

Muslim Woman Asked to Remove Her Hijab: “My Life Has Been Destroyed”

by Hugh Fitzgerald



A Muslimah mother in France, wearing a hijab, and accompanying children on a school trip to a local council (parliament), was requested indirectly by a member of that parliament, Julien Odoul, to remove her hijab (he had asked the president of the council, Mme Dufay, to make the request), in order to respect the French principle of not wearing “ostentatious religious symbols” in schools and such other public places as government offices. The story is [here](#).

The Muslim woman who experienced Islamophobic attacks from France’s National Rally party (RN) in mid-October “has spoken out about how the event at the Regional Council of Burgundy-Franche Comte affected her life and that of her son.

Fatima E. accompanied her son to a school activity to explore the mission of the general assembly at the regional council.

The school trip, however, did not go well for Fatima, who faced Islamophobic insults from the members of the RN in front of her son because of the hijab or the veil.

Fatima spoke to Le Parisien about the incident, emphasizing that what concerned her the most was the distress of the children.

“They were really shocked and traumatized.”

Photos of the woman trying to calm her son who was crying after hearing RN’s comments went viral. The move angered several public figures who strongly condemned the RN attack against Muslims.

During the meeting held on October 11, leader of RN Julien Odoul asked the president of the council to ask Fatima to remove her hijab or to leave the meeting.

He was merely asking for French law to be observed. The wearing of the hijab in schools has been prohibited in the law, and that prohibition has been extended to include the wearing of “ostentatious religious symbols” in government offices. The woman wearing her hijab knew where the school trip was going – a regional parliament – and that it was a government office. She chose, nonetheless, to wear the hijab.

Julien Odoul did not, as has been so widely reported, “demand” that she remove her veil. He asked the presiding officer to “ask” (“demander” in French) the Muslim lady either to remove her veil, or to leave the meeting.

“It’s the republic, it’s secularity. It’s the law of the Republic, no ostentatious [religious] symbols,” said Odoul, exploiting France’s secularity to promote his own agenda.

Odoul was not “exploiting France’s secularity to promote his own agenda.” He was “explaining” France’s secularity. The word

“exploiting” puts a sinister twist on what is a straightforward matter. He was asking that French secularism, as enshrined in the law, be observed. That should have been the end of the matter.

The president of the council, Marie Guite Dufay, refused his request, emphasizing that no law allows her to ask the woman to leave for wearing hijab. The RN members then left the meeting.

Fatima said that the only thing she could do is to smile.

Marie Guite Dufay should have referred to the law banning the wearing of the hijab in schools which has, by extension, also been applied to government offices. Women in France do not wear the hijab in those offices. A regional assembly certainly qualifies as a government office.

Note that it was not the Muslim lady who left the parliamentary chambers, but the members of Odoul’s party, RN (Rassemblement National), who left, feeling they had to express their dismay at this violation of French secularism which was being upheld by Marie Guite Dufay. Yet it is the Muslim woman who remained, still hijabed, for a little while after the RN members had left; this was a victory for her, but she presents herself as the victim, whose “life has been destroyed.”

“I smiled first at his stupidity,” she said.

Her unpleasant condescension at the Kuffar’s request is palpable. Was Julien Odoul “stupid” for wanting to uphold the principle of laicity, central to the French state, against someone clearly determined to flout it? Much of the French media have found his behavior outrageous, but why? He was merely trying to prevent one more breach of that principle.

She added that she received support from several elected

regional officials who wanted her to stay.

“When I saw my son crying, I told them that I will not be able to stay.”

It was not any consideration for French secularism, enshrined in law and custom, that led her to leave, but only the desire to keep her son from being upset. Had he not been upset, we can assume she would have remained, while Odoul and the entire RN delegation felt they had to leave, as a sign of their displeasure at this flouting of laicite.

She said that she also faced verbal attacks when she was leaving.

On her way out, she met right-wing regional elected member Karine Champy who told her “You will see, we’ll win.”

Does that constitute a “verbal attack” on her? There was no “verbal attack.” It was, rather, an expression of hope by Karine Champy – “you will see, we’ll win” – that Islam will not dominate France in the future.

She said that the RN member wanted to provoke her to react.

