

## Burka Ban Law Used against Store Mascot



**Summary:** *A tech store employee wearing a shark costume was cited for breaking the burka ban law in Austria.*

Store mascots have a less than glamorous job dancing around the outside of stores either in a mascot costume or with a sign to bring customers in. Police officers stopped the tech store employee who was promoting the store opening by wearing a full-body shark costume outside the store. The Apple re-seller store called McShark was celebrating its grand opening in Vienna.

The officers approached the employee dressed as a shark and asked him to remove his shark head. The employee refused, claiming he was “just doing his job.” They arrested him and gave him a fine that could be up to just over \$170.

Austria enacted new restrictions on burkas, a full Islamic veil, at the beginning of the month that completely bans them. The new restrictions also prohibit clown disguises, medical masks and scarves covering ones face. Austrian residents are only allowed to wear them in public in special circumstances like “cultural events.” Faces must be visible from hairline to chin in public spots. This includes the ban on off-slope ski masks and surgical masks outside of medical settings. The country introduced the restrictions to ensure “the cohesion of society in an open society.”

Vienna officials said, “Acceptance and respect of Austrian values are basic conditions for successful cohabitation between the majority Austrian population and people from third countries living in Austria.” They noted that the laws apply to tourists and visitors.

The assumption is that a member of the public reported the employee to the police to make a point about the new legislation. Warda Network, an advertising agency, was at the McShark opening. They wrote on their Facebook page: “Today we were at the McShark store opening and our shark mascot received a fine from the Vienna police because of the new ban on face-coverings. Life is not easy.” The company is now reviewing its policy on using mascots.

This employee is not the first citizen of Austria to get in trouble under this new law. On the first day of the law, a woman was forced to remove her niqab in Zell Am See. A cyclist was arrested and fined for wearing a scarf over her face, according to local media sources.

Critics of the ban say it singles out Muslim women that conform to wearing the full-face veils, which is only a small percentage. France and Belgium introduced similar laws several years ago in 2011. The Netherlands and Germany are considering similar bans. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said, “The full veil is not appropriate here, it should be forbidden wherever that is legally possible. It does not belong to us.”

Have you ever had one of the store mascot/sign dancer jobs? Share your comments with us in the comments below.

**To learn more about burka bans, read these articles:**

- [European Union Allows Private Companies to Set Limits on Religious Attire](#)
- [Australian Senator Proposes Full Face Covering Ban](#)
- [France's Burka Bikini Ban under Scrutiny](#)

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