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Afghan Sportswomen: Courage, hurdles and harassment

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Afghan sportswomen have become a symbol of change for many in Afghanistan, representing hope for a more egalitarian society with greater opportunities for girls and women. For others, they are a symbol of western imperialism that is bringing change and undermining Afghan society and culture, turning women away from their families and traditional roles. For a young sportswoman to succeed, she needs not only to excel in her field, but also to navigate family pressures and social taboos which do not favour women playing sport or other social activities which take them outside the home. AAN researcher Rohullah Soroush looks at the obstacles women wanting to play sport face and their courage to persist in difficult conditions.

Afghan women have become increasingly visible not only as competitors and participants in sport, but also in the leadership of official sports bodies. In 2018, Samira Asghari became the first Afghan appointed to the International Olympic Committee, and at 25 years old she was one of the youngest members in Afghan IOC history. Domestically, the General Directorate of Physical Education and Sports records 752 women among the 3,662 national team members in 52 Olympic and non-Olympic sports federations (around 21 per cent). (1) Two sports federations are led by women: badminton by Mastura Arezo and table tennis by Helena Kakar. Robina Jalali, a sprinter (now also a parliamentarian), is the second deputy of Afghanistan's National Olympic Committee for women's affairs. There are also growing numbers of women working as coaches and referees.

Increasing numbers of women have become involved in sports, particularly in major urban and semi-urban areas (data on exact numbers is not currently available). Playing sports, some of these women told AAN, is important for them for staying physically healthy and helping them cope with the challenges of life in Afghanistan, not least conservative and patriarchal attitudes towards women. In urban centres such as Kabul and Herat, there are private gyms, sometimes owned or rented for women by their families, where groups of women gather to do regular exercise. When the gyms lack professional trainers, women teach themselves or learn by watching training programmes online on their smartphones.

Despite this progress, sportswomen face multiple barriers which discourage them from playing sport. These could be objections from the family, social and structural obstacles, threats and violence, discrimination and, perhaps most pervasively, sexual harassment.

Based on face-to-face and phone conversations with a range of sportswomen – runners, football players, swimmers, coaches, trainers, a badminton player, volleyball players and a practitioner of the martial art, wushu – in three cities, Kabul, Herat and Balkh, the author takes stock of the challenges Afghan sportswomen face.

Families hindering or supporting sportswomen

For many women and girls interested in playing sports, their problems start with their families. Many family members, particularly men, question whether women should be involved in sports at all, citing cultural norms, insecurity or the risk of girls and women working closely with male coaches. Sexual harassment scandals in the sporting world have only compounded these anxieties, as will be discussed later.

As a result, some girls have started to play sports in secret, without the knowledge of their families. Soraya Yusufi, a karate practitioner, told Deutsche Welle (<https://www.dw.com/fa-af/%D8%AF%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%B2%D8%B4-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%88-%D8%AF%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86/a-16833886>) that she was not allowed to go out to play sport, so she had to lie to her family and say she was going to English language and computer classes. Sara Hamidi, a coach in Alzahra Centre, a private sports club in Kabul city, told Rah-e Madaniat (<https://madanyatonline.com/%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B4-%D9%85%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%81-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%B2%D8%B4%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%9B-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AF%DA%AF%DB%8C-%D8%AF/>) daily paper that of 200 girls playing sport such as gymnastics, fitness, and taekwondo in the centre, "there are some who play secretly, without letting their relatives know about it." She said that for some families, sport is seen as inappropriate and even dishonourable for women.

