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Muslim women can be forced to show faces under new West Australian law

The Guardian (01.11.2013) - A new law requiring Muslim women to remove a burqa or niqab to prove their identity to West Australian police has been passed by the state's parliament.

The legislation was drafted in response to public outcry about the case of mother of seven Carnita Matthews who wore a burqa, and had a conviction of knowingly making a false statement quashed.

Matthews was originally given a six-month jail sentence after being found guilty of falsely accusing a senior constable of forcibly trying to remove her burqa when she was pulled over while driving in Woodbine in Sydney's south west in June 2010.

She was later acquitted on appeal after the prosecution could not prove she was the woman who signed the statement while wearing the garment.

The acting WA police minister, John Day, said the legislation, which was passed on Thursday, had been amended after consultation with the Muslim and Sikh communities.

"Initially, the legislation stated police would be able to require someone to remove their headwear for the purposes of identification," Day said.

"However, following consultation with the Muslim and Sikh communities, the government agreed to change the word headwear to face covering."

He said the change had removed "some" of the concerns of the communities, while police had advised it was acceptable.

"So I am confident a satisfactory compromise has been reached," he said.

The new law also makes it easier for police to take DNA from suspects, with the definition of "identifying particular" expanded to permit the taking of dental impressions, hair samples and body tissues.

It also provides a process for applying to a magistrate for a warrant when samples are needed from juvenile suspects who have not been charged when there is no responsible person, or they cannot be found, or it is impracticable to make requests to them.

Man sent to jail for whipping Muslim

AP (14.06.2013) - A man who whipped a Muslim convert as a religious punishment for drinking alcohol was sentenced Friday to at least 16 months in jail.

Wasim Fayad, 45, was convicted earlier this year of the 2011 attack on Christian Martinez. Sydney Central Local Court Magistrate Brian Maloney sentenced Fayad, who had been Martinez's spiritual mentor, to a maximum of two years in jail for assault occasioning actual bodily harm.

"You have brought much shame upon the Islamic faith," Maloney told Fayad during the sentencing hearing. "You have proved yourself unscrupulously cunning, deceptive and dishonest. You profess to be a religious man, however you resorted to violence upon Mr. Martinez."

The attack happened after Martinez called Fayad to admit he'd spent a night out drinking and doing drugs. Islamic Sharia laws prohibit alcohol and recommend whipping as a punishment for several offenses.

Fayad showed up at Martinez's Sydney home and whipped him 40 times with an electric cord while three other men held him down on his bed. Martinez said he cried and begged for them to stop, and was in pain for about a week after the attack.

The other three men involved received suspended sentences and were ordered to perform community service.
