



Human Rights and Religion - The Islamic Headscarf Debate in Europe

Dominic McGoldrick

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The debate on multiculturalism and human rights in Europe was reignited in 2004 by the Islamic headscarf ban in France. The legal and political tensions thrown up by this debate are now being witnessed in many European states. The place of religion in schools in general, and wearing of religious dress in State schools in particular, has become an issue across Europe. Supporters of the right to wear the headscarf argue that the ban and similar prohibitions infringe upon a number of human rights. This book examines the issues by considering questions of language, meaning, and symbolism. In doing so it identifies the debates behind the debates. Detailed consideration is given to the headscarf debate in France, and at the same time, comparative practice in a number of European states - Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, the UK, and Turkey - is examined. Brief consideration is also given to a number of non-European states. The book also outlines the role and function of an international human rights law approach to the Islamic headscarf. The wider the frame of analysis, the deeper the significance of the headscarf ban can appear to be. The book concludes with some reflections on the broader political and cultural struggles that lie behind the headscarf debate.



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