

Egyptian presidential candidate: Women must wear veil or change their 'creed'

Saturday 25 February 2012, by [AJBAILI Mustapha](#), [MAYTON Joseph](#) (Date first published: 12 February 2012).

Hazem Saleh Abu Ismail has said that if he is elected as Egyptian president he would force women to wear the hijab.

An ultra-conservative Egyptian presidential hopeful has said that if he is elected as head of state he would force women to wear the hijab (veil) or "change creed," adding that Islam provides no guarantees of personal freedom.

"If you claim that Allah considers it your personal freedom, show me your reference. Nobody has ever said that - except for people who have no understanding of the Shariah," Hazem Saleh Abu Ismail, a long-time supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood, said in a recent interview with the Egypt's Tahrir TV.

He said that if he is elected president he would enforce the hijab on women and that if they do not want to wear it, they have to change their "creed."

He did not elaborate on what he meant by changing their "creed" and whether this meant changing their religion, knowing that such a move is strictly forbidden under the Shariah law and could result in capital punishment.

Ismail, who was previously charged under the regime of Hosni Mubarak for "endangering national security," said that by seeking to enforce the veil on women he was only obeying Allah's commands.

"You see, this is the difficulty; this is Islam. Does she want to be a Muslim and not obey Allah's rules? Let them say so; that's all I ask; let them be honorable and just speak up," he said.

But speaking up against religion in Egypt can lead a person to prosecution for blasphemy.

Ismail said that following the Shariah (Islamic law) is like being in the military, where a person has to follow a strict code of conduct.

He said that the Islamic saying of "no compulsion in religion" is comparable to "no compulsion in the military, meaning that if someone wants to enter the military, he can enter and if he does not want to, he does not have to enter."

But once a person enters the military, that person has to respect its rules, the cleric said.

"If you join, then you are obliged to wear their uniform, to attend their classes, to attend the training with them and to obey their leader," Ismail said.

In August 2011, Ismail appeared in an online video praising Osama bin Laden and describing him as a martyr. He said the late al-Qaeda leader spoke "the word of truth on power" and went to the "front

lines to work in the path of Allah.”

Ismail said he has “some minor differences” with the Muslim Brotherhood, a group he left before expressing intentions to run for president.

By AL ARABIYA

(Written by Mustapha Ajbaili)

* Source: *Al Arabiya*, Sunday, 12 February 2012:

<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/02/12/194186.html>

Egypt women lash out at presidential hopeful Abu Ismail's veil comments

CAIRO: Egyptian women are angry, again, at presidential hopeful Hazem Saleh Abu Ismail's comments that as president he would require the veil, or higab, on all women in the country.

Abu Ismail said that women in the country must “change creed” and that Islam gives no special personal freedom.

“If you claim that Allah considers it your personal freedom, show me your reference. Nobody has ever said that – except for people have no understanding of the Shariah,” Hazem Saleh Abu Ismail, a firebrand ultra-conservative Salafist, said in a recent interview with the Egypt's Tahrir TV.

He argued that if he is elected president he would enforce the hijab on women and that if they do not want to wear it, they have to change their “creed.”

He did not elaborate on what he meant by changing their “creed” and whether this meant changing their religion, knowing that such a move is strictly forbidden under the Shariah law and could result in capital punishment.

“You see, this is the difficulty; this is Islam. Does she want to be a Muslim and not obey Allah's rules? Let them say so; that's all I ask; let them be honorable and just speak up,” he said.

But Egyptian women have had enough. A group of young Cairo University students, who are forming a women's alliance organization on campus, told Bikyamasr.com that “this forcing of women to do this or that is not Egyptian.”

Noha, a 22-year-old Christian, argued that “we Egyptians have always supported each other in their personal freedom and now it seems people want to attack it and make people do things they want.”

She argued that as a Christian, she would never wear a veil. “I do not think this is what the revolution is about. I hope he [Abu Ismail] is not elected because it could ruin the country.”

Her fellow women's rights supporters agree, including Omnia, who said “the veil is never forced, or it shouldn't be, so these people who are trying to do so are going against Islam. There is no obligation in religion, Islam says.”

Joseph Mayton

* Source: *bikyamasr*, 12 February 2012:

<http://bikyamasr.com/56841/egypt-women-lash-out-at-presidential-hopeful-abu-ismails-veil-comments/>
