



UN WOMEN

Level - *Principiante*

Language - *English*

Topics

Topic A—*Girl's and women's rights to education. Case study: Afghanistan*

Topic B - *Freedom of expression. Case study: The use of hijabs and burkas in the Middle East region.*

Presidents

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2. Welcome letter

Dear Delegates,

We would like to warmly welcome you to the XVI edition of MMUN. It is a pleasure for us to be able to accompany you during these 3 days. These will be days full of unforgettable debates and arguments, but, above all, where you will have the opportunity to gain a lot of knowledge.

UN Women offers a unique space in which each of you can contribute your ideas, passion, and dedication, leaving your mark. We encourage you to fully immerse yourselves in this experience, sharing your visions while actively listening to those of others, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaborative learning.

Finally, we want to make sure that this space is yours as much as ours, please do not hesitate contacting us if you have any questions or comments so that we can help you in the best way possible.

*With the warmest of welcomes,
Mariana and Valeria.*



3. Introduction and context of the committee:



Founded in 2010, the United Nations Committee on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, commonly known as UN Women, is an entity dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women globally, not only through policies and programs, but also by driving fundamental cultural and social changes to achieve a world where both genders can enjoy equal opportunities and rights. In particular, this includes efforts to eliminate gender disparities in national legislations, combat violence against women and girls, and ensure that gender considerations are included in all policies and programs at an international level. (About UN women. (n.d.). UN Women, Headquarters.)

UN Women Main Objectives:

1. Leadership and political participation: Working to ensure that more women can access leadership and decision making roles at all levels.
2. Women's economic empowerment: Promotes equal access to economic resources for women, including property rights, decent employment and control over their own economic resources.
3. Strengthening and empowering women globally: This is achieved through the promotion of policies and laws that favor gender equality and women's empowerment.
4. Elimination of discrimination against women and girls: UN Women advocates for changes in policies and regulations that perpetuate discrimination and inequality.



(S/f). Unwomen.org.<https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women>

4. **Topic A:** *Girl's and women's rights to education. Case study: Afghanistan*

a. **Introduction to the topic**

Education is a basic human right and a key tool for equality, development, and peace. It allows people to gain knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, and participate actively in our world. However, this right has not always been respected. For hundreds of years across the world, women and girls were denied access to education simply because of their gender. In many societies, education was reserved mainly for men, while women were expected to stay at home and had limited opportunities to learn, work, or make decisions about their own lives. The journey and progress toward equal access to education has been changing, but in some parts of the world, these inequalities still exist today.

Afghanistan is a clear and important example of this challenge, many women in Afghanistan have faced, and continue to face, serious restrictions on their ability to attend school or pursue higher education. These limitations are not only a violation of human rights, but they also affect the country's social and economic development.



France-Presse, A. (2021, agosto 30). Afghanistan: Women allowed to attend university under Taliban rule, says acting education minister. South China Morning Post.

- This topic invites you delegates to reflect on this global issue. By understanding both the historical exclusion of women from education worldwide and the specific situation in Afghanistan today, delegates can better analyze the conflict and propose respectful and effective solutions within the committee of UN WOMEN.

b. Key concepts

These key concepts are essential to understanding this topic. They explain the main ideas and terms related to girls' and women's right to education. Remember to take them into account and use them during the debate.

- **Human rights:** Universal and inalienable rights that belong to every human, protecting diverse values such as dignity, freedom, and equality under law.
- **Education:** "The process of teaching or learning, especially in a school or college, or the knowledge that you get from this."
- **Right to education:** A legal right that guarantees access to primary and secondary education, recognized in human rights law.
- **Access to education:** *Access: the method, right or opportunity to use or look at something. So:* Having the chance to go to school and study, without barriers like money or discrimination.



