

Amid rise in refugees, Congo-Brazzaville bans wearing of veils

by [Fredrick Nzwili](#) in the [June 10, 2015](#) issue

Congo-Brazzaville, a Central African nation, has banned women from wearing a full-face veil in public, saying it hoped the measure would prevent terrorist acts.

Congo-Brazzaville and France are the only two countries to ban the veil.

Recently, the country has witnessed an influx of Muslims as people affected by war in the neighboring Central African Republic seek refuge from revenge attacks committed by the Seleka coalition, which is mostly Muslim, and Antibalaka militias, which are pro-Christian.

The government announced a ban on the niqab and the burqa in May. Officials said they feared the garments could be used as a disguise to commit terrorist acts.

Congo-Brazzaville has not witnessed violence like neighboring Cameroon, where Nigeria's Boko Haram insurgency has carried out deadly attacks in villages and towns. Female suicide bombers in veils have committed some of Boko Haram's attacks.

"Muslim women can now only wear the full veil at home and in places of worship, but not in public places," El Hadj Abdoulaye Djibril Bopaka, the head of Islamic Supreme Council of Congo-Brazzaville, told Agence France-Presse.

The government also banned Muslims from other countries from staying in mosques. The ban will affect thousands of Muslim refugees from the Central African Republic who have taken shelter in mosques.

Between 300,000 and 800,000 of the people in Congo-Brazzaville, a former French colony, are Muslim, out of a population of 6 million. —Religion News Service

*This article was edited on May 27, 2015.*