

NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child  
**Database of NGO Reports presented to the UN Committee on  
the Rights of the Child.**

---

**Document Title:**

**The ban from the ordinary State school system of Moslem girls who  
refused to remove their headscarves**

**Region:**

Western Europe, Europe

**Country:**

**France**

**Issued by:**

Defence for Children International (DCI), International Secretariat

**Date of publication of NGO Report:**

11/93

**Date of presentation to preessional working group:**

11/93

**CRC Session**

(at which related national state party report was submitted):

06th Session : Apr 94

**Language:**

English

---

**Document Text**

[Link to related state party report at UNHCHR](#)

DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL  
DEFENSE DES ENFANTS - INTERNATIONAL  
DEFENSA DE LOS NIÑOS - INTERNACIONAL

NOTE TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD  
**FRANCE**

In the 1989 special edition of its International Children's Rights Monitor, DCI commented on the children's rights aspects of a controversy over whether or not it should be possible to ban from the ordinary State school system Moslem girls who refused to remove their headscarves - or who were forbidden to do so by their parents - on entering the school premises (see attached). Regrettably, the essentials of that comment remain topical today.

DCI wishes to draw the attention of the Committee at this time to the fact that Moslem girls are still apparently being denied access to public education facilities in France on these grounds.

In the first week of November 1993, four girls (two of Turkish and two of Moroccan origin) were reportedly banned from entering the Xavier Bichat school in Nantua (Ain) because they would not remove their headscarves. They and their parents were given one week to reconsider their position. The two Moroccan girls, at least, arrived at the school on Monday 15 November, still wearing headscarves that they refused to remove, and they were not permitted to enter the premises.

As in 1989, there is considerable media coverage of this case, once again coinciding with a time of particular sensitivity regarding the situation of Moslems in France - in the current instance linked more especially with events in Algeria.

DCI believes that, under the guise of defending "secularity", the French Authorities are taking an actively discriminatory stance in regard to the application of the child's right to education, and fears that the children concerned are being used in an attempt to pressure parents rather than being enabled to exercise their rights in conformity with their best interests. A fundamental question concerns whether it is in the best interests of a Moslem girl to remain at home or to attend school wearing a headscarf.

DCI therefore respectfully urges the Committee to request clarifications and explanations from the French Authorities on this issue.

DCI/16-XI-93

Case postale 88 CH-1211 GENEVE 20 Suisse/Switzerland/Suiza  
Tél. [+41 22] 734 05 58 Fax: [ + 41 22] 740 11 45 Telex: 414 128 dci ch  
Visiteurs: 1, rue de Varembé, Genève

[Home](#)

---

The NGO Reports Database on Children's Rights includes all existing and public reports submitted to the Committee on the Convention of the Rights of the Child by NGOs and NGO Coalitions. The copyright of the reports are retained by the authors and use thereof must be duly acknowledged.

The database is the property of the Liaison Unit of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and is managed by that unit. For further information or other enquiries please contact the Liaison Unit at [dci-ngo.group@pingnet.ch](mailto:dci-ngo.group@pingnet.ch).

---