It is important to note that not all families create these hurdles. In urban centres, families are more likely to be relaxed about female participation in sports, and some even support them when problems arise. Freshta Hussaini, a taekwondo practitioner who has won many medals from Afghanistan and abroad, told Khabarnama (<http://khabarnama.net/blog/2017/12/27/3-afghan-girls-taekwondo-champions/>), an online newspaper, "When I started playing sport, there were lots of problems, but my will was stronger. A lot of people were opposed to me – even the mullah imam [mosque leader] prohibited girls and women from playing sport in our neighbourhood... but I was lucky because my family supported me and my brother talked to the mullah imam and convinced him to let me play sport." Tamanna Frutan, another taekwondo practitioner who has also won several medals in competitions inside and outside the country, told Khabarnama (<http://khabarnama.net/blog/2017/12/27/3-afghan-girls-taekwondo-champions/>), "The government pays me 1,000 afghanis [about USD 13] per month and if my family hadn't encouraged and supported me morally and financially, I wouldn't have been able to become a member of the national taekwondo team." There are also mixed reactions within families towards women playing sport. For instance, Muzhgan Sadat, a member of the volleyball team of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, told AFP (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bg1Yyz8kgAI>) her brother encouraged her to play sport, but her father was against it: "My father had a lot of problems with my sport. He even threw away my sports kit so I couldn't play anymore." Sadaf Rahimi, who was inspired to take up boxing when she saw Laila Ali, daughter of Muhammad Ali, in a match, told The Guardian in 2012 that it was her supportive parents enabled her and her sister to carry on boxing, despite both opposition from some family members (<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2012/mar/11/sadaf-rahimi-afghanistan-woman-boxer>) and threats to her father from outside the family. (2)

These family barriers are not necessarily static, particularly when they are met with determination or success from the girls and women, as the following interview excerpts suggest:

My family wasn't happy with me playing sport. They would ask what a girl is doing in sports. If you play sport, what will our relatives say? But they changed their minds when I became successful in my sport.

A wushu practitioner in Herat city

When I started running, I left home very early in the morning and my father wasn't happy about it, but when he understood that I and my running mates had safe transport from and to home and that we played in a safe area where only girls practiced, he was relieved.

A member of the national volleyball team

Societal and structural barriers

Hindrance from families can often emanate from further afield such as extended families and local communities. Some families might not have strong views about women playing sport, but be concerned about what their neighbours and relatives would think and, more importantly, how this would affect their relationships. A foreign running coach told AAN that after dealing with barriers from the family side, the question typically becomes more of a community issue: "Neighbours tell parents that they shouldn't allow their daughters to play sport or participate in tournaments." A runner who asked only for her first name to be mentioned, Arezo, told AAN, "My relatives are very conservative and they oppose women's sports. They told me women mustn't run, but I didn't pay attention because my father supports me."

Mastura Arezo, head of the Badminton Federation, compares sections of broader society to the Taleban because, in her view, they also want to limit women's choices and mobility in the same way as the Taleban do:

I believe there are four types of Taleban and they include family and relatives, neighbours and shopkeepers in the area, and tradition. For me and my sisters, the opinion of the neighbours and shopkeepers in our area in Baghlan was very dangerous because they didn't like us playing sport. They knew we were playing volleyball and they were unhappy about it. They were questioning why women play sport. I thought they might stop us playing sport or even harm us, but, we ignored it and continued because our father stood by us.

These social hurdles are inextricably related to the ways in which Afghanistan's society is structured in gender terms in ways that actively restrict women's agency and mobility to the domestic sphere. Sportswomen also cite a range of obstacles to them accessing sports facilities, such as not feeling safe, denial of access, and a lack of female trainers:

Most sports fields, stadiums and gyms are male-dominated, so this is one of the reasons why families don't allow their daughters to play sports. I train some women in fitness in my club, but these private clubs are too expensive for many women.

A volleyball and fitness coach in Herat city

We are very keen to play sport, especially football, but we don't have a proper place to play, especially a playing field, or proper clothes. There is only one gym where we are allowed to play, for one hour a day. The rest of the time, boys play there.

Nilofar, a member of Drokshshan Football Team in Ghor province, speaking to Pajhwok Afghan News

(<https://www.pajhwok.com/dr/2018/04/03/%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%88-%D8%AF%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%B2%D8%B4-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%BA%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%AA%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA>)

Because there are no standard facilities for women and no female coaches, girls and women don't play sports easily or comfortably.

