

Women in Qatar and Children in England

An interesting article about how **women in Qatar** are treated.

Upon arriving at Doha International Airport, as a 22-year-old American female coming as part of an ABCNEWS Nightline team to cover the then-imminent Iraq war, I took one glance around the baggage claim and realized that, apart from my fellow journalists, every woman was completely covered in the black *abaya*...

Women in Qatar now have the right to vote, drive, and pursue many career opportunities, but the restrictions of family and tradition, which are much stronger than any law, are still strong...

"It's not from the government. There is no law to ask you what to wear or what to do," said al-Malki. "But the people themselves, they have the choice. Everybody here in Qatar has the choice to do whatever they want. Even women."

They have a choice do they? **Really?** If they have a choice, why do they all do the same thing and why do they all choose to wear costumes that have such obvious practical, not to mention sartorial, disadvantages?

Well, presumably there are a few women who wear abayas because they enjoy it. There must be many who think that God will punish them if they don't. Many do it because people they care about will put psychological pressure on them or punish them if they don't wear abayas. Many do it because their fathers or husbands will hurt them (or plain force them) if they don't, and hurting women against their will is legal in Qatar. There may be some who wear abayas because nobody has told them that there is no longer a law requiring them to do so. So the lack of a law banning something does not in itself make it genuinely possible to choose to do it.

Similarly, there is no law in England requiring children to go to school and yet most of them do go. A few go because they enjoy it. Many go because their parents will put psychological pressure on them or punish them if they don't go. Some go because their parents will hurt them (or plain force them) if they don't, and hurting children is legal in England. Most children and most parents are not aware that there is **no legal requirement to go to**

school. Even where a child does know that playing truant is legal (*for the child*),

the police often treat truancy exactly as if it were a crime, using force to prevent it. The lack of any law in England requiring children to go to school doesn't provide much help for many children who don't want to go, because most adults are determined to get children to go to school regardless of whether they want or not, and regardless of whether it is legally compulsory or not.

Mon, 04/14/2003 - 15:50 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

Legally

This paragraph seems misleading:

The lack of any law in England requiring children to go to school doesn't provide much help for many children who don't want to go, because most adults are determined to get children to go to school regardless of whether they want or not, and regardless of whether it is legally compulsory or not.

You seem to imply that children may legally come and go to and from school as they please but that is not true. If a child is registered at school, the parent has a legal obligation to ensure that they attend regularly. This explains why parents of kids registered at school might want to get them to school. Only if the child is NOT registered is it legal for the parents not to make them go.

by a reader on Mon, 04/14/2003 - 20:47 | [reply](#)

Deregistration is available on demand

<http://www.education-otherwise.org/Legal/Deregistration.htm>

by [David Deutsch](#) on Mon, 04/14/2003 - 21:20 | [reply](#)

Yes but your article implied ...

Yes but your article implied that even if you're not deregistered it's still legal for the parents not to make the kid attend school and that's not true.

by a reader on Tue, 04/15/2003 - 01:16 | [reply](#)

Women in Qatar

I am a Canadian woman living in Qatar and I would like to provide an alternative perspective on wearing the Abaya. Did you know that I and many other non-muslim and non-qatari women wear them on occasion? It is especially helpful when driving in a country with a very high accident rate. There is a lot more respect given by both qataris and non-qataris alike to the local women who are easily

identified by the way they dress. Yes - some may even be afraid to offend or hurt them! Given that this is the case, wouldn't you prefer to assimilate into this society?

I originally bought my abaya on a trip to UAE when I was being hassled by men thinking that I was a quick and available western woman. But now that I have it, I am very practical about wearing it when I want to. I do thank the government in Qatar that I am not required to wear it and that I can choose my dress.

Before you make judgements upon arriving in the airport with very harsh views, please stop to take some time to understand ALL facets of what might be going on.. Also realize, that you can't tell which locals are NOT following the crowds because they blend in with the rest of us.

by a reader on Wed, 11/10/2004 - 08:35 | [reply](#)