

Female chess players forced to wear hijab as governing body awards world championship to Iran

From the [Grandmasters lined up to say they would boycott the 64-player knock-out](#) and accused the game's scandal-hit governing body Fide of failing to stand up for women's rights.

Nazi Paikidze, the US women's champion, also raised concerns about players' safety in the Islamic republic. She said: "It is absolutely unacceptable to host one of the most important women's tournaments in a venue where, to this day, women are forced to cover up with a hijab. I understand and respect cultural differences. But, failing to comply can lead to imprisonment and women's rights are being severely restricted in general..."

Former Pan American champion Carla Heredia, from Ecuador, added: "No institution, no government, nor a Women's World Chess Championship should force women to wear or to take out a hijab..."

Nigel Short, the British former world title contender, said: "There are people from all sorts of backgrounds going to this, there will be atheists, Christians, all sorts of people. If you are deeply Christian why would you want to wear a symbol of Islamic oppression of women?" *What a good point.*

The U.S. Department of State has issued a warning about travelling to Iran saying citizens risk being unjustly imprisoned or kidnapped because of their nationality.

Fide held a smaller Grand Prix event in Iran earlier this year where female players were required to wear the hijab. The

Telegraph understands several players were left angry about having to use the scarf.

Fide's Commission for Women's Chess, meanwhile, called on participants to respect "cultural differences" and accept the regulations.

Susan Polgar, the Hungarian-born American Grandmaster and chair of Fide's Commission for Women's Chess, responded by defending the federation and saying women should respect "cultural differences".

She said: "I have travelled to nearly 60 countries. When I visited different places with different cultures, I like to show my respect by dressing up in their traditional style of clothing. No one asked me to do it. I just do it out of respect. I personally would have no issues with wearing a head scarf (hijab) as long as it is the same to all players. I believe the organisers provided beautiful choices for past participants of Women's Grand Prix."

So lets see if I have this right. A European or person of European descent who plaits her hair into dreadlocks or wears a sombrero to a Mexican themed party is guilty of 'cultural appropriation' and deserves abuse, but to wear a 'beautiful' hijab is respecting a culture. On yer bike!