

# Muslim students in France sent home for wearing banned abaya

[Dozens of female pupils in France](#) were sent home on their first day of school for refusing to remove their abaya.

Education minister Gabriel Attal said some 298 girls showed up to state schools on Monday morning wearing the full-length dress that has been banned by the government.

While most agreed to change out of the dress, 67 refused and were sent home, he told BFM TV.

“In the coming days, they will come back since they have to be in school, and then we will see if they have complied with the rule or not,” he said. “Otherwise, there will be a new dialogue. This is how we will continue to move forward.” Mr Attal said the girls refused entry were given a letter addressed to their families saying that “secularism is not a constraint, it is a liberty”.

Campaigners have argued that the abaya is not a religious symbol but a traditional garment and should not be banned on secular grounds.

An association representing Muslims has filed a motion with the State Council, France’s highest court for complaints against state authorities, for an injunction against the ban on the abaya and the qamis, its equivalent dress for men. The Action for the Rights of Muslims (ADM) motion is to be examined later on Tuesday.

A law introduced in March 2004 banned “the wearing of signs or outfits by which students ostensibly show a religious affiliation” in schools. This includes large Christian

crosses, Jewish kippas and Islamic headscarves.