

# Hijab women at the Olympics

vendredi 3 août 2012, par [Ul HASSAN Riaz](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 3 août 2012).

**June last year, Iran's women's soccer team before an Olympic qualifier against Jordan was disqualified. FIFA thinks hijab "could cause choking injuries." Ironically, FIFA boss proposed in 2004 that women players wear « hot pants » to boost the sport's popularity.**

These are the first Olympics when women are participating in all the events !

Those who watched the London 2012 inaugural ceremony on the BBC would recall these remarks by an enthusiastic woman commentator.

She could have pointed out that Saudi Arabia was not violating the IOC's (International Olympic Committees') statutes, unlike previous Olympics, by including two women athletes in the Saudi squad. She did not. However, the International Judo Federation (IJF) noticed the unfamiliar presence of women in the Saudi squad. Not because of women's presence but because Saudi judokas Wodjan Abdulrahim Shahrkhani (16), competing in the +78kg judo category, wanted to enter the arena in hijab.

'She cannot compete in hijab', decreed the IJF czars.

A media scandal erupted. The IJF's Australian president, Marius Vizer, when reminded that Asian judo federations grant allowance to judokas wearing hijab, Shahrkhani was given a green signal.

Shahrkhani was Olympic-lucky perhaps because she is Saudi. June last year, Iran's women's soccer team, literally moments before an Olympic qualifier against Jordan, was disqualified. Jordan was granted a 3-0-forfeit victory. The Iranian squad objected. But in vain. [Could it be the close personal friendship between Henry Kissinger and FIFA boss Sepp Blatter ?]

« Players and officials shall not display political, religious, commercial or personal messages or slogans in any language or form on their playing or team kits. » Thus says FIFA. Also, 'since 2007' FIFA holds the view that wearing a hijab while playing "could cause choking injuries."

Is it a coincidence that the West always comes to rescue Muslim women in the name of hijab ? Ironically, the FIFA czar Sepp Blatter proposed in 2004 that women players wear « hot pants » on the pitch to boost the sport's popularity [[1](#)]. He said that the « tighter shorts » would produce « a more female aesthetic. » For years, human rights organizations have asked Blatter to take a stand and say something about prostitution that accompanies every football World Cup. Blatter refuses to say a word.

In fact, there is no concern about the welfare of the women involved here.

While denying the sports women in hijab the opportunity to show their sporting genius in the so-called Muslim dress, IOC sports bureaucracy becomes an agent of their oppression. However, what is even problematic is the hypocrisy involved.

Years ago, indicting the world of women's gymnastics and figure skating, Joan Ryan reported :

*"In the dark troughs along the road to the Olympics lay the bodies of girls who stumbled on the way, broken by the work, pressure and humiliation... Girls who broke their necks and backs. One who so desperately sought the perfect, weightless gymnastic body that she starved herself to death. Others many who became so obsessive about controlling their weight that they lost control of themselves instead, falling into the potentially fatal cycle of bingeing on food, then purging by vomiting or taking laxatives. One who was sexually abused by her coach and one who was sodomised for four years by the father of a teammate. I found a girl who felt such shame at not making the Olympic team that she slit her wrists. A skater who underwent plastic surgery when a judge said her nose was distracting. A father who handed custody of his daughter over to her coach so she could keep skating. A coach who fed his gymnasts so little that federation officials had to smuggle food into their hotel rooms... Coaches who motivated their athletes by calling them imbeciles, idiots, pigs, cows".*

Progressive sports writers have repeatedly pointed out the following facts that mainstream media go on ignoring :

In 1956 the top two Olympic female gymnasts were 35 and 29 years old. In 1968 gold medalist Vera Caslavskaja of Czechoslovakia was 26 years old, stood 5 feet 3 inches and weighed 121 pounds. It all transformed in 1972 when Olga Korbut ( 17), 4 feet 11 inches, 85 pounds won gold. Four years later Nadia Comaneci (14) clutched a baby doll after scoring the first perfect 10.0 in Olympic history. She was 5 feet tall and weighed 85 pounds. The decline in age since Comaneci's victory is startling.

But this world is indeed upside down. Such manipulation of young women bodies and souls do not raise any alarm. Hence, it will be wrong to believe that misogyny is an exclusive province of puritan Ayatollahs, Saudi royals, and dictators like General Zia of Pakistan.

If women in the West are able to appear at Olympics, they were able to win this right after decades of struggle for equality. It has nothing to do with Olympic committees' concern for women cause. As a matter of fact, at the start of the modern Olympics, French founder of these games Pierre de Coubertin, dismissed women playing sport as impractical, uninteresting, unaesthetic and incorrect.

The IOC, in fact, only allowed women to be members of their club in 1981. Though IOC is not an all-male administrative body yet women representation is miniscule [there are 17 percent women]. Women were not allowed to run a marathon until 1984. As recently as the 1950s they were debating the elimination of all the women's track and field events so that the audience would be "spared the spectacle of watching women trying to look and act like men". There were also debates in the 1950s about not allowing black women from any nation to participate in track and field events because they were hermaphrodites !

Now when Muslim women have begin to be more visible at the Olympics, Islamophobia guised as Olympic-rules-for-safety have become the latest tool to discriminate already discriminated Muslim women.

**Riaz ul Hassan**

---

---

## **P.-S.**

\* FROM VIEWPOINT ONLINE, ISSUE NO. 112, AUGUST 3, 2012 :

<http://www.viewpointonline.net/hijab-women-at-the-olympics.html>

\* Riaz ul Hassan has been actively involved in Social Media studies since 2006. He has held diverse editorial positions in different literary magazines including Ravi and Patras. Currently studying in Sweden and plans to pursue his PhD in the field of Social Media. Riaz graduated from Government College Lahore and has worked at the same institute for about one year as lecturer. He has keen interest and involvement in arts, theater and Social Media studies.

---

## **Notes**

[1] See on ESSF (article 26005), [Soccer chief's plan to boost women's game ? Hotpants](#).