

# Ayatollah Khamenei: “If Women Were to Wear the Hijab,” They’ll be Spared “Depraved Behavior”

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The recent [directive of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in Pakistan](#) that schoolgirls cover up in order to prevent “unethical incidents” calls to mind the fact that Iran’s supreme leader, the Ayatollah Khamenei, has said much the same thing. [He has contended](#) that Islam holds the answer to the problems of sexual mistreatment of women in Western societies.

*If women were to wear the hijab, he argued, they would be spared such depraved behavior.*

The “depraved behavior” that Khamenei ascribes to men, all men, in the West, is actually found much more often in the

Muslim lands, where men are regarded as uncontrollable wild beasts when it comes to women, and they need to be protected from their own instinctive passions by women – devilishly attractive as they are – doing their part by covering up the way all obedient Muslimahs do.

But the licit behavior of Muslim men toward Muslim women certainly includes sexual mistreatment. A Muslim husband may demand sex from any of his wives, at any time and if she refuses, he may “beat” her for being disobedient (Qur’an 4:34). And “marital rape” of an unwilling wife certainly constitutes, for Western man, “depraved behavior.”

Khamenei doesn’t go into the full extent of the mistreatment of women under Islam. Men are superior to women, for whom they must act as guardians in all important matters. A daughter’s inheritance is half that of a son. Even more important, a woman’s testimony, for example, is worth only half that of a man, for as Muhammad himself explained, such a rule is necessary “because of a deficiency in her intelligence.”

*Two days earlier, the Iranian regime executed a 24-year-old woman – reportedly a child bride who suffered domestic abuse while still a minor until her husband was killed. She claimed to have confessed to the murder under coercion, telling a judge the killer was in fact her husband’s brother, who she also accused of having raped her several times.*

The accusation of repeated rape was not looked into, much less accepted, by the court, because in Islam, a charge of rape requires the testimony of four male eyewitnesses. Obviously there were none in this case, as indeed, there almost never are, which is one of the reasons why rape is so frequent a crime in Muslim lands – it’s almost impossible to get a conviction. Note that this girl was a “child bride.” That phenomenon is common in Islamic societies, because Muhammad himself married Aisha when she was six, and he consummated the

marriage – that is, had sexual intercourse with her – when she was nine. Finally, she suffered “domestic abuse” because in Islam, a man can “beat” his wife, and there is little a wife can do about what is permitted by the Qur’an.

*On an official Twitter account, Khamenei wrote, “The disaster of countless sexual assaults on Western women – including incidents leading to #MeToo campaign – and Islam’s proposal to resolve it.”*

Islam’s proposal to “resolve” this “disaster of countless sexual assaults” is to have non-Muslim women dress like Muslim women, covered up, and the more covered up they are, the safer Khamenei believes they will be. Presumably it’s not as much fun to proposition a girl if she’s wearing a hijab or burqa; walking around naked in front of her also loses its appeal if she’s hijabbed. Making jokes with sexual innuendo – a third common #MeToo charge – would only be arousing if she doesn’t wear a veil. So put on that veil, and no one will proposition you, walk naked in front of you, or make certain kinds of jokes. Of course this is idiotic. Wearing the cover does not diminish the incidence of sexual assault. It’s a sign of male power over women. Many women are still subject to sexual assault, including rape, all over the Muslim world, the victims including many with cover, from simple hijabs to burkas and niqabs. Apparently that cover has not been enough to calm the raging beast within Muslim males.

What a squalid view of humanity Khamenei offers. No appeals to morality or decency will work with men, apparently. The only thing that will change their animal behavior will be to keep women covered up. And if it is the lack of cover that is responsible for rapes, why is there less sexual assault in the Western world than in Muslim lands? And why are Western women in Europe now so afraid, not of Western men, but of the Muslims in their midst? Could it not be more convincingly argued that Muslim men are taught to be contemptuous of women,

to treat them as unequals, taught also that it is permissible to behave violently and aggressively toward women, especially Infidel women, and that men should not be held legally or morally responsible for actions which they cannot help?

