

Communication Regarding the Request of Photographs of Wedding Ceremonies of Muslim Couples for the U.S. Naturalization Process

Subject: Requesting photographs of wedding ceremonies of Muslim couples

Dear Sir/Madam,

We would like to inform you that the Islamic religion requires women to wear hijab in the presence of men for the protection of unwanted attention upon her outward appearance. Hijab is the practice of modesty which entails covering the whole body of a woman except her face and palms of her hands from all men other than her close relatives (such as her husbands, father, sons, brothers, uncles, nephews, etc.). Therefore, a woman's right to safeguard and maintain her hijab is not only a religious obligation but a very personal choice of which we ask for sensitivity and understanding.

Therefore, we kindly ask that public departments whose official business requires investigating the authenticity of a marital relationship, such as the U.S. Immigration Services, make allowances for this religious restriction. We thoughtfully suggest, that in cases of Muslim women who observe hijab, that a female officer be made available to check the pictures instead of a male officer. We hope you understand a Muslim woman's right to privacy and appreciate your understanding in this matter.

This communication was issued in response to the high number of requests from people who conduct official business, such as requesting family reunion at the U.S. Immigration Services, for an official letter that explains this intricacy of their faith. I.M.A.M. is a non-profit religious organization that is authorized and commissioned by the supreme religious authority of Shia Muslims in the world, which has been based in the Seminary of Najaf in Iraq for more than a millennium, to support and serve the Shia Muslim community in North America.

For more information, feel free to contact us through any of the communication channels listed below.

Sincerely,

I.M.A.M.