Fatima Jaffari, a martial arts practitioner and a medallist, speaking to Afghan News

(<http://afghannews.af/%D8%B9%D9%86%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%BE%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%9B-%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%AA%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%86-%DA%86%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4-%D8%B3%D8%AF-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%B2%D8%B4%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1>)

There is only one private pool for women to swim in. I started to go there, but there was no female coach to teach women and girls to swim. So, I had to turn to YouTube to learn how to swim and find new swimming techniques.

Helena Sabori, a swimmer

Sports bodies are also largely unapproachable for women. The *wushu* practitioner cited above told AAN she had found sport federations too male-dominated or misogynist. "Even in sports federations, there are men who think women should not leave their homes. In the volleyball federation, there are men who say any girl who leaves her home is not a 'good' girl."

Outdoor sports present particular barriers for girls and women, with strong cultural taboos against physical activity in public by women, security concerns and limited space for sportswomen. In the northern province of Faryab, for instance, women can be seen doing aerobic exercises while wearing burqas in a park in Maimana city. In a video posted on social media ([a woman explains that they cannot play sport or exercise without wearing burqas because men from the nearby houses disturb them by staring at them. Their solution shows their determination, but is clearly not ideal: the burqa was not designed as sportswear.](https://www.facebook.com/abumoslim.shirzad/videos/331734970783481/?__xts__[0]=68.ARC_0p_XJYy25ZJVcrh1UOfDuSGqs9WZgcTHJMTtBSVqPypU6swgOYwjBfwdFvlgIA-D_MK2RcWa_sOyCf3ZUG8e696bhbSRLckhDoWoUZrcvKLQ6KZyTuGjSVizttvnVAu0O-CABS14SScxuIRFEmergQdadaJNtDXvYbgrXz7u_OBSQX2oJGH26KXJLbi5G6DbNd-FikMC6qTTwZ1uROfmJtJ04P8waRDsVg37cL3i5MhW53CP8xu-W_SIBPA_-dAv3MKFvSv2FJPoLX7Z3Cm9rywu4qh7pT3HWq1XJ8bGKjBq18tUuwAcouHdU16KJ-EVXHM4lhEV9LxynZ6sVUO-JLMSoz8NI5iSHs7YSXocP1eKQxhWjAu0Bm0tt25sm0&__tn__=-R),</p>
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Outdoor sports such as cycling pose even greater challenges for women. Zakia, a cycling trainer from Bamyan, said, "There is no proper place to go, and not enough bicycles so that I can train the girls. I train seven girls with one bike! I give them training in my house. If we go out for training, we face harassment. If a girl falls from the bike, people laugh at us." A female bike rider hints at an underlying taboo (<https://totalwomenscycling.com/news/afghan-womens-cycling-team->

nominated-nobel-peace-prize#wqbk1w1FDsUZbCh.97), "People say bicycles can destroy a girls' future." The reference is to a belief that female cyclists might damage their hymens and so not be perceived as virgins when they get married. Zahra Hussaini, another cyclist from Bamyan, told Ufuq News (<http://ufuqnews.com/archives/37237>):

When I first started cycling in Bamyan, I faced mullahs calling me 'kafir' [non-believer]. One day, I went to Bamyan city by bike and the people in the bazaar gave me unwanted attention and mocked me.

Outdoor runners face similar problems. A marathon runner told AAN they have to run in public spaces like roads and parks. "Once a man stopped me and my running mates," she said, "and told us: You must wear 'full hijab'. Otherwise, you can't run here next time." She said light-heartedly that the man's wife was also running with them, but with full hijab, so only her eyes could be seen.

Threats and violence

Afghanistan is one of the top 10 worst countries to be a woman, according to a survey (<https://poll2018.trust.org/country/?id=afghanistan>) conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2018. Threats and violence towards sportswomen reflect this wider context.

Threats often take the form of warnings to sportswomen to stop their sport altogether, or make changes such as in their clothing while playing sport. These threats can be effective. For example, a female football player from Herat city said:

It was 2013 when I started playing football and at that time the stadium in Herat was not completely constructed. Some unknown people, who were against women playing sport, sent letters to our trainer. They said women were not allowed to play sport and warned if we did continue, they would carry out a suicide attack against the women. As a result of that threat, I and my teammates had to leave the stadium and after that we could play only at school.

