

Tuesday, 30 June 2009

## Sarkozy's stance on the burka an injustice: Qaeda Qaeda threatens France with revenge over burka



The French National Assembly set up an inquiry into the rising number of Muslim women who wear the burka.

DUBAI (AFP)

Al-Qaeda's North Africa wing threatened on Tuesday to take revenge on France for its opposition to the burka, calling on Muslims to retaliate against the country, the U.S. monitoring service SITE Intelligence reported.

Nicolas Sarkozy had said earlier this month that the burka, which covers the whole face and is also known as a niqab, was not welcome in the strictly secular country.

"Yesterday was the hijab (the Islamic headscarf long banned in French schools) and today, it is the niqab (the full veil)," the leader of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb Abu Musab Abdul Wadud was quoted as saying.

"We will take revenge for the honor of our daughters and sisters against France and against its interests by every means at our disposal."

The group also called on Muslims to retaliate for what it called French "hostility" against the community and its attempt to obstruct Islam's practice on its territory.

"For us, the mujahedeen ... we will not remain silent to such provocations and injustices," Abdul Wadud said without elaborating, according to SITE.

"We call upon all Muslims to confront this hostility with greater hostility, and to counter France's efforts to divide male and female believers from their faith with a greater effort ... (by) adherence to the teachings of their Islamic sharia."

He said Muslims in France, who are estimated at around five million, are "increasingly concerned about

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the practices of French politicians and leaders and their harassment."

On June 22, Sarkozy said the burka was not a symbol of religious faith but a sign of women's "subservience," adding that the head-to-toe veil was "not welcome" in staunchly secular France.

The French National Assembly set up an inquiry into the rising number of Muslim women who wear the burka.

France is home to Europe's largest Muslim community and faces a dilemma between accommodating Islam and maintaining secularism. In 2004, it passed a law banning headscarves or any other "conspicuous" religious symbols in schools to uphold a separation between church and state.

Al-Qaeda number two Ayman al-Zawahiri criticized the law, saying the decision showed "the grudge the Western crusaders have against Islam."

France is the only state in Europe to have such a ban. It is not known how many women wear the burka in France.