- **Discrimination:** “Treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their race, gender, sexuality, etc.”
- **Empowerment:** “The process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you.”
- **Gender equality:** Equal treatment and opportunities for women and men, regardless of gender.
- **Gender inequality:** A social process where people are treated differently and unfairly because of their gender.
- **Advocacy:** “Public support for an idea, action, or belief.”
- **Protests:** Actions, demonstrations or statements showing strong dislike or opposition to something.
- **Legal framework:** A set of laws, rules or systems that form the basis of society.
- **Sustainable development:** Growing and improving society in a way that doesn't damage the future.
- **Women’s rights:** Legal, social, and economic rights for women.

c. Historical context

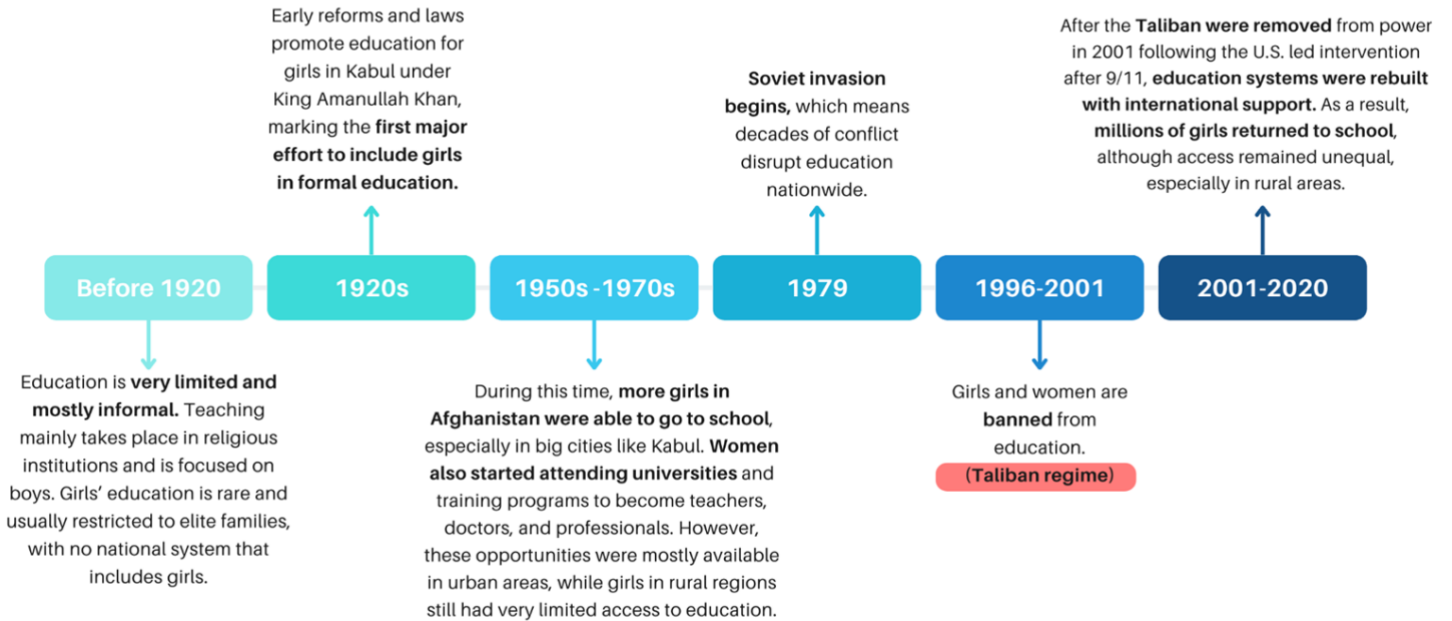
The history of girls’ and women’s access to education in Afghanistan is closely tied to the country’s political changes, conflicts, and governments. Unlike a gradual or “normal” global progress, progress in Afghanistan has been so inconsistent, with advances and setbacks depending on who was in power at different moments in time.

- The following timeline is provided to help delegates understand the history and the key changes that have shaped the current situation:



EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

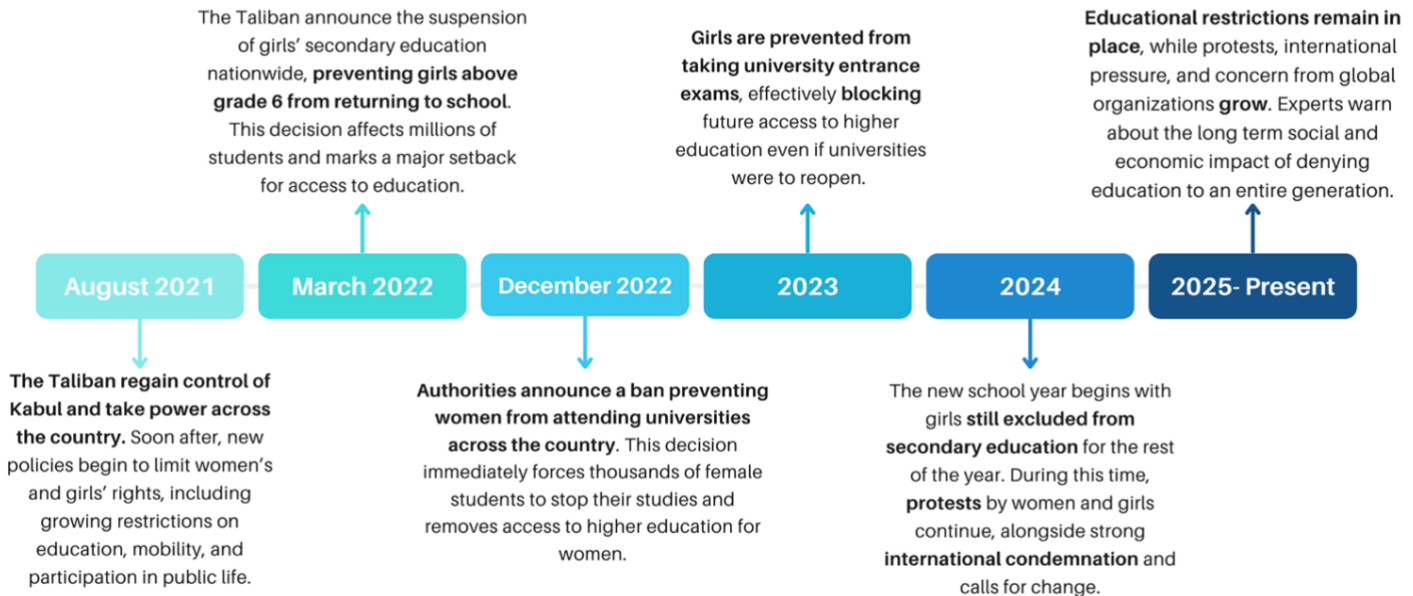
A quick timeline !!





EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

A quick timeline !!



d. Current situation

Today, girls and women in Afghanistan face severe and serious restrictions on their right to education. Take into account:

- Many girls are not allowed to attend secondary school.
- Women face so many barriers to higher education and professional training.
- Fear, insecurity, and lack of resources prevent families from sending girls to school.
- Teachers, especially women teachers, face limitations that affect their career and the quality of education.
- These factors affect the future opportunities and the development of the country.

The consequences of all these restrictions and factors mentioned are severe. Without access to education, millions of Afghan girls are losing opportunities to learn, develop skills, and build a future. Education is not only about reading and writing, it is also about gaining independence, learning and developing your critical thinking skills, improving health, discovering new things, and contributing to society. When girls are denied schooling, the entire country suffers. Families face more poverty,



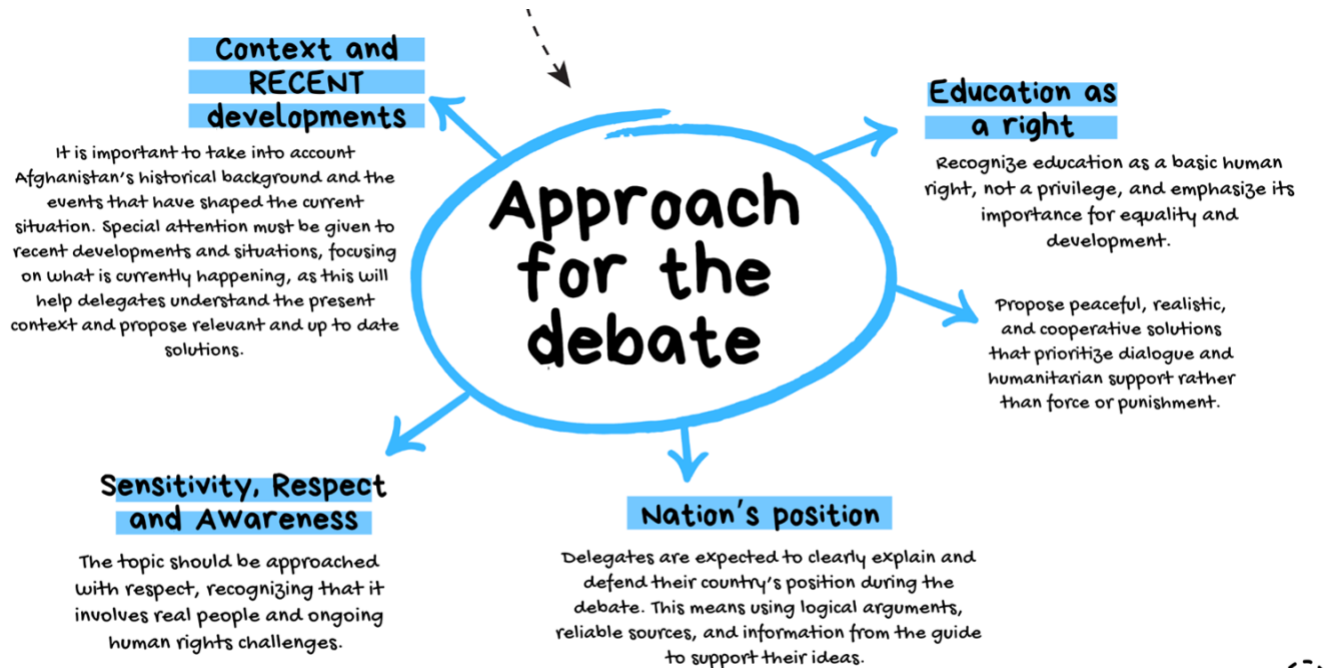
communities lose their potential leaders, and the economy cannot grow as strongly.

