

The right-wing attack on Algerian boxer Imane Khelif

Nick Barrickman
11 August 2024

The week-long media lynching of Algerian boxer Imane Khelif stands out as one of the more shameful occurrences in recent days. A mob of far-right social media commentators, politicians and even some of Khelif's opponents, piled on following her astounding 46-second victory over Italy's Angela Carini August 1 and didn't let up until the 25-year old boxer's victory against her opponent, China's Yang Liu, to win the gold medal Friday, the first Algerian female to do so for her country in boxing.

Rumors and speculation outweighed rational discussion following Khelif's victory over Carini. Anti-trans bigot and children's book author J.K. Rowling tweeted that Khelif was the face of a "new men's rights movement," declaring Khelif was "enjoying the distress of a woman he's just punched in the head, and whose life's ambition he's just shattered."

For their parts, fascist former president Donald Trump swore he would "keep men out of women's sports" should he be re-elected, and Italy's Mussolini-admiring Prime Minister Georgia Meloni wrote on Twitter/X that "I know that you won't give up Angela, and I know that one day you will get what you deserve through strength and sweat. In a competition that is finally equal."

In fact, Khelif, from an impoverished rural part of northern Algeria, has overcome considerable difficulty to become an elite competitor. Born a female, Khelif had to overcome initial resistance from her family to pursue the sport, in addition to hazing and bullying due to it. Her career in the sport had been previously "solid, if unspectacular," according to the Associated Press, with a record of 47 wins, 9 losses.

The fascistic rabble persisted, leading the Algerian boxer to collapse following her victory over Hungary's Luca Anna Hamori. "I send a message to all the people

of the world to uphold the Olympic principles and the Olympic Charter, to refrain from bullying all athletes, because this has effects, massive effects," she appealed in an interview following her win.

"It can destroy people, it can kill people's thoughts, spirit and mind. It can divide people. And because of that, I ask them to refrain from bullying," she said.

Khelif and her family also faced physical dangers. Her home country of Algeria, ruled by a military camarilla, has banned gender-affirming treatment, placing both her and her family in danger at home due to the baseless witch hunt.

In addition to bigotry and racism, the furor fed off misinformation originating from flawed testing given by the International Boxing Association (IBA), the body that until 2019 oversaw boxing at the Olympics. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) severed ties with the IBA due to various ethical, financial, refereeing and other issues.

On Monday, the IBA held a press conference, explaining their previous decisions to disqualify both Khelif and fellow boxer, Lin Yu-ting, at the 2023 boxing world championships.

According to the *New York Times*, the press conference

was a two-hour affair of little explanation, a great deal of obfuscation, and a series of evasive answers to reporters' questions that did nothing to back up the IBA's claims that the women should be ineligible to compete in women's divisions, even though they were both assigned female at birth and identify on official documents as women.

According to the IBA, Khelif and Lin had been determined to have “competitive advantages over other female competitors,” although it could not explain what that meant or how it merited the two women’s disqualification. Adding fuel to the fire, the IBA promised monetary compensation to Khelif’s beaten opponents.

Olympics organizers told the AP that the IBA’s testing of Khelif and Lin was “so flawed that it’s impossible to engage with it.” The IOC’s president, Thomas Bach, defended the two female athletes on multiple occasions, denouncing the “politically motivated ... cultural war,” and calling it “hate speech.”

Bach challenged Khelif and Lin’s detractors “to come up with a scientific-based new definition of who is a wom[an], and how can somebody being born, raised and [having] competed and having a passport as a woman cannot be considered a woman.” He denounced the IBA as being part of a Russian government-led “defamation campaign against France, against the games, against the IOC.”

For years, both Khelif and Lin had competed in IBA events without controversy. Only after Khelif bested previously unbeaten, up-and-coming Russian prospect Azalia Amineva in a 2023 did the IBA, whose main sponsor is the Russian-state owned energy giant Gazprom, disqualify Khelif, in the process preserving Amineva’s spotless record.

Regardless of which government is fueling the misogynistic frenzy, it remains an immutable fact that politicians, cultural figures and other leading personalities across the world, including governments aligned with NATO against Russia, have been implicated in the bigoted attacks.

On Saturday, Khelif’s legal team filed a lawsuit against X, the social media site owned by fascist oligarch Elon Musk. According to statements, Khelif was the victim of an “online lynching” fueled by “important political figures” and “malicious individuals.” Posts attacking the boxer “exceeded 100 million views,” the statement read.

Musk himself participated in this online harassment, regularly retweeting and replying in agreement to posts denouncing the Algerian.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained at the onset of the Paris Games, the ceremony’s “proclamation of ‘excellence, respect and friendship’

with ‘a view to building a better world’ inevitably clashes with the glorification of money in athletics and the capitalist establishment’s promotion of a nationalist fixation on athletes of one’s own country.”

The Olympics have become one more opportunity for the backwardness and filth of capitalist society to burst forth. This holds true especially for the Paris Games, taking place during a police siege and the wholesale disregard for public health and safety, under the shadow of world war, genocide and dictatorship.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact