

# [***Australia postpones T20 series against Afghanistan citing worsening 'conditions for women and girls' under Taliban rule***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BKN-XTC1-DY7V-G007-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Australia has postponed its T20 series against Afghanistan citing worsening 'conditions for women and girls' in the country under Taliban rule, the country's national cricket body announced on Tuesday.

The three-match series, which had been scheduled for August, was assigned to be hosted by Afghanistan but with all games played in the United Arab Emirates.

But Cricket Australia said the human rights situation towards women and girls in Afghanistan has resulted in the postponement.

"Over the past twelve months CA has continued to consult with the Australian Government on the situation in Afghanistan. The government's advice is that conditions for women and girls in Afghanistan are getting worse. For this reason, we have maintained our previous position and will postpone the bilateral series against Afghanistan," it [*said in a statement*](https://www.cricket.com.au/news/3936660/cricket-australia-withdraws-afghanistan-three-odi-series-august-tour-taliban-human-rights-women-girls-ireland-tour-finances).

"CA continues its strong commitment to supporting participation by women and girls in cricket around the world and will continue to actively engage the International Cricket Council and work closely with the Afghanistan Cricket Board to determine what actions could be taken to support the resumption of bilateral matches in the future."

Contacted by CNN for comment, Suhail Shaheen, the Taliban's spokesman in Doha, questioned what it called the CA's politicization of cricket.

"We keep ***politics*** separate from sport. Otherwise, [we] all know the atrocities of the Australian soldiers in Afghanistan who killed innocent children and women. At that time, they had forgotten about women's rights," said Shaheen.

"Now they raise this slogan when it favors them. Why did they not raise a finger about women rights in [the] World Cup when it suited them to play against Afghanistan? Better for them not to mingle ***politics*** and sport! Let sport move ahead its own way without hurdles."

In a statement posted online, the Afghanistan Cricket Board expressed its "disappointment" towards Australia's decision and "reiterates its stance on neutral and ***politics***-free cricket across the globe."

It is the third time Australia has chosen not to play against Afghanistan since the Taliban took control of the country in 2021.

It previously cancelled a one-off Test match against Afghanistan that was scheduled to be played in Hobart in November 2021, before canceling a three-match ODI series due to be played in the UAE in March 2023.

The Taliban became the controlling power in Afghanistan in 2021 after the United States' chaotic, controversial withdrawal from the country after nearly 20 years of fighting.

The regime immediately [*restricted the ability for women and girls*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/15/asia/afghanistan-taliban-takeover-anniversary-women-intl-hnk-dst/index.html) to participate in sports, as well as limiting their opportunities in many other areas of life.

Many of the country's professional female athletes [*fled Afghanistan*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/07/29/football/australia-afghan-womens-team-hnk-intl-dst-spt/index.html) in the wake of the Taliban's takeover to continue to pursue their sporting careers, with the national team's football and cricket players [*leaving to Australia*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/28/football/afghan-women-footballers-taliban-australia-spt-intl/index.html) under the threat of death.

Afghanistan is the only International Cricket Council (ICC) full member nation without a women's team. ICC CEO Geoff Allardice [*told the BBC*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pBcFsT1RAI&t=419s) last year that the Afghanistan Cricket Board still receives the full payment awarded for their Test member status, despite not having a women's team.

"We have spoken with the Afghanistan Cricket Board and their position is they have to operate within the laws of the country and the rules as set by the government, and really the question for the ICC Board is: 'Do we support our member in their ability to promote cricket within the rules set by the government of the country?' and the view is yes."

When the Taliban, a radical Islamist group that had previously ruled Afghanistan in the 1990s, took power in 2021, it initially presented itself as a more moderate version of its former self, even promising that women would be allowed to continue their education up to university.

But it has [*since cracked down*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/15/asia/afghanistan-taliban-takeover-anniversary-women-intl-hnk-dst/index.html), closing secondary schools for girls; banning women from attending university and working at NGOs, including the United Nations; restricting their travel without a male chaperone; and banning them from public spaces such as parks and gyms.

Their actions have resulted in a severe mental health toll in the country, with widespread reports of depression and suicide, especially among teenage girls who've been prevented from pursuing an education, according to a UN report released last year, compiled after a week-long visit to Afghanistan.

By Ben Morse and Sahar Akbarzai, CNN

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