International organizations, including the United Nations, UN Women, UNICEF, and Human Rights Watch, have strongly criticized these policies. They argue that banning girls from education violates basic human rights and international agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Many countries have also called on the Taliban to reverse these restrictions, but so far, the bans remain in place.

Despite all these challenges, Afghan women and girls continue to show resilience. Some communities have organized informal schools in homes, and activists are using online platforms to provide lessons. However, these efforts are limited and often face risks*, which is why this committee must act urgently. The situation remains on alert, and the international community is debating how to apply pressure and support Afghan girls and women without making the humanitarian crisis worse.

*The risks Afghan women and girls face when joining informal schools or online lessons include harassment, intimidation and violent attacks. They can also face punishments: these can range from threats and closure of those schools to imprisonment or physical harm by Taliban authorities or extremist groups.

e. **Approach for the debate**



f. QARMAS

1. What is the position of the delegation regarding the protection of women's and girls' right to education in Afghanistan?
2. What role can UN Women play in supporting education programs?
3. What policies does your country support regarding women's rights and education?
4. How should the international community respond if restrictions continue or worsen?
5. What measures can be taken to protect students, protesters and activists from harm?
6. How can the voices of Afghan women and girls be amplified at an international level?
7. What responsibilities do international organizations (like the UN) have when basic rights are systematically denied?

g. Support Material

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5. **Topic B:** *Freedom of expression. Case study: The use of hijabs and burkas in the Middle East*



region

a. Introduction to the topic

Before diving into our topic, there are three main questions that need to be answered in order to understand the topic we are going to be debating:

What is Freedom of Expression?

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right that allows all people to openly share their opinions, freely express their demands, agree or disagree with those in power, and engage in protest, all without the interference of any state, as long as there is no propagation of hate speech.

What are burkas and hijabs?

Hijabs and burkas are Muslim modesty garments meant for females. In Islam, modesty for men and women is a really important part of their religion and therefore deeply encouraged in the Quran (their holy book), which leads Muslim women to wear different garments to cover their bodies, primarily their hair and their body, and sometimes their entire face too, like hijabs and burkas. It's important to know that although modesty is a key element in this discussion, for many, wearing the hijab or veil works as an act of showing devotion and following divine commands, making some women feel that veiling brings them closer to God, which is key to understanding the further reason why they might choose to wear it.

What is state imposition?

First, let's understand what an imposition is, and an imposition means something that is placed upon people and is often an unfair or unwelcome demand or burden. When a government formally imposes a responsibility, punishment, or requirement on its citizens, it is referred to as a state imposition. In contrast to voluntary choices, it refers to a formal state command.

