

# MUSLIM WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES: REALITY AND OPPORTUNITIES

*Edited by*  
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## **THE SOCIAL STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: HEADSCARF DEADLOCK IN TURKEY AS A CASE STUDY**

Serdar Demirel

### **Introduction**

Almost two-thirds of Turkish women wear a headscarf. This is a reality of Turkish society. But, the headscarf is banned in universities, public schools, Parliament, and among public servants and professionals. It is quite difficult to understand how in a democratic country can two-thirds of women's freedom of dress code be curtailed. It is this simple square of cloth that has provoked a political crisis, exposing a growing rift between the majority of the people and the secular establishment which is behind this ban, and even threatens to wage a military coup to enforce it. It claims that the headscarf is a violation of the nation's secular principles as it is a political and religious symbol.

Turkey's secular establishment, which includes the powerful military, judiciary and bureaucracy, has taken a hard-line position against the will of the majority in this regard. This, in turn, exposes Turkish secularism to a democratic test, as Muslim women's access denial to higher education challenges the idea that secularism is synonymous with modernity.