*He then linked a video clip which begins with news footage of some of the many [Western] women who have come forward with stories of sexual assault and harassment in workplace environments over the past year.*

*The slickly-produced video moves to brief excerpts from a speech Khamenei delivered on International Women's Day last March in which he extolled the virtues of the hijab.*

*"You might have heard, a few months ago, that a large number of Western female politicians announced one right after another they had been subjected to abuse, harassment or violence at times while they were working in government offices," he said, according to the subtitles.*

*"By introducing hijab, Islam has shut the door on a path that would pull women towards such deviation."*

*The video ends with images of Iranian women wearing the Islamic head covering, and another Khamenei quote: "Hijab gives women freedom and identity."*

In Islam, the "hijab" does not give women "freedom," for it is mandated for them by men. Those who seek to exercise real freedom, and choose not to wear the hijab, have suffered everything from being murdered by their male relatives, as happened to Aqsa Parvez in Canada, to being sentenced to several years in jail simply for removing their hijabs in public by way of protest, as has happened to women in Iran.

*"During the hundreds of years of oppression that the patriarchal Western civilization imposed on the female gender and particularly on Western women, some movements were*

*launched by women to revive their rights," the article begins.*

This is rich: here is Ayatollah Khamenei describing the centuries "of oppression" that women suffered in the "patriarchal Western civilization." It is not that Western civilization that permitted polygamy (which devalues each wife), that allowed a husband to divorce his wife by uttering the triple-talaq, that permitted a husband to "beat" his wife, that made a woman's testimony worth half that of a man because of, according to Muhammad himself, "the deficiency in her intelligence." Men are supposed to handle all the important matters, including finance, because of women's inferior intelligence. It is male relatives who can punish a girl or woman who does not wear her prescribed cover or who does anything else to "dishonor" the family. Doesn't all this add up to the "patriarchal civilization" that Khamenei absurdly ascribes to the Western world?

*"One of these movements is the #MeToo movement which was initially launched by famous Western women who had experienced humiliation and sexual harassment. But, will this movement find the cause of this human disaster and the real solution to it?"*

To end sexual harassment of women in the West, Khamenei has an easy solution: Western women need only dress like their Muslim sisters, who, just as soon as they put on the hijab or better still, the burka or niqab, will find that the men around them will be instantly subdued, their animal passions dissipated, and the women will be safe, as Khamenei is convinced happens in Iran. Yet we have plenty of examples of Iranian women, properly covered, who nonetheless have been raped, such as Reyhaneh Jabbari, who killed her rapist and was executed for that act of self-defense. And Iranian women are as subject to sexual harassment as Western women. The #MeToo movement has

arrived in Iran, and many women have recounted their own assaults, even when they were fully covered. Here is one such testimony: "I have been sexually assaulted several times, even wearing chador, although I have never been quiet about. Not having 'appropriate dress' is nothing more than a patriarchal excuse." "Even wearing chador" will not protect you. Khamenei needs to read what Iranian women are saying.

Ayatollah Khamenei presents himself as a defender of women, but the Supreme Leader is recorded as saying that "gender equality is one of the biggest mistakes of western thought." Iran's Islamic regime has, according to Iranian opposition groups, institutionalized, legalized and normalized misogyny, rape culture, and gender violence.

Another excerpt from Khamenei's statements:

*"In spite of the dim-witted and superficial propaganda campaigns of materialistic people, hijab does not shackle women."*

When hijab is made mandatory for girls and women, and if they disobey, that can bring severe punishment – prison terms – by the state, and even murder by male relatives, this certainly "shackles" women. They are not free to refuse. They must obey. Their freedom has been curtailed.