Now that we have clear bases on our topic, let's do a quick intro to our topic:

In the Middle East region, there are countries where the government makes all women (regardless of their religion or personal preference) wear all kinds of modesty veils. This action has sparked debates all around the world, with some people saying that this is a form of oppression and a violation of



freedom of expression, limiting a woman's choice on what to put on her body, while others argue that the governments that enforce these policies are deeply religious and culture-based systems that are simply following traditions. As delegates from the UNWOMEN committee, it is YOUR duty to evaluate all the perspectives on the issue and guarantee the best for women.

b. Key concepts

- Human Rights: A set of basic rules that apply to every single person in the world from the moment they are born. They ensure everyone can live a life that is safe, fair, and free.
- Freedom: The power or right to act, speak, or think as you want without being stopped by others, as long as you aren't hurting anyone else.
- Expression: The way you show your feelings, thoughts, and who you are to the outside world. This can be through talking, writing, art, or even the clothes you choose to wear.
- Identity: The unique set of things that make you *you*. This includes your name, where you are from, your religion, and the things you believe in.
- Autonomy: The right to be the "boss" of your own body and your own life. It means being allowed to make your own decisions about things that affect you personally.
- Oppressive measures: Cruel or unfair rules used by people in power to control others and take away their rights.
- Religious practices: The traditions, prayers, and ways of living (like wearing certain clothes) that people follow to show their connection with God.
- Perspectives: The different ways people look at the same situation. Two people can see the same thing but have different ideas about it based on their life experiences.
- Hate speech: Using words (or images) to attack or disrespect someone just because of who they are, their religion, or where they come from. It is meant to hurt and scare people.
- Westernization: When countries or people start following the styles, ideas, or culture that are common in places like Europe or North America (the "West").
- Shaila Law: A set of religious laws and guides based on the teachings of Islam. Different countries and groups interpret (understand) these laws in very different ways—some are very strict.
- Censorship: When a government or a group in power hides information or stops people from speaking, writing, or showing their ideas because they don't like what is being said.
- Islamophobia: A fear or dislike of Islam or Muslims, often based on unfair "stereotypes" (judging a whole group of people by the actions of a few).



c. Historical context

Religious symbol:

As mentioned briefly before, hijabs and burkas are modesty veils that Muslim women wear, and they have deep meaning. Islam praises the relationship between body and mind, and those who practice this religion believe that covering the body shields the heart from impurities, therefore strengthening this relationship between body and spirit. This has been a practice taking place for centuries back in the Middle East; however, veiling became the distinct Islamic symbol that it is today from the 1970s onwards, with some regions later enforcing it legally (like Iran) while others emphasize it as a personal choice. While the Quran mentions veiling for the Prophet's wives, the broader practice became common in Muslim communities as Islam spread, evolving from cultural customs into a strong religious identifier.

Iran Revolution:

Between the 1960's and the 1970s, the Middle East began to experience deep influence from the West in a political, social, economical, and cultural sense.

Before this time period, the Middle East was known for its ties to tradition in all meanings of the word; their societies (much like now) were deeply religious, with strong customs that were expected to be followed by all members of society rather than an individual reflection and choice; this also involved very patriarchal systems within society where male superiority was completely normalized and gender roles were extremely restrictive. All of this is tied to the strong presence of the Sharia Law within the social norms in these societies; the Sharia Law is a code of ethical and moral conduct for living in harmony with God's will, and over time it evolved into the system of Islamic law that guides all aspects of a Muslim's life, going beyond a guide for spiritual and ethical practices to stipulate civil and criminal laws derived from the Quran.

However, during the 60s and 70s, more of Western culture started to be absorbed in the Middle East, with the growing wants for urbanization, industrialization, and integration into the global economy rooted in the US involvement in the region, which led to a change in the drive for development in these countries. But as mentioned before, lots of other aspects of the Middle Eastern society were changed due to Westernization; people in upper social classes began to adopt Western lifestyles, fashion, and technology, creating a "Western look" in some cities, but this often heavily contrasted with conservative rural populations, creating inequalities among some countries. Among the superficial Western



adaptations, there was also a growing desire for modernization in a social sense, better education, and better living standards, leading to tension between traditionalists and reformers.

The thing is, all of the process of westernization was deeply encouraged by the leader of Iran at the time, but a strong opposition to this movement began to grow, and Iran's leader was removed from its position. A new leader then took his place and established Iran as an Islamic Republic, strengthening the relationship between religion and state within the country. This regime change led to various other changes, such as the imposition of the use of hijabs for all women in the country regardless of their religion. This is a law enforced by morality police, with punishments for improper covering. This can be seen as a way of returning to previous traditional and patriarchal standards that, in one way, could help Iran to truly be independent from foreign actors and their overall influence.

