

# [***Top Indian wrestler quits after federation elects ally of controversial former chief***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69XN-ND11-DY7V-G42M-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; The only [*Indian*](https://www.cnn.com/world/india) woman wrestler ever to win an Olympic medal said she will quit the sport in protest after the country's wrestling federation announced it would replace its president, who is [*accused of sexually harassing*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/02/india/india-wrestlers-protest-sexual-assault-intl-hnk/index.html) female athletes, with his close ally.

Sakshi Malik told a news conference in New Delhi on Thursday that it had taken a lot of "courage" to fight against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, 66, a controversial and powerful politician from the country's ruling party and former chief of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI).

"We fought with all we had," she said, shortly after the new president was announced.

Holding back tears, Malik, 31, placed her footwear in front of her in a symbolic gesture of hanging up her shoes.

"Upcoming female wrestlers will also face exploitation," she said.

"If (Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's) business partner and a close aide is elected as the new president, I quit wrestling."

Malik, who won bronze in the women's freestyle 58 kilograms at the 2016 Rio Olympics, was among several leading wrestlers who in January supported demands for an inquiry after allegations came to light against Singh of sexual harassment of younger athletes.

Delhi police in June charged Singh with assault, stalking, and sexual harassment. He has not been arrested and has denied all allegations.

Speaking to CNN on Friday, Singh's lawyer Rajiv Mohan, said: "We are denying these charges as a whole. It is not possible that these alleged offenses took place over the years, in the presence of brothers, husbands and friends, and no one would say anything. Why would a lady keep silent for so long - that is, for three to four years?"

Earlier this year, Malik and several other top wrestlers led a weekslong protest against Singh's alleged abuse, spending days camping on the streets of Delhi.

On Thursday, a panel of voters at the WFI appointed Sanjay Singh, a close aide but no relation to Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, as its new chief, reigniting the controversy that has plagued the sporting body for much of this year.

Sanjay Singh was up against Anita Sheoran, a female wrestler who won gold at the Commonwealth Games in 2010. She was a vocal critic of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh and spoke of her desire to create reforms in the wrestling federation.

Sanjay Singh said his victory was a "triumph" for the wrestlers "who suffered in the past seven to eight months."

"Wrestlers who want to compete should wrestle. Those who want to do ***politics***, should do ***politics***," he said, [*according to local media reports*](https://twitter.com/IExpressSports/status/1737784692995223678).

The wrestlers' protest had become a flashpoint of criticism against the ruling establishment, with rights activists and opposition politicians accusing authorities of blocking the course of justice.

Among those leading the protests alongside Malik was fellow female Olympian Vinesh Phogat, whose rise to prominence in the male-dominated sport has brought joy and pride to millions.

CNN has contacted the Wrestling Federation of India and Sanjay Singh for comment.

CNN's Aishwarya Iyer contributed reporting.

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