# Algerian boxer Imane Khelif advances to Olympics semi-finals amid gender eligibility debate



Making headlines at the Paris Olympics, Algerian boxer Imane Khelif advanced to the women's welterweight semi-finals, securing at least a bronze medal in a showdown that's captivated the world. The bout, held at the North Paris Arena, saw Khelif triumph over Hungary's Anna Luca Hamori by unanimous decision, sweeping the judges 5-0.

Khelif, 25, has faced a storm of controversy since her disqualification from last year's World Championships by the International Boxing Association (IBA) for allegedly not meeting their gender eligibility criteria. Despite this setback, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) cleared Khelif to compete in Paris, igniting widespread discourse.

Supporters packed the arena, many of them Algerian fans chanting Khelif’s name and waving flags. This emotional backing was crucial for Khelif as she navigated a complex path to the semi-finals. Overcome with emotion upon her victory, Khelif fell to her knees, tears streaming down her face, and scribbled her name on the canvas—a poignant gesture of vindication amid the mounting controversy.

The debate surrounding Khelif’s eligibility stems from the IBA’s claim that both she and Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan, another boxer disqualified last year, failed gender tests, hinting at the presence of XY chromosomes. However, the IBA has not released detailed test results, citing confidentiality. This has sparked a social media uproar, with public figures such as Donald Trump and J.K. Rowling making false claims about Khelif’s gender identity. The IOC, standing firm, has reiterated that both Khelif and Lin were born women and possess passports identifying them as such.

IOC President Thomas Bach publicly defended the athletes, saying, "We have two boxers who were born as women, raised as women, who have passports as women, and who have competed for many years as women. There was never any doubt about them being women. This is not a case involving transgender athletes."

Despite the Hungarian Boxing Association's protest over Khelif's participation, the fight proceeded, and Khelif’s stellar performance in the ring silenced critics, at least for now. Hungarian IOC member Balazs Furjes emphasized the need for fair competition, calling for a meticulous review of the circumstances surrounding boxing at the Paris Games once the event concludes.

Italian Angela Carini, who lost to Khelif in just 46 seconds during an earlier bout, faced backlash for her actions and comments post-fight but later issued an apology. "I’m sorry for my opponent," Carini remarked. "If the IOC says she can fight, I respect that decision."

The Algerian Olympic Committee has staunchly defended Khelif, condemning attacks on her dignity. Highlighting the broader societal implications, Khelif's journey is particularly poignant considering Algeria's restrictive environment, where freedom of self-expression is limited and being gay or transgender is illegal.