*"[The West] wants women to entertain men's eyes."*

Western man is not the lust-crazed beast that Ayatollah Khamenei believes all men to be. Does he include himself, I wonder? Why would "the West" want women "to entertain men's eyes"? Is he talking about the West that really exists? Last I looked, Western women were being urged to do everything that men do, to study STEM subjects, to run for office, to rise high at work and break all glass ceilings, to lean out. No one was being told to "entertain men's eyes." Ayatollah Khamenei

has sex on the brain; he seems to think of America as one big show in Las Vegas, with leggy chorines and men in the audience straining at the bit.

*"They want men to be free to even fulfil their visual lusts; so they persuade women to uncover, wear makeup and exhibit themselves before men!"*

Who is "they" in Khomeini's fantasy? Zionist spies? The C.I.A.? Who? Is he talking about Western agents who want "Iranian men" to fulfill their visual lusts so they persuade "Iranian" women "to uncover, wear makeup and exhibit themselves before men"? No one has been going around persuading Iranian women to uncover; they do it themselves, as a brave act of defiance against the Islamic clerics such as Khamenei himself. No one has to persuade them to wear makeup and lipstick; it is their own choice, their refusal to kowtow, their rebellion against the grim constraints of dour ayatollahs. Khamenei makes these acts of individual defiance sound like the product of a sinister conspiracy.

*"If this [hijab wearing] is not observed, the society will be afflicted with the same depravity that the West is plagued with today."*

The greatest sexual depravity in the world today is that exhibited by Muslim grooming gangs in Rotherham, U.K., where 1400 "white, English girls, "some as young as eleven," were repeatedly raped by Muslim men, the mass rape of Yazidi girls and women by the Muslim fanatics of the Islamic State in Iraq, the kidnapping and use as sex slaves of Christian girls by the Muslim terrorists of Boko Haram in Nigeria, the repeated examples of mass sexual assault and rape, by Muslim men, of Christian girls and women, during public celebrations, as at the New Year's Eve celebration in Cologne in 2015/2016, during which 1,000 German women were sexually assaulted (and some raped) in public, by up to 2,000 Muslim men, while 400 other

women were similarly assaulted in Hamburg, and many hundreds more groped, or raped, throughout Germany.

Rape statistics from all over Europe have shown a great recent rise in the number of rapes, and they are related precisely to the number of Muslim migrants. The U.K. has the highest Muslim population and the highest sexual assault rate. Sweden has the second highest non-indigenous Muslim population rate in Europe and the second highest sexual assault rate in Europe. Belgium has the third highest Muslim population rate and the third highest sexual violence rate. The Netherlands has the fourth highest sexual assault rate in Europe and the fourth highest Muslim population rate. Germany has the sixth highest assault rate and the sixth highest Muslim population rate. Are all of these numbers just a random coincidence?

There are plenty of cases of Muslim men raping Muslim girls, too, in Europe, in the Muslim “ghettos” of the housing projects, though given a choice, Muslims prefer to rape Infidel girls, who are seen as the “enemy” deserving such treatment, and who, by their dress and mien, are “asking for it.”

With little hope of making it outside the housing projects, many of these young men try to dominate their own neighborhoods, resorting to violence, especially against young women.

They rule gangland style, combined with the male-dominated traditions of the Arab countries they came from. It's gotten so bad that, today, most of the young women only feel safe if they are covered up, or if they stay at home. Girls who want to look just like other French girls are considered provocative, asking for trouble.

So the cover is worn not voluntarily, but out of fear. It's a sign that says “I'm a dutiful Muslim, please don't attack me” – to ward off attacks by other Muslims. It doesn't always

work.