In Parwan province, as another example, women who were interested in practicing taekwondo had to play in a sports hall in the Women's Affairs Department because there was no other place for them to play. Shakiba Razaqi, a woman from Charikar, the provincial capital, who loves to practice taekwondo, told the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (<https://iwpr.net/da/global-voices/%D8%B1%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%B2%D8%B4>):

Many girls and women, including me, were threatened on our way to practice and told to give up our sport, but we continued because of our passion. However, one night armed men broke into the Women's Affairs Department. They broke the windows of the sports hall and damaged the equipment. So we and other women no longer had a place to practice in.

In other cases, taking part in sports can trigger threats that come in addition to other activities that are discouraged by fundamentalists. "In Kabul," said the runner Arezo, "I was harassed by men on the street while running, but the Taleban who are from my tribe and home province threatened me not only because of my sport, but also my education at the American University of Afghanistan and work in a foreign NGO."

In more severe cases, as already indicated in the case of taekwondo in Parwan, threats can turn into outright violence, such as stone-throwing. Abdul Sadiq, former coach and founder of the Afghan women's cycling team, described to NPR (<https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/05/02/308353109/afghan-female-cyclists-breaking->

away-and-breaking-taboos) female riders being hit by stones thrown by hand and slingshot. In another case, Marjan Sadeqi, assistant coach and a key rider in the time, was deliberately hit by a man on a motorbike, "It was a terrible thing because my back was badly injured. I was basically knocked out."

Zainab, the only Afghan woman who took part in a marathon in Bamyan province in 2015, has complained that harassment extends even to children. She told The Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/the-running-blog/2015/oct/28/afghanistans-female-marathon-runner-defies-danger-to-go-the-distance>), "The children were stoning us and people were saying bad words like, 'prostitutes, why don't you stay at home? You are destroying Islam.'"

Successful sportswomen who move into the limelight can be at greater risk of threats and violence. Tamanna Frutan, the taekwondo medallist, tolerated street harassment for a long time, but says her father became concerned for her safety when she started winning medals. She told the Spanish News Agency (<https://www.efe.com/efe/english/sports/afghanistan-has-no-place-for-female-sporting-heroes/50000266-3106220>), "If I became more famous, then I would be kidnapped or someone would want to kill me or my family or, one day, someone would attack me."

Sexual harassment of sportswomen

Sexual abuse is something prevalent all over the world and Afghanistan is no exception; a joint 2016 report by the UK Trade Union Congress and Everyday Sexism Project, found that, globally, 52 per cent of women reported being sexually harassed at work. This included groping, sexual advances and inappropriate jokes (media report here (<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/aug/10/half-of-women-uk-have-been-sexually-harassed-at-work-tuc-study-everyday-sexism>)). Sexual harassment of women at work happens in Afghanistan as well (for more on this, read an earlier AAN report (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/harassment-of-women-in-afghanistan-a-hidden-phenomenon-addressed-in-too-many-laws/>) and see also here (<https://www.etilaatroz.com/53381/%D8%AC%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B4-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%AD%DB%8C%D8%B7-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1/>)).

All the sportswomen AAN interviewed, either face-to-face or by phone, confirmed that sexual harassment against sportswomen is prevalent in every sport women play. This includes sending unwanted sexual or 'romantic' messages, asking girls for a massage or other sexual favours and making unwanted or inappropriate comments about girls and women's physical appearance. In various ways, girls and women who engage in sport are viewed as sex objects, and can be vulnerable to abuse by men who physically intimidate them or use their power against them, such as control of finance, transport, or opportunities, including getting into teams.

