

July 31, 2024

ATN:

Sarah Hirshland, CEO
Gene Sykes, Board Chair

U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee
27 S Tejon Street
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

RE: Male Violence Against Women in Olympic Boxing

Dear Ms. Hirshland, Dear Mr. Sykes:

The Olympic and Paralympic Movement is at a crossroads and the time for silence has passed.

On Thursday, August 1, 2024, a man will fight a woman in a boxing ring at the Paris Olympic Games and again on the following day. On the largest stage in the world, at an event that should symbolize the best of humanity, male violence against women will become a sport. A man's punch is over 160% stronger than that of a woman.¹ And now, we are all aware that a male will purposefully and violently strike a woman in sport in front of a crowd of spectators. This will provoke shock and outrage in every decent man and woman. But shock and outrage from the public at large will not be sufficient to stop the normalization and mainstreaming of violence against women. U.S. female athletes and the women of the world and all who care about fairness and integrity in sport need you to immediately stand up against the International Olympic Committee's sanctioned abuse of women.

Ending this barbaric practice will require every Olympic leader to stand up and be counted on a pivotal question for both sport and civilization:

Will you allow male violence against women to be mainstreamed, sanctioned and authorized as entertainment and sport?

If you cannot respond with an emphatic "No!" to this question, then with all due respect, you should not be leading the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee, an organization that is required by law, in the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, to "to encourage and provide assistance to amateur athletic activities for women" and to "provide an equal opportunity to . . . participate in amateur athletic competition, without discrimination on the basis of . . . Sex."²

¹ Hilton EN, Lundberg TR., "Transgender Women in the Female Category of Sport: Perspectives on Testosterone Suppression and Performance Advantage." Sports Med. February, 2021 February. available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7846503/>

² Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, codified at 36 U.S.C. Sec. 220501 et seq. of the United States Code.

By now you know that there are two male athletes competing in the Paris Olympics in Women's Boxing, Imane Khelif from Algeria and Lin Yu-Ting from Taiwan. Both athletes were disqualified from the Women's World Boxing Championships last year in India by the International Boxing Association after failing the gender eligibility criteria. "This decision, made after a meticulous review, was extremely important and necessary to uphold the level of fairness and utmost integrity of the competition." These tests "conclusively indicated that both athletes did not meet the required necessary eligibility criteria and were found to have competitive advantages over other female competitors."³ These decisions were legally binding.

Within recent months, the International Olympic Committee assumed rule-making for boxing and the IOC is permitting these men to compete in women's boxing in the Paris Olympic Games. The IOC's decision to allow males to compete against women in a combat sport abandons the principles of fair competition and equal opportunity for women which the Olympic Charter pledges to uphold.⁴

The IOC's decision marks a descent into barbarism and ignores basic safeguarding for women, a responsibility that falls squarely on the shoulders of all leaders throughout the Olympic Movement. The consequences of the IOC's failure to protect women against male violence will not be insignificant. The physical abuse of women on an Olympic stage will undermine the integrity of all Olympic events by grossly increasing the risks of lifelong injury or even death for female athletes. All who fail to speak up against this atrocity are complicit in it.

We are women from across the political spectrum, we represent women's rights organizations, feminist organizations, sports organizations, female Olympians and lawyers. We regard the failure to protect women athletes against male violence as brutality and a massive step backwards for women's safety and women's rights. We will not be silent in condemning all who condone male violence against women.

We demand the USOPC immediately and forcefully condemn the IOC for failing to protect women and for permitting males to compete in combat sports. We urge the USOPC and members of the United States government to file protests and to use every legal, public, and diplomatic opportunity at your disposal to protect female boxers and demand that these male athletes are immediately removed from the women's boxing competition.

Upon return of the U.S. delegation from the Paris Olympic Games we are demanding that Congress hold hearings to consider all additional actions that can be taken to apply maximum pressure upon the IOC and any other sport organization that has provided aid and comfort to the IOC and these barbarous practices, including scrutiny of the role of the USOPC. We will

³ IBA: Statement made by the International Boxing Association regarding Athletes Disqualifications in World Boxing Championships 2023, July 31, 2024, available at: <https://www.iba.sport/news/statement-made-by-the-international-boxing-association-regarding-athletes-disqualifications-in-world-boxing-championships-2023/>

⁴ International Olympic Committee, Olympic Charter, July 17, 2020, available at: <https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/General/EN-Olympic-Charter.pdf>

also call upon Congress to pass the Protection of Women in Olympic and Amateur Sports Act and ensure that the United States is taking a leadership role in defending female athletes.

It is not difficult to protect women against male violence in Olympic boxing. A simple, accurate, non-intrusive, spit test is available to screen competitors in women's sports to prevent men from taking women's places and from fighting against and injuring women. Thus, there is no valid excuse for sport leaders who permit male violence against women to become the defining legacy of the Paris Olympic Games.

We urge you to act forcefully, decisively and immediately stand up and reject violence against women.

Sincerely,

Independent Council on Women's Sports

Kim Jones, *Co-Founder*

Marshi Smith, *Co-Founder*

Women's Declaration International USA

Kara Dansky, *President*

Independent Women's Forum

Carrie Lukas, *President*

Riley Gaines, *Ambassador*

Champion Women

Nancy Hogshead, J.D., OLY

Founder and CEO

Women's Sports Policy Working Group

Martina Navratilova, OLY

Donna de Varona, OLY

Donna Lopiano, Ph.D.

Mariah Burton Nelson, M.P.H.

Tracy Sundlun

International Consortium on Female Sport

Linda Blade, *Founding Member*

Concerned Women for America

Penny Nance, *CEO and President*

Independent Women's Law Center

May Mailman, *Director*

Young Women for America

Faith Ozenbaugh, *National Director*

Independent Women's Voice

Heather Higgins, *CEO*

Women's Liberation Front

Sharon Byrne, *Executive Director*

Margot Heffernan, *Vice President*

Independent Women's Network

Julie Gunlock, *Director*

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Women's Sports Policy
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