



# The Headscarf Controversy: Secularism and Freedom of Religion (Religion and Global Politics)

*Hilal Elver*

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**The Headscarf Controversy: Secularism and Freedom of Religion (Religion and Global Politics)** Hilal Elver

Hilal Elver offers an in-depth study of the escalating controversy over the right of Muslim women to wear headscarves. Examining legal and political debates in Turkey, several European countries including France and Germany, and the United States, Elver shows the troubling exclusion of pious Muslim women from the public sphere in the name of secularism, democracy, liberalism, and women's rights.

After evaluating political actions and court decisions from the national level of individual governments to the international sphere of the European Court of Human Rights, Elver concludes that judges and legislators are increasingly influenced by social pressures concerning immigration and multiculturalism, and by issues such as Islamophobia, the "war on terror," and security concerns. She shows how these influences have resulted in a failure on the part of many Western governments to recognize and protect essential individual freedoms.

Employing a critical legal theory perspective to the headscarf controversy, Elver argues that law can be used to change underlying social conditions shaping the role of religion, and also the position of women in modern society. *The Headscarf Controversy* demonstrates how changes in law across nations can be used to restore state commitments to human rights.

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