



## WORKING SESSION 6:

My name is Gözde Taskaya and I am here as a representative for Netzwerk Muslimische Zivilgesellschaft.

I want to use this platform to talk about some restrictions of the Austrian government towards its Muslim citizens.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October the full-face veils-ban will come into effect. The law passed although the Austrian Bar says that this ban is running counter to the country's constitutional democracy and "the fundamental rights of the freedom of conscience and the freedom of private life". The full-face veils-ban is part of a larger "integration law" that was introduced by the Austrian government which argued that moving in public is part of a policy improving integration. Yet, this ban is just another kneejerk reaction to the rise of the far right. Otherwise it makes no sense to bring out a law which probably affects only 80 persons out of 8 million.

Our integration and foreign minister Sebastian Kurz is talking about symbols of a counter-society, where a Niqab has no place because a face-veil would be against the Austrian fundamental values. In his opinion, it undermines the equality between men and women, so it wouldn't fit our value system.

But the real inequality is that male politicians are silencing thousands of Muslim, as well as non-Muslim women, who protested against this law and took a stand for the right of self-determination of all women.

When it comes to Muslims, politicians always argue that religious practices like wearing the Niqab, or wearing a Hijab as a teacher is not conform to our fundamental values. But what are these fundamental values? Austrians were taught that our fundamental values are based on our fundamental rights, which are fixed in our constitutional law. And this law allows and guarantees us the right of freedom of religious or belief. But our integration minister is willing to introduce a Hijab-ban in the public sector, especially for teachers. Because in his opinion Muslim women can't be good role models and they would have too much influence on young people only by their appearance.

In this case I want to use this platform to be a voice for my dear friend who is hindered to work as a public prosecutor or judge only because of her headgear and not because of her qualifications. As if her headgear would influence her capability to make decisions in that field.

Particularly Muslim women have become a target of hate in times of populism and anti-Muslim sentiment. And with never-ending discussions about a Hijab-ban in public as well as private sectors, which are supported and led by different Austrian public institutions, the Austrian government prevents Muslim Women's financial and economic independency.

### **Recommendations:**

- We recommend every OSCE country to conduct a self-evaluation report in order to see if the OSCE countries observe the commitments they agreed upon. These analyses should be in close cooperation with civil organizations and NGO's, similar to the self-evaluation report that countries which have had the chairmanship conducted.
- This is why we recommend that there should be OSCE representatives who observe the situation of human rights in the respective countries. Furthermore, we recommend every state to configure an institution, which is legally obligated to check if there are unconstitutional legal situations and if they cause unequal rights because of ethnicity, gender or religious beliefs.
- We recommend that the government take the lead in fighting the existing discrimination against minorities on the labor market by creating a quota system for minorities within government employment, which will lead to religious minorities having more trust in the state institutions.