
Algerian Boxer Imane Khelif secures historic Olympic gold amid gender controversy

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Algerian boxer Imane Khelif made history by winning gold in the women's 66kg boxing final at the Paris Olympics, overcoming not just her opponents but a significant gender controversy. On Friday, in front of a lively crowd at Roland Garros, Khelif defeated China's Yang Liu by unanimous points decision, becoming the first Algerian woman to claim an Olympic boxing gold medal. This victory also marks the first Olympic boxing gold for Algeria since Hocine Soltani's triumph at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

The 25-year-old Khelif, who was paraded around the arena on a team member's shoulders, expressed her joy after the win: "For eight years this has been my dream, and I'm now the Olympic

champion and gold medallist. I've worked for eight years, with no sleep, always tired. Now, I'm Olympic champion."

Khelif's journey to the gold medal has been fraught with challenges, including a controversial disqualification from the 2023 World Championships. Khelif and Taiwan's Lin Yu-ting were both ruled ineligible by the International Boxing Association (IBA) after failing gender eligibility testing. This disqualification sparked a heated debate and became a major headline across various media platforms.

However, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) took over the organization of boxing at the Paris Games after stripping the IBA of its governing status in 2023. The IOC applied the eligibility rules from the 2016 and 2021 Olympics, which did not include gender testing, allowing Khelif and Lin to compete in Paris.

Khelif's final match against Yang Liu, a former world champion, was closely contested. Standing at 1.79 meters (5ft 9in), Khelif had a height and strength advantage over her earlier opponents, which she leveraged effectively throughout the tournament. Despite facing a taller and more experienced Yang in the final, Khelif's determination and skill led her to a hard-fought victory.

The Court Philippe Chatrier, typically reserved for Grand Slam tennis, was filled with Algerian fans who celebrated Khelif's groundbreaking achievement. This victory not only solidifies Khelif's place in Olympic history but also marks a significant moment for women's sports in Algeria.