# Can Hijab Be Part of the Work Uniform? Finnishness and the Silent Norms in Finland

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# Abstract

In the last few years in Finland there have been situations where employers banned the use of religious clothing (*hijab*[[1]](#footnote-1)/turban) in the workplace and employees had to fight for their right to wear them at work. These prohibitions were based on, for example, image, brand, or safety. Cases which were processed by the legal system ended up in favour of the employees, but there are still no universal regulations, and practices vary. For example, in the healthcare sector wearing a *hijab* is an accepted practice, but police officers cannot wear any kind of religious symbols/clothing.

This paper examines the wearing of religious clothing (mainly *hijab*) in workplaces from the perspective of Finnishness. Even though Finland is a Lutheran country and Lutheran traditions are ingrained in its society, religion is still seen as something separate from everyday life. Is wearing religious clothing at work possible in Finland? Are there problems because this clothing is not part of Christianity but of other religions, or is religion in general the problem? Should these symbols/clothing be shown only in private and kept away from workplaces, where communication should only concern the work itself? This paper will reveal the Finnish discussions concerning these matters.

1. The word *hijab* means the modest clothing of Muslim women, but it is also used to describe the veil covering the hair. In this article the word is used with the latter meaning. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)