



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

Muslim Immigration and Policy in Italy

Dr. Suad Joseph, General Editor

Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Women and Gender Studies, University of California, Davis

EWIC Staff: Datasheet

- ❖ Italy has an estimated 1.45 million Muslims out of a population of 61 million. In 2010 the estimated Muslim population was 1.5 million which was 2.6% percent of the population. By 2030 the Muslim population is projected to increase to 3.1 million making Muslims 5.4% of the population. Much of Italy's Muslim population includes immigrants from Albania and North Africa.¹ After Catholicism Islam is the second largest religion in Italy.²
- ❖ A large group of Muslim immigrants are from Morocco with 172,000, Albania with 169,000 and Tunisia with 62,650. Most Muslim immigrants arrived to Italy in the 1980s as students. According to the UK Foreign Office in 2005, up to 160,000 Muslims are Italian born. Most Muslims have the right to reside and work in Italy, but are not citizens.³
- ❖ Migrantes and Caritas, of the Italian immigration statistics department, have estimated that half of Italy's immigrants are Christian, based on the religious demography of origin countries. Yet, political commentators observe that Italy as having an "Islam issue" is misleading.⁴
- ❖ Italy has only eight official mosques and 660 prayer halls. The city of Treviso, where local worshippers purchased a building, has prevented the building from being turned into a mosque. The right to worship is enshrined in Italian law.⁵
- ❖ Mosques in Italy do not receive a share of income tax revenue like other faith groups (Christians, Jews, Buddhists and Hindus) under the eight per thousand law which allocates eight percent of income tax revenue to established faith groups. Politicians cited radicalism, polygamy, and misogyny by Muslim immigrants as obstacles to recognizing Islam as an official religion in Italy.⁶
- ❖ An Italian parliamentary commission has approved a draft law banning women from wearing veils that cover their faces in public. The draft, which was passed by the constitutional affairs commission on Tuesday, would prohibit women from going in public wearing a burqa, niqab or any other garment that covers the face. It would expand a decades-old law that for security reasons prohibits people from wearing face-covering items such as masks in public places.⁷

¹ January 27, 2011 <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-europe/>

² February 2010 <http://pure.au.dk/portal/files/32769822/Rapport3.pdf>

³ December 23, 2005 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4385768.stm>

⁴ 2005 http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/italy/#identifier_9_467

⁵ July 15, 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jul/15/nicolo-degiorgis-rencontre-arles-book-prize-italy-islamophobia-hidden-islam>

⁶ April 7, 2003 <http://www1.adnkronos.com/AKI/English/Religion/?id=3.1.880028077>

⁷ August 2, 2011 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/aug/03/italy-draft-law-burqa>