Some sportswomen said they personally had faced sexual harassment, while others said they had heard about it. They reported harassment by male coaches, fellow athletes, sports federation authorities and guards. In her conversation with AAN, one volleyball player detailed some harassment cases:

While I was studying at the Physical Education Institute, the head of the institute was asking girls to visit him in his office. He was even trying to get their mobile phone numbers and call them. Sometimes we didn't have any lessons, but he was calling girls to come to the institute because he wanted to see them. And during official hours, while we were in class, he asked one of his staff members to go to this or that

class and tell this or that girl to come to his office. When a girl went, he would ask her for illegal things. I heard once that he asked a girl, "I'm very tired. Please come and massage me." In the Volleyball Federation, one of my male teammates, who is married and has children, sends me text messages, calls me and asks me inappropriate things. I don't dare complain or tell anybody, even my coach, about it.

Harassment does make sportswomen's lives very hard. Sometimes they just ignore it, but at other times, they feel forced to quit, to escape an exploitative or dangerous situation. For example, runner Fatema Ibrahim told AAN:

Once we went to Iran for a competition and a male coach accompanied us as well as a female one. The male coach sent me postcards and pictures with love poems. He also called me very late at night. Once he came to the door of my room and knocked on it. When I opened the door, he asked me to put my sports jersey on, so he could see if it fitted, although the female coach was present, too. That made me angry. I didn't do what he asked, of course, and later I left the federation.

There are many other similar cases in which sportswomen found themselves at risk have limited options in how to respond. Qudsia (a pseudonym) described to BBC Persian (<http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan-41718854>) how, "If sportswomen lose matches, the male coaches ask them to meet in their private rooms to compensate for the loss," but she said they dare not complain because they would risk themselves being accused of immorality. This cultural tendency to 'blame the victim' means that sportswomen rarely complain of harassment. Sportswomen who talked to AAN said that it is not worth raising the subject because men are not held accountable, particularly if they are powerful.

The notorious football harassment scandal is a prime example of this impunity. Several members of the women's football team eventually made complaints about serious sexual assault and harassment by men from the Afghanistan Football Federation (AFF), including the president, Keramuddin Karim. The international governing body for football, FIFA, issued (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/afghan-football-president-life-ban-sexual-abuse-190608164652507.html>) a fine of 1,000,000 Swiss francs (USD 1.01m) and a ban for life on Karim, while former General Secretary of the AFF Sayed Ali Reza Aghazada received (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/10/fifa-bans-afghan-football-official-sexual-abuse-scandal-191011135619821.html>) a five-year ban for failing to act on the complaints and a fine of USD 10,000. Several others received suspensions.

However, no criminal investigation in Afghanistan have resulted in any criminal trial or punishment for the abuse. After a lengthy government investigation, the government suspended five AFF officials and finally, the Attorney General's Office issued an arrest warrant (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2019/06/09/ago-issues-arrest-warrant-former-football-chief>) against Keramuddin Karim, then AFF head, in June 2019. However, it is not clear where he is. On 18 August 2019, Human Rights Watch issued a press release (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/19/afghanistan-fifa-sexual-abuse-investigations-stall>) saying he had not yet been arrested. Moreover, Aghazada, the former AFF general secretary, who was suspended (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/08/football-leaders-stand-human-rights-abuses-pile>) by the Attorney General's Office due to his alleged role in the abuse of female soccer players, was then elected (<http://asna.af/?p=29205>) to the executive committee of the Asian Football Confederation. A foreign running coach told AAN, "If the Olympic committee structure was kind of looked at more in-depth, there are a lot of issues there from what I have heard and seen, more than just sexual abuse. I think it needs to be addressed full on and reformed, and if it included more women in the reform of it, then I think that [the problems] would probably go."

Despite the glare of the international media on the Afghanistan Football Federation, the limited action from the government suggests that women are right to be sceptical about the value of complaining. Some of those interviewed by AAN suggested that making a formal complaint could make a situation worse:

If sportswomen complain about harassment, there's no one even in the government to listen to them and investigate it. It's mostly the girls who are blamed. I think another reason that sportswomen don't complain about being harassed is because they're afraid of losing their dignity in society. They're also afraid their families wouldn't let them get out of the house afterwards.

Fatima Ibrahim, a runner

I was running on the street and I noticed someone was following me in a car and bothering me. I complained to police, but they didn't pay attention. The police said, "If you don't want to be bothered, you should stay at home." If a sportswoman who is harassed complains, there wouldn't be any punishment for the perpetrator. He'll only be transferred from one post to another.