*Key: The 60s is a key time period in the Middle East because it's the moment when countries in the region truly start to gain strength of their own as their own independent nations without colonial powers like the French or British, meaning that this was a time of strong nationalism within the Middle Eastern society, showing that each country was different, each had their own identity, and they were trying to differentiate themselves from previous colonial powers. Knowing this allows us to understand the nature of the Iranian Revolution and the movement that spread throughout the entire region. In one way, westernization was similar to the colonial time these countries were trying to move past, with a foreign culture beginning to take power over its states (in the political and economical sense) and its people (the social and cultural sense)

d. Current situation

There are two main aspects of the current situation triggering freedom of expression through veils. While there are places in the Middle East where women are forced to wear veils and are punished if they don't do it or express their disagreement, there are countries that prohibit women from wearing their veils as an expression of their culture and religion. Although the two situations aim to do the apparent opposite, both control women and prevent them from freely expressing their beliefs, which is wrong.

WEARING SPECIFIC FORMS OF DRESS

Wearing – and not wearing – religious and cultural symbols and dress is a component of the right to freedom of expression and to freedom of religion or belief. The right to freedom of religion includes both a positive component – for instance, the right to manifest one's religion or belief by wearing specific forms of dress or symbols; and a negative component – the right not to be exposed to any pressure to wear specific forms of dress or symbols. Each individual should be free to decide whether or not they

want to wear specific symbols and dress on the basis of personal religious convictions, cultural customs or for any other reason. Prohibitions on the wearing in public of particular forms of religious or cultural symbol or dress may violate the right to freedom of expression and the right to manifest religion or belief if such restrictions are not based on a legitimate aim and if not proportionate and necessary to the achievement of that aim. The legitimacy of any such restrictions, like any other restriction on the right to freedom of expression or manifestation of religion or belief, should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

(«Choice And Prejudice – A Summary Discrimination Against Muslims In Europe», 2012)

Countries with legally enforced veiling for women:

a. Afghanistan:

The use of veiling in Afghanistan is enforced by the Taliban rule.

- Who are the Taliban?

The Taliban is an Islamist, nationalist, and militant movement that currently holds power over the Afghan government. They were mostly students from religious schools, who pledged to put a stop to corruption and restore order during the nation's conflict.

- What does their regime consist of?

The Taliban rule the country under extremely strict and conservative laws and policies deeply connected to Islamic values and radical and literal interpretations of the Quran that often emphasize



the submission of women towards men in society, operating under what is known as the Sharia Law. They also have this institution called the Morality Police, which is in charge of enforcing social conduct, monitoring everything from beard length for men to the presence of male guardians for women. When someone violates the Taliban's code of morals, the "morality inspectors" (police) have the authority to threaten, arrest, and prosecute them in Taliban tribunals. The Taliban Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV, often known as the morality inspectors or police) declared in August 2024 that they had arrested 13,000 individuals in the previous year for breaking their morality regulations, which included failing to wear a veil "properly."

- How does their way of governance affect women?

Women are deeply affected by the policies and overall governmental dynamics that the Taliban regime manages. For example, it mandates that women must fully cover their faces and bodies in public. Crucially, it also declares a woman's voice as "intimate," meaning they are prohibited from singing, reciting, or speaking loudly in public, which is a direct violation to their right to freedom of expression in multiple ways.

- b. Iran

Ever since the 1979 revolution and the government started to enforce mandatory veiling laws for women, the oppression and human rights violations that come with them have become more and more urgent to discuss, especially when there is resistance to the policies. In Iran, violations of hijab laws encompass not only the failure to adhere to the hijab but also the expression of dissent against these regulations through various communication channels, including verbal, written, and social media forms. Authorities impose strict penalties such as imprisonment and fines for openly challenging these laws, significantly restricting freedom of expression. Women from diverse sectors have persistently protested against these limitations, viewing their actions as a direct challenge to the hijab mandates. This has led to numerous arrests under the pretext of public order violations, further curtailing their freedom to express dissent. Additionally, forced confessions from detained women, portrayed as voluntary admissions of guilt on state media, have drawn significant criticism for being coerced and damaging to the right to free expression. The Iranian government has escalated enforcement through extensive surveillance of women in public and targeted police operations, including confiscating vehicles as punishment for non-compliance with veiling laws. Many women face harsh repercussions, including flogging, imprisonment, and compulsory attendance at "morality" classes as penalties for defying these regulations. This systematic repression highlights the broader struggle for women's rights and expression in Iran.



