

# Congo bans Muslim women from wearing veil

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Congo-Brazzaville has banned Muslim women from wearing the full face-veil in public, citing security reasons, an Islamic association has told AFP.

“The Interior Minister (Raymond Zephirin Mboulou) notified us of the decision to prohibit Muslim women from wearing the full veil. The decision was taken in order to prevent any act of terrorism and insecurity,” said El Hadj Abdoulaye Djibril Bopaka, who heads the Islamic Supreme Council of Congo-Brazzaville. “Muslim women can now only wear the full veil at home and in places of worship, but not in public places,”

Congo-Brazzaville is home to some 800,000 Muslims in a population of nearly six million. Only 10 per cent are local with the rest coming from Arab or neighbouring west African nations. Unlike its neighbour Cameroon, which has suffered fierce attacks by the Nigeria-based jihadist group Boko Haram, Congo-Brazzaville has not been hit by any such terror attacks.

The government will also ban non-residents from sleeping in mosques in order to encourage refugees to register with police, he said. “Many Muslim brothers from Central Africa are being housed in mosques and not presenting themselves to authorities. We do not know what they are up to,”