Arezo, a runner

Sportswomen who are harassed don't complain because there's no trusted place to go to. If they complain, the perpetrators are not dealt with, but women are accused instead. People also judge the sportswomen who are being harassed. Besides, if they complain, the issue will be known publicly and then not only the sportswomen, but also their families will live with problem.

Helena Sabori, a swimmer

Conclusion

Afghan sportswomen face barriers and risks, particularly sexual harassment, all over the country and across all sports. Threats and violence will discourage some girls and women from playing sports, and have even forced some to leave the country for safety. These challenges are unlikely to change quickly, particularly given the weak response of the authorities. It is worth noting however, that not all men create problems preventing sportswomen from excelling in their endeavours. There are fathers, husbands, brothers, friends and professional trainers and coaches who become passionate supporters of sportswomen and their struggle, not just for excellence in sports, but also for a change in the public life.

For those women who do persevere and excel, they serve as cultural role models, recognised for their courage, grit and physical prowess. Some of these women and girls go on to leading roles in public life, such as Hajar Abul Fazl, who was a member of the women's football team for almost ten years before becoming a doctor. She told New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/10/sports/women-girls-athletes-leadership.html>), "I wanted to use the power of sport to show the power of women to people... You learn how to be a hard worker and how, when you lose, you learn to work harder to be successful the next time. It makes you feel like you can do anything." Shukufa Haidari, who has been boxing for ten years, told Radio Free Europe (<https://www.rferl.org/a/afghan-boxer-women/29088559.html>), "I want to tell all my sisters, girls and women to get out of the house, fight, learn and do sports."

These women and girls represent a strong and dynamic group who are determined to reach their goals and contribute to change in Afghan society, despite the frustration and danger.

Edited by Sari Kouvo, Reza Kazemi and Rachel Reid

(1) According to Afghanistan’s General Directorate of Physical Education and Sports, the sports federations are as follows (not all of them have English language counterparts):

1. Light athletics
2. Badminton
3. Basketball
4. Boxing
5. Cycling
6. Table tennis
7. Tennis
8. Taekwondo WTF (World Taekwondo Federation)
9. Wrestling
10. Swimming
11. Water polo
12. Judo
13. Gymnastics
14. Swordsmanship
15. Handball
16. Hockey
17. Weight lifting
18. Volleyball
19. Boating (canoeing)
20. Horse riding
21. Skiing
22. Karate
23. Wushu
24. Golf
25. Rugby
26. Snooker and billiards
27. Buzkashi
28. Mountain climbing
29. Kabaddi
30. Chess

31. Bodybuilding
32. Ashihara karate
33. Kurash
34. Zurkhaneh sports
35. Paralympics
36. Deaflympics
37. Power lifting
38. Martial arts
39. Muay Thai
40. Kung Fu To'a
41. Pankration
42. Kickboxing
43. Taekwondo ITF (International Taekwondo Federation)
44. Taekwondo ITTAF (International Traditional Taekwondo Federation)
45. New full contact karate
46. Batoran Dud
47. Fulrazm
48. Jujitsu
49. Vovinam
50. Quwatul Rami (a type of martial arts)
51. Tebma
52. Football

(2) Sadaf was chosen to represent Afghanistan in the 2012 Olympics, and was to be the only woman on the team. Then, just before the games, the International Boxing Association decided she could not compete, citing concerns that boxing against opponents of much higher standards might threaten her safety in the ring (<http://olympics.time.com/2012/07/19/rahimis-ko-afghan-woman-boxers-olympic-invite-rescinded-amid-safety-concerns/>).

ecoi.net summary:

Article on the situation of sportswomen (families hindering or supporting sportswomen; societal and structural barriers; threats and violence; sexual harassment)

**Country:**

Afghanistan

Sources:

Soroush, Rohullah (Author), published by [AAN – Afghanistan Analysts Network](http://aan-analysts.net/en/source/10939.html) ([/en/source/10939.html](http://aan-analysts.net/en/source/10939.html))

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