



Atheist Freethinkers

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

AFT Supports AQNAL's Initiative Against Religious Symbols in the Montreal Police Force

Montreal, 17th April 2018 – *Atheist Freethinkers* (LPA-AFT), an association which promotes secularism and supports the rights of atheists, declares its support for the initiative of the *Association québécoise des Nord-Africains pour la laïcité* (AQNAL, Quebec Association of North-Africans for Secularism) in its letter addressed to Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante concerning the wearing of religious symbols by policemen and policewomen. AQNAL's [letter](#), published in the newspaper *Le Devoir* on 12th April 2018, emphasizes the fact that allowing the hijab, which is in no way representative of Muslim women, will not favour the emancipation of women. On the contrary, the veil constitutes a means of controlling Muslim women, jeopardizes their freedom and is even a symbol of violence.

We would like to add several arguments to complement those expressed by AQNAL. Firstly, it must not be forgotten that allowing religious symbols to be worn by police officers while on duty constitutes an undue privilege granted to religions. Why should other persons not be allowed to display their moral, political or personal convictions in a similar manner? Why should religion be the only criterion for such a privilege?

Secondly, the requirement for a police officer to remove any religious symbols while on duty is of no consequence other than any personal uneasiness that individual might feel. If the removal of these obvious religious symbols were to lead to any threats or violence from their relatives or coreligionists, then this situation should of course be investigated. Allowing the wearing of religious symbols would in such a case be yet another obstacle to freedom of conscience, including the freedom to change one's religion or to leave it.

Finally, the majority of religions are incompatible with the rule of law which guarantees equality between men and women and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion or lack thereof and sexual orientation. Indeed, religions often consider women to be inferior to men and homosexuality to be an abomination. Furthermore, religions advocate the supremacy of so-called "laws of God" over any human laws. All policemen and policewomen have a duty to set aside their religious values if they wish to wear the police uniform with complete impartiality.

– 30 –

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