



National Association of Muslim Police

Muslims Making a Positive Difference to Policing

HISTORY OF WORLD HIJAB DAY

On February 1, 2013, Nazma Khan declared the first World Hijab Day. Khan is a Muslim woman from New York City. By allowing all women to try wearing the hijab for a day, she hoped to promote religious understanding and tolerance.

When Khan was a child in New York City, she faced a lot of prejudice because she wore her headscarf to school, particularly after the 9/11 attacks. She hoped that by establishing this day, she would be able to put an end to this form of discrimination. World Hijab Day is currently celebrated in 190 countries across the world.

In 2017, New York State declared World Hijab Day, and Theresa May attended an event commemorating the occasion at the House of Commons. In 2021, the Philippines' House of Representatives designated February 1 as National Hijab Day to foster better understanding and acceptance of the Islamic tradition.



Hijab in Arabic translates to 'Awra'. Hijab includes conduct and behaviour among other things. Complete 'hijab' also includes the moral conduct, behaviour, attitude and intention of the individual. A person only fulfilling the criteria of 'hijab' of the clothes is observing 'hijab' in a limited sense. 'Hijab' of the clothes should be accompanied by 'hijab' of the eyes, 'hijab' of the heart, 'hijab' of thought and 'hijab' of intention. It also includes the way a person walks, the way a person talks, the way they behave, etc.

World Hijab Day is observed by millions of Muslim women across the world, who choose to take a stand against discrimination for their choice of wearing a hijab. It is a great opportunity to raise awareness and understanding about the challenges faced by those women who choose to wear hijabs.

WHAT DOES HIJAB MEAN TO OUR COLLEAGUES?



PS Marina Waka was the first female police officer in Leicester to wear the hijab in 2016 after returning from Hajj (the annual pilgrimage made by Muslims to the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. One of the five key acts which every Muslim is expected to do in their lifetime, should they be able to physically and financially).

She said: "I feel proud to wear my hijab – not only does it define who I am, but it is also a symbol of my religion and modesty. Wearing the hijab is my choice and my crown I hope I can inspire and open the path for other Muslim women who are considering a career with the force."

PC Khadeejah Mansur was the first uniformed front line Muslim police officer at Leicestershire Police to have trialled the hijab in 2021 and says, "I am proud to wear a hijab because I can represent my community and be a role model to others."



PC Fiona Shaik Umar, CE BCU , works over at The Metropolitan Police London and says: "It's not the cloth that oppresses the woman. It is the illiterate mind"

People look at hijab and immediately think the woman behind it is oppressed, overshadowed by the cloth on her head. This is far from the truth.

I have been a Muslim for 14 years and worn Hijab for 10 of them. It has never hindered me and in fact it acts as a daily reminder of the kind of person I want to be and the kind of woman I want society to see strong, confident and happy.

My Hijab ultimately is something I do to please my Lord, but it also acts as a representation of my faith to people who see me. It's my barrier, helping me maintain a tongue which aims to speak only good, a heart which gives without wanting in return and eyes which look only to what is pleasing. Sometimes I falter and that's okay because wearing Hijab doesn't mean I am perfect; it just means I am trying.

My daughter was 5 when she asked me "Mama can people like you be Police". Her question took me by surprise, and I questioned her on what she meant by "people like you".

In her mind there was never a representation of our faith and although there are Hijab officers we are a small minority.

I took this thought and vowed to be that visual for my daughter. I left a career in financing and threw myself into this job because I want my daughter to know that the Hijab is not a barrier to achieving your dreams, I want her to see that Mama took her thought and turned it into something real.

My Hijab is a part of me, it is me when I am Mama, it is me when I am PC Shaik Umar and it is me when I am the woman you sit next to on the tube...it doesn't make me any different, it just makes me want to do better.

PC Zara Basharat, who has served for West Midlands as a Police Constable for almost four years says; "I have worn the hijab for several years prior to joining and I still choose to represent my faith physically by wearing the hijab whilst being a front-line officer working on Response.

At times, it can be difficult to continue to wear it as it can also be used as a 'target' for suspects to be racially/religiously abusive. However, I believe that wearing the hijab has empowered me and I feel it has allowed me to form connections with communities that are not used to seeing a police officer who looks like them. It is refreshing to see members of the public speaking to me about their thoughts of seeing more representation in the force."

Hijab. Our identity. Our choice. Our right.