

ISLAMISM

Afghan athlete under escort in France: 'Paris like Kabul'

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'How many women have to be killed by the Taliban for the world to recognise the crime of gender apartheid taking place there?', Marzieh Hamidi lamented in a video shot in Paris and launched on social media last September 8. Since then, the 21-year-old Afghan

refugee in France has been the victim of an avalanche of Islamist death threats to the point she is forced to remain in hiding and under escort.

Marzieh Hamidi (pictured in a video interview by *Le Figaro*) is a taekwondo athlete who found refuge in France in the aftermath of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan. It was the summer of 2021, and Hamidi managed to escape to Paris just in time. Today, thanks to a scholarship, she trains with the French national team at INSEP (Institut national du sport, de l'expertise et de la performance). She was born into a family of Afghan refugees who fled to Iran. There, rejected by the government, they lived as illegal immigrants which prevented the children from attending school. In 2020, the family returned to Afghanistan with the dream of staying there for a better life, but a year later the Taliban returned. To move to France meant working with sport, which ultimately saved her life by taking her to the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

Hamidi is currently forced to live in hiding and who knows if she will ever regain her freedom. The same freedom she tried to claim for the women she left behind in Afghanistan and which, now, she has also lost, although she is in France. Her controversy comes in the aftermath of the **new law** that Emir Hibatullah Akhundzada had published in the official Afghan gazette last August 22. The text, to 'promote virtue and prevent vice' in Kabul, armour all the Islamic precepts already put into practice in the country. **Thirty-five articles** that oblige women, among other things, to leave the house only if strictly necessary and covered from head to toe, including their faces, maintain silence in public and singing is prohibited even within their own homes if audible.

In particular, the ban on women singing has caused much debate in Europe. Relaunched as a Taliban-only legacy, in reality it is nothing new for Islam as a news story in Italy demonstrates. A few years ago, in the province of Reggio Emilia, some Muslim families in the Bassa Emilia asked for their children to be exempted from music lessons. The request triggered considerable controversy in the school, but the following year the number of families who wanted to reformulate the request increased.

The Koran comes down hard on music because it is considered a temptation in itself. And what makes it a really serious matter is the sound of female voices. On the other hand, the opinion that music is haram because it distances from the right path is also widespread among the new preachers who enjoy a huge following in Europe on Tik Tok or YouTube: an opinion based on criticism of Western phenomena, but also on a whole series of Muhammad's hadiths. In Islam, it is possible to find a certain hatred for art and beauty.

Afghanistan has even banned music in cars, the transportation of women not wearing a veil, and women being in the presence of men who are not members of their family, and women without a mahram, an escort who is a male relative. All of these prohibitions are already imposed in the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan but have now been more tightly enacted to increase control over the population and women in particular.

Yet, it was for denouncing the new Taliban law and defending the women of Kabul, by launching the hashtag #LetUsExist, that the Afghan athlete Marzieh Hamidi found herself bombarded with death threats. While the media and feminists maintain silence, she has lost her freedom, but not in Kabul, in democratic Paris. The first phone call came from Afghanistan. 'A voice in Pashto - an Iranian language spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan - told me he knew my address in Paris,' Hamidi recounted. A minute later, the phone rang again and it didn't stop for two consecutive days, 'it seemed like they were under pressure'. Three thousand calls in 48 hours. After that, she stopped counting. 'I received death and rape threats because I oppose the terrorists and those who support them,' said Hamidi.

The French police said they were bewildered by the incident, shocked certainly by the scale of the threats, but especially by the speed with which they were able to intercept Hamidi's mobile phone and her address in France from Kabul. Nonetheless, the scale of the threats does not resemble any of the more recent cases, such as that of **Mila** - the then 16-year-old French girl forced to abandon home and school and live under escort for having offended Allah -, not least because this time they come from all over the world, including Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and France itself.

Hamidi wonders how in the same country that sells itself as the home of rights, one can be forced to live as a fugitive for defending Afghan women. 'I couldn't imagine that expressing myself like this, fighting against Islamic terrorism, dressing Western, would mean putting my life in danger. I feel like it was in Kabul when the Taliban came, even

though I am in France'. Hamidi acknowledges, in fact, that today's Paris has similar problems to those of any state administered by Islam. She recounts that she learned early on to avoid several Parisian neighbourhoods if she wants to walk around without a veil, 'I know very well that in La Chapelle, for example, in the 18th arrondissement, I cannot set foot'. 'Three weeks ago, I was in Marseilles with a friend, we couldn't walk three steps without being touched, harassed and insulted by groups of men. Something that never happened to me in Afghanistan!'.

But it is nothing new for Macron's France. Last April, an attack of rare violence took place outside a school in Montpellier. **Samara, 14 years old**, was brutally beaten into a coma because she 'does not wear the veil, dyes her hair, wears make-up and dresses in European fashion'. These were the reasons listed by the three juvenile perpetrators of the savage beating: Samara was a disbelieving kouffar and should therefore be punished with an exemplary lesson. Again, in Achenheim (Lower Rhine), during Ramadan, a 13-year-old girl on the bus that was supposed to take her to school was **beaten up by four peers** on the accusation that she had not respected the fasting imposed by the Islamic holy month.

France is witnessing an Islamist offensive in an explosion of violence that has no parallel in Europe. The policy of Islamic tension is increasingly paying off, and European society, which for Islam is profane and secularised, is failing to protect its female citizens who are being sacrificed on the altar of multiculturalism.