No, Karine Champy was merely proclaiming her hope, and her belief, that Islam would not “win” and dominate France. The Muslim mother is reading things into Champy’s statement that are not there.

“They destroyed my life,” the mother said. She added that she feels a “rejection that I had not felt before and that will have consequences.”

“They destroyed my life.” What can one respond to this kind of hysterical victimization? She was merely being asked to remove her hijab while in the assembly (“le hemicycle” – “benches” –

are mentioned in the French reports). How has her life been destroyed? She will continue to wear the hijab. She is being hailed as a victim, a martyr for her faith, by much of the French media, while Julien Odoul is the one having his life made miserable, declared – without the slightest evidence – to be a “racist.” Ninety French celebrities have signed a letter to Macron decrying her treatment, and asking him to intervene.

She said that she now understands why women with hijabs refuse to participate in school trips.

Women wearing hijabs in France who accompany children on field trips are not bothered in any way, unless those trips are to government offices. The French Senate did pass a bill banning the wearing of the hijab by mothers on school trips, but it has not been adopted by the National Assembly. Perhaps after this contretemps the National Assembly will pass that bill after all.

The RN’s move divided public opinion about the hijab in public spaces.

While some denounced the move, others seized the opportunity to attack Muslims.

The deputy editor of France’s Le Figaro publicly stated that he “hates the Muslim religion,” and that he believes it is his “right” to openly criticize a religion on national television.

The deputy editor of Le Figaro did not “seize the opportunity to attack Muslims.” He stated clearly that he “hates the Muslim religion.” He restated, for the benefit of the French public, that he, and everyone else, has a right under French law to criticize any and all religions. This right is not something new, concocted by “islamophobes.” It has long been recognized as protected by the freedom of speech.

However, public figures, including actors, called on France President Emmanuel Macron to intervene.

“How long will we keep tolerating hatred against Muslims,” the French public figures asked in a collective statement published by Le Monde.

Shouldn't the question be reversed? How long will the French tolerate the imams all over France preaching hatred of Infidels? How long will the French tolerate the antisemitic messages by such Muslim preachers as Youssef al-Qaradawi, before they jam his radio broadcasts? How long will the French tolerate the hate-filled atmosphere in mosques, prisons, and Muslim neighborhoods that have led to mass killings by Muslims that have taken place all over France – in Paris (many times), in Nice, in Toulouse, in Tours, in Magnanville, in St. Etienne du Rouvray, and many other places – and the hundreds of such attacks by Muslims that, thankfully, have been foiled in time? The islamocritics are not promoting hatred of Muslims, as those notable “public figures” asking Macron to intervene (to do what, exactly?) seem to think; they are promoting the examination of Islam, seeking to understand what is contained in the Qur'an and Hadith that explains the observable behavior of Muslims toward Infidels both now, and over the past 1,400 years.

The alacrity with which so many of France's Great and Good – actors, writers, journalists – rallied around the Muslim woman, as if she had suffered some terrible ineradicable injury, and chose to vilify Julien Odoul for standing up for the French state's principle of laicity, has been disheartening.

And few seem to have minded the preposterous claim of this Muslim woman, who plays the inoffensive and innocent victim – she seemingly unaware that wearing the hijab in a local parliament might violate French secular principles – that her

“life has been destroyed.”

She’s now well-known and has been made much of, for the supposed calvary she had to endure, which lasted all of a few minutes, as Odoul made his request of Mme Dufay to ask Fatima to remove her veil; Dufay refused; then Odoul left the chamber with other RN members. Fatima has already been interviewed respectfully, even admiringly, in print, and on the radio. Television comes next. The photograph of her comforting her crying son – who was apparently so shaken by that unspeakably cruel suggestion that his maman should remove her hijab – has gone viral. She is planning to sue for “racism.” Does anyone doubt that in the current climate, she will win? And how large and comforting that settlement will likely turn out to be.

“They’ve destroyed my life,” she claims. Not at all. Her life – as a victim of islamophobia, a celebrity sufferer, a maternal martyr – is just beginning. And can a book deal – “Can One Still Be Muslim In France?” – be far behind? These days, nothing is too absurd to be contemplated.