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## Headscarf Controversy Goes Global

Tuesday 10 September 2013 2.00 - 3.00 pm

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### Professor Hilal Elver

Research Professor at the University of California - Santa Barbara

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CAIS Lecture Theatre, Ellery Cres, Building 127, ANU



In the early 1990s, Turkey was the only Muslim country where a headscarf ban in schools, universities and public institutions existed. In the aftermath of 9/11, especially in the West, there occurred a troubling exclusion of pious Muslim women from the public sphere in the name of secularism, liberalism, and women's rights. Moreover, domestic courts and the European Court of Human Rights participated in such exclusion by various judgments that are increasingly influenced by social pressures concerning immigration and multiculturalism, and by attitudes expressed via Islamophobia, the 'war on terror,' and 'homeland security.' As a result, many Western governments have failed to recognize and protect essential individual freedoms. While exclusion of pious women from public spaces is spreading in many countries where Muslims are a minority, the Turkish headscarf case is still a politico-legal battle among lawyers, judges, and politicians. In this lecture Professor Elver argues that judicial system and law could be used to change underlying social conditions shaping the social contract, role of religion, and the position of women in modern society.

Hilal Elver has been a Research Professor at the University of California - Santa Barbara since 2002. She has a law degree and a PhD from the University of Ankara Law School, and SJD in UCLA Law School. She started her teaching career at the University of Ankara Law School. During this period, she worked with the Turkish government as the founding legal advisor of the Ministry of Environment, then the General Director of Women's Status in the Prime Minister's Office. In 1994, she was appointed to the Chair in Environmental Diplomacy by the UNEP at the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies in Malta. Since 1996 she has been teaching in various universities in the United States. Currently, she is the co-director of the project on Climate Change, Human Security and Democracy at the UCSB Orfalae Center for Global Studies. Her publications have mainly focused on international environmental law, human rights law, particularly environmental rights, climate change and women's rights. Her book, *Peaceful Uses of International Rivers: Case of Euphrates and Tigris Rivers*, was published in 2002. Her most recent publication is *The Headscarf Controversy, Secularism and Freedom of Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Presented by

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College of  
Arts & Social Sciences

Acceptances appreciated

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