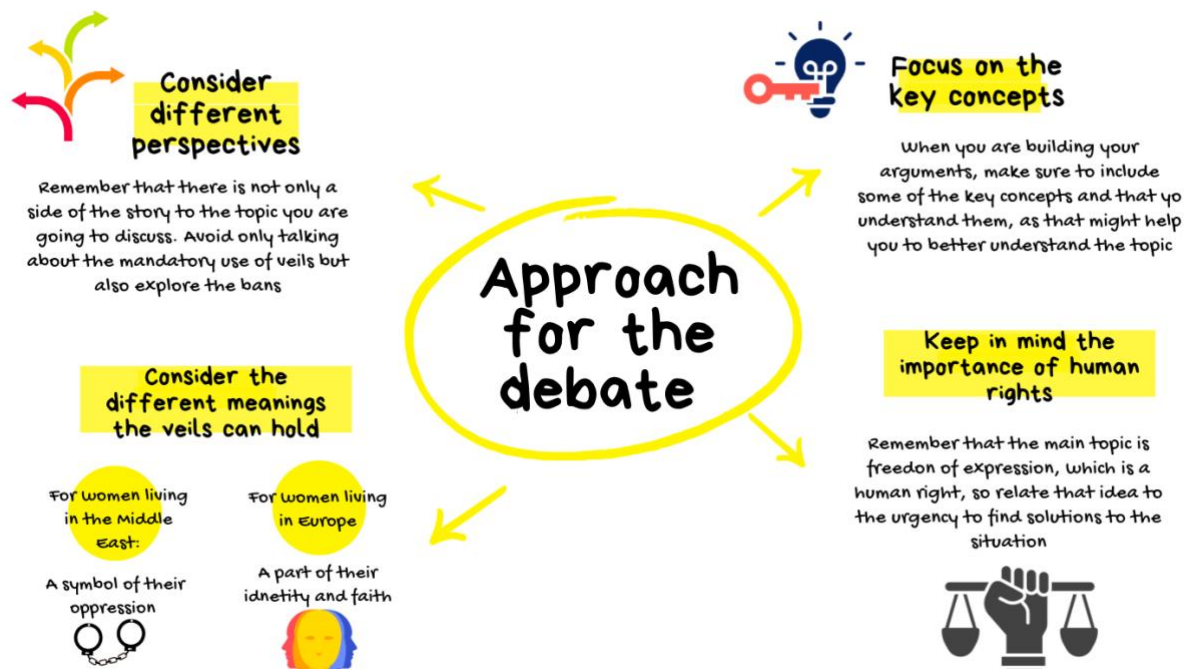
Europe veil ban:

Various European nations have implemented bans on veils, especially full-face coverings, in public settings. Countries like France and Belgium have developed broad prohibitions justified by arguments for gender equality and the protection of women's rights. Advocates of these bans assert that they are necessary to prevent coercion and ensure freedom of expression, including access to work and education.

These restrictions challenge Muslim women's ability to express their identity and faith, reflecting broader Islamophobic trends that contribute to a sense of insecurity for Muslims, particularly women, across Europe. The banning of veiling based on unfounded prejudice is considered a violation of individual religious freedom, emphasizing the right to express oneself through clothing without facing discrimination.

The implications of hijab bans significantly affect women's autonomy, as the use of veils like hijabs serve as more than a religious symbol; it embodies a fundamental right for Muslim women to publicly express their beliefs and cultural identity. The bans reflect not a progressive movement toward women's liberation but rather the perpetuation of deep-rooted patriarchal norms regarding women's dress and identity in society.

e. Approach for the debate



f. QARMAS

1. If a girl is told she must wear a specific outfit to go to school, and she doesn't want to, how can the UN help her keep learning?
2. How can countries protect women from being bothered or punished for what they choose to wear in public?
3. What can schools do to teach students about different cultures so that no one is teased for wearing a headscarf or a burka?
4. If a woman is being treated unfairly because of her clothes, where can she go to get help, and how can the UN make that easier?
5. How can governments include the ideas of young girls when they are making new rules about clothing?
6. Freedom of expression also means the right *not* to say something. How can we protect women who do **not** want to wear a veil as their way of expressing themselves?
7. How can we teach people that freedom of expression means respecting *both* the girl who wears a hijab because she loves it and the girl who chooses not to?

g. **Support Material**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0VYaRHqBI>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qAZQuS6Lts&start=0&pli=1&authuser=1>
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