There is the case of Samira Belli, who was attacked though she wore the hijab:

*Samira Bellil wasn't asking for trouble, but trouble came to her. She's the granddaughter of Algerian immigrants and she's written a book about surviving the hell of the Paris ghettos.*

*"I was gang raped by three people I knew, and I couldn't say anything, because in my culture, your family is dishonored if you lose your virginity," says Bellil. "So I kept quiet, and the rapes continued. The next time, I was pulled off a commuter train and no one lifted a finger to help me. ...Everybody turned their head away. They were all looking out the window."*

*When Bellil's family discovered that she had been raped, they weren't sympathetic. They threw her out onto the streets. But she's since discovered that what happened to her was not the only case.*

*"There was a trial in Lille where a 13-year-old girl was gang raped by 80 men. Sometimes, it's 80, or 50 or 10. It's absolutely terrible," says Bellil. "In the case of Argenteuil, it was horrible. A young woman was raped in a school. Of course, everybody knew, but they're so afraid of these young men that they prefer to close their eyes. That's the price of peace in the ghettos."*

*When the verdicts came down in this case, the courthouse turned into a madhouse. Eighteen teenagers were convicted of raping a 15-year-old girl over a two-month period. But what really shocked France was how the mothers of those boys reacted.*

*"You call this justice, seven years in prison for some oral sex," says one mother. "It's the girl who should be behind bars."*

Does any of this suggest that Muslim girls and women who wear the hijab are immune to attack?

Khamenei has a dim view of humanity. Like many Muslims, he sees men as uncontrollable beasts, unable to stop themselves if women appear without cover. That is more true of Muslim men, certainly, for they have been raised in a misogynistic faith, and believe they have a right to control "their" women and to make sure that those women make themselves, through cover, as un-alluring as possible. If there is a rape, it's always the fault of the victim.

In the non-Muslim West, men are not seen, nor treated, as ravenous sex-mad beasts. And though Ayatollah Khamenei might not believe it, Western women, even those who are models and film stars, are not regarded as fatally alluring, and pounced upon. And no one thinks that if Western women refuse to cover, that must mean they "are asking for it." The West has its rapists, but nothing like the number who are to be found in the Muslim world, with its inculcated violence and misogyny. Rape is grossly underreported in Muslim lands for several reasons. It can get the victim in trouble for "dishonoring" the family. The victim receives not sympathy, but condemnation, and many girls are afraid, as a consequence, to report the crime. And remember, too, that a woman's testimony is worth only half that of a man, so if it is only a case of he said-she said, the victim has no chance of prevailing. Finally, to make a charge of rape under the Sharia requires the testimony of four male witnesses. How often is a rape victim going to have four male witnesses present who are not friends of the rapist? That requirement discourages many rape victims from going forward, and for those who do, their chances of seeing justice done are small.

*"[The West says] women have to give up their modesty and morality and use their physical appeal in order to gain the approval of men. Is this humiliation or respect? Influenced by Zionist elements, the ignorant and intoxicated western*

*world presented this idea under the guise of respect for women."*

Actually "the West" makes no such demand of women, about giving up their "modesty and morality" and using their "physical appeal." Respect for women in the West is demonstrated in both their full legal and social equality. It is also shown in their exercise of free choice: women are not required to cover, nor forced not to cover. They can do as they decide, as individuals, and unlike in Islam, are not to be ordered about by their husbands, fathers, and brothers. If women do not cover in the West, it is their decision entirely. Khamenei's reference to the "western world" being "influenced by Zionist elements" is of course both bizarre and incomprehensible. What could he mean? We don't regard women as incapable of moral behavior if they dress in a certain way. Nor do we see men as unable to control themselves. If a Western man rapes a Western woman, she is not too ashamed to report it. Her family does not suffer "dishonor" as a result. In court, her testimony is not "worth half that of" the male defendant. Nor need she produce four male witnesses to the rape.

