

NASSS Public Statement on Afghanistan Issue

On 15th August 2021, the Taliban, along with their supporters, captured Kabul and other key cities of Afghanistan. After the U.S. forces' withdrawal, the Taliban takeover has caused mayhem and suffering in the region as many Afghans try to leave the country. The U.S.-led war in Afghanistan began in October 2001 purportedly to fight against the inhumane policies of the Taliban's government and to capture Al-Qaeda militants. In the last 19 years, tens of thousands of Afghan civilians and over 2,000 U.S. soldiers have lost their lives¹. Peace in the region seems more distant than ever since talks between the Taliban, the U.S. government, and regional actors have not yet resulted in any fruitful outcome.

Taliban have announced they will develop an inclusive government based upon religious lines. However, many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars fear the Taliban might use their narrow and debatable interpretation of religious laws to impose restrictions on the freedom and liberty of many Afghans living in the region. Further, many women's rights activists, educators, and non-profit organizations worry about the future of Afghan women living in the region.

In their earlier stint in power, the Taliban banned traditional Afghan sports like kite-flying and buzkashi. In addition, sports such as cricket and soccer were allowed for men only with strict dressing restrictions. Women were strictly forbidden to participate in any type of sport or recreational physical activity. In the last couple of years, we have seen the growing popularity of sports among the Afghan population. Afghan national athletes have also been able to shine on the world stage despite facing a deadly war for the past 19 years. For example, the Afghanistan men's cricket team have put their mark on global sports with their outstanding performances. Afghanistan leg spinner Rashid Khan has been named as the International Cricket Council Men's T20I Cricketer of the decade². Additionally, Afghan women athletes, such as Robina Jalali, also known as Robina Muqimyar, participated in the 2004 and 2008 Summer Olympics and in many international sporting events.³ However, the recent violence in the region is a threat to athletes and the growing popularity of sports among the Afghan population.

As sport scholars who study the international and transnational impact of sport and sporting cultures, we are extremely worried by the ongoing conflict in the region. The current violence in the region is also really concerning for sport scholars from Central and South Asia associated with NASSS. The present Afghan conflict is not only a threat to athletes, especially women athletes, but also to the very infrastructure of sport and everyday life for Afghans. We are also very much aware of the current threats ethnic and religious minorities are facing in war-torn Afghanistan. We appeal to international and regional actors to ensure human rights in Afghanistan, including the right to sport participation, especially for women athletes. We call upon all stakeholders to discuss the future of Afghanistan's civil society, including sports, in the current dialogue with the Taliban. We reassure our Central and South Asian scholars that we are standing with the Afghan people. We reiterate that we firmly stand with Afghan athletes, sporting officials, activists, and many academic associations advocating equal opportunity for

sport participation and consumption for all genders and minorities in the region. We also call upon national and international sporting organizations (e.g., the International Olympic Committee) to protect and help Afghan refugees' right to sport participation and consumption outside Afghanistan. Lastly, we appeal to all the stakeholders to bring peace to Afghanistan and take all possible measures to safeguard Afghan women's freedom and liberty.

Umer Hussain

NASSS Political Advocacy Committee

Faye Wachs

Vincent Peña

Jeffrey Montez de Oca

NASSS Members

Rob Lake

Stanley Thangaraj

Victoria Paraschak

Bushra Resham

Melody Alanis

Peyton Stensland

Dominique Kropp

Shireen Ahmed

Julie Brice

Letisha Brown

Alan Klein

Sabrina Razack

Jessica Chin

Jesse Couture

Kyle Kusz

Hugo Ceron-Anaya

Lars Dzikus

Emma Calow

Alex Manning

Daniel Burdsey

Sources

¹ <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-business-afghanistan-43d8f53b35e80ec18c130cd683e1a38f>

² <https://www.icc-cricket.com/news/1956800#:~:text=Afghanistan%20leg%20spinner%20Rashid%20Khan,T20I%2>

[0Player%20of%20the%20Decade.&text=Tahir%20\(South%20Africa\)-,Afghanistan%20leg%2Dspinner%20Rashid%20Khan%20has%20been%20named%20as%20the,T20I%20Player%20of%20the%20Decade.&text=He%20has%20an%20incredible%20record,an%20average%20of%20just%2012.62](#)

³ <https://change-makers.blog-tom.com/en/robina-muqimyar.p16.html>