

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 21, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Gianni Infantino
President
Fédération Internationale de Football Association
Zurich, Switzerland

Dear President Infantino:

We write to urge the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) to take decisive action to formally recognize Afghan Women United as Afghanistan's national women's football team and to ensure that Afghan women athletes are not erased from international competition by the Taliban's repressive regime. These players have continued to train and compete in exile despite being banned from their own country. FIFA's support and recognition are essential to safeguard their right to play and to uphold the integrity of the sport.

Since the Taliban's takeover in 2021, women and girls in Afghanistan have been stripped of their most basic freedoms, including the right to receive an education, travel freely, and participate in sports. Yet, the Afghan women's team, now in exile, has shown extraordinary courage and perseverance by continuing to train, compete, and represent the spirit of their nation under unimaginably difficult circumstances.¹

Their recent participation in a FIFA-supported tournament marked a powerful symbol of hope, but it also underscored a glaring truth: without formal recognition and consistent opportunities to compete, these women remain sidelined from the international stage. FIFA's creation of an Afghan women's refugee squad was an important step forward, but the players' ultimate goal is to represent Afghanistan as their national women's football team, and that goal remains unfulfilled.²

FIFA's own statutes commit the organization to upholding human rights and promoting non-discrimination in sport.³ Those commitments *must* extend to the Afghan women who have lost their federation, their home field, and their right to play. One day, these brave athletes will hopefully be able to safely return home to play free from the repression of the Taliban. Until then, FIFA should ensure that they can continue to represent the millions of Afghan women who have either been forced to flee or remain under the Taliban's brutal rule.

¹ Colin Millar, *The Taliban Ruined the Dreams of Female Afghan Footballers. In Exile, Their Struggle to Play Continues*, N.Y. TIMES: ATHLETIC (May 5, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6286433/2025/05/05/taliban-afghanistan-women-football-team>.

² Amanda Davles, *As Afghan Women's Soccer Squad is Announced, Players' Fight for Recognition Goes On*, CNN (Oct. 2, 2025, at 5:24 ET), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/10/02/sport/soccer-afghan-womens-squad-intl>.

³ FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION (FIFA), FIFA STATUTES art. I, §§ 3–4 (2024).

FIFA has tools at its disposal. Yet despite its stated human rights standards, the body has too often failed to enforce them consistently. It should investigate Taliban-controlled the Afghan Football Federation for violations of those standards and consider restricting funding and access for federations that bar women from sport. Additionally, FIFA should take concrete action to recognize Afghan Women United as Afghanistan's official national women's football team, consistent with precedents in other contested or politically complex contexts.

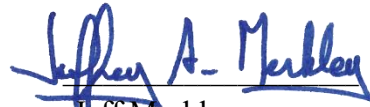
These actions would be consistent with FIFA's stated mission "to [respect] all internationally recognized human rights and strive to promote the protection of these rights."⁴ Afghan Women United has shown unmatched courage and perseverance. They have not asked for sympathy—only the chance to play the game they love on equal footing. We urge FIFA to take decisive action that lives up to its own principles.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

⁴ *Id.* art. I, § 3.