The #MeToo movement in the West began by addressing the abuse of women by powerful men, beginning with Harvey Weinstein, and it metastasized from that, with many other women coming forward with their own tales of being forced to endure some kind of sexual assault, verbal or physical. The #MeToo movement is a sign not of weakness, but of female strength, given that some of the behavior described went back decades, with women at long last eager to reveal what had been kept quiet, for so long, out of fear of retribution from powerful men. It's not a sign of decadence, as Khamenei thinks, but rather, of a salutary cleansing of the societal stables,

*Raising questions about Khamenei's arguments on compulsory hijab wear, Radio Farda, a U.S.-funded Farsi-language*

*broadcaster, reported last March that “billboards disdaining sexual harassment in Tehran and other major Iranian cities indicate that despite four decades of forceful enforcement of compulsory hijab the issue of sexual harassment is still a major social problem in Iran.”*

Indeed, for forty years all Iranian girls and women have been forced to wear hijab and many women wear burqas, yet sexual harassment of all kinds – including rape – is still of major concern. That suggests that wearing cover turns out to be of little efficacy in preventing sexual assault.

*Despite Khamenei’s idealized portrayal of the lives of women in Iran, a 2017 U.N. report on Iran cited official discrimination against women including underage marriage, the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions and the labor force, and harassment of women’s rights campaigners. It said women and girls also faced discrimination with regard to divorce, child custody and freedom of movement and dress.*

*Earlier U.N. reports noted that under Iran’s Islamic penal code, “a woman’s testimony in a court of law is regarded as half that of a man’s” and that abuses of female prisoners include forced marriages, sexual violence and torture, and the rape of virgins awaiting execution.*

*The execution of 24-year-old Zeinab Sekaanvand has focused attention not only on the Iranian judiciary’s treatment of people convicted of crimes committed while minors, but on the issue of child marriage and abuse.*

*In Iran, girls may be legally married at 13, although those as young as nine may be married with the permission of their fathers and a court. (Nine is the age at which Islam’s prophet Mohammed consummated his marriage to Aisha, the youngest of his dozen wives and concubines, according to an authoritative Hadith.)*

*Seventeen percent of Iranian girls are married younger than 18, according to 2018 UNICEF data. (The highest rates are in sub-Saharan Africa. The figure for the U.S. is 0.46 percent, according to the Pew Research Center.)*

*Iran lies near the bottom – in 140th place out of 144 – of the World Economic Forum’s “Global Gender Gap” rankings for 2017. The survey examines political empowerment, economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and health and survival, among men and women.*

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a terrible place for a woman. All the misogynistic Islamic rules apply. Husbands can take up to four wives; they can divorce any wife for any reason, merely by saying the triple-talaq; they can beat disobedient wives; they can marry girls as young as 13, and with special dispensation, even girls as young as 9, if the girl’s father, and a court, permit it. Daughters inherit half of what a son inherits. A Muslim woman’s testimony is worth half that of a man because of “women’s deficiency in judgment.” A rape victim must produce four male eyewitnesses to the rape. Women are required, whether they wish to or not, to wear cover, from hijab to burqa.

Crime statistics show that Muslims everywhere in Europe engage in much more rape and sexual assault than do non-Muslims. In Muslim countries, sexual assault statistics are hard to come by, for there is underreporting by victims, to safeguard their own and their family’s “honor,” and because it is so often not worth bringing charges, given the kind of testimony – four male eyewitnesses – that the Sharia requires. But the testimony of rape victims in Iran, including many who wear the chador, undermines Khamenei’s claim that wearing islamically correct clothing will end sexual assaults.

Ayatollah Khamenei thinks we in the West are decadent and depraved because “our” women don’t wear hijab, which is needed

to hide a woman's natural allure, because men – according to Khamenei – are beasts. Perhaps it would be truer to say that all the Muslim men Khamenei meets are beasts in their attitude toward women. What could be more depraved than the Muslim grooming gangs of Rotherham, or the Islamic State members mass-raping helpless Yazidi girls? Khamenei should look at what the Islamic Republic has done to women over the past 40 years, and compare the freedoms and status enjoyed by women under the Shah's regime, with what they must now endure under the misogynistic Islamic Republic, where merely removing your hijab for a bright shining moment of freedom can lead to several years in a dank, dark, thoroughly Islamic prison.

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