

COURT OF ARBITRATION IN SPORT RULING SMACKS OF SEXISM AND RACISM

The Department of Women wishes to place on record its disappointment at the Court of Arbitration in Sport's (CAS) decision to dismiss Ms Caster Semenya's appeal against the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) new rules that aim to regulate testosterone levels for female athletes with differences of sex development competing in restricted events.

Caster Semenya launched a legal challenge against the IAAF's new rules which would require female athletes with differences of sexual development, or in Semenya's case, hyperandrogenism to regulate their testosterone levels through chemical hormonal suppression treatments.

"We are shocked, disappointed, angry, and hurt by the CAS ruling to approve the IAAF's new rules that would require mainly African women to inject their bodies with harmful substances to conform to the global north's definition of the female form," said Minister in the Presidency Responsible for Women, Ms Bathabile Dlamini.

The department is of the view that the IAAF's new regulations to arbitrarily manage eligibility in restricted events is a legal route to normalising colonial definitions of the female body, and setting limits on the performance of female athletes, thereby entrenching societal stereotypes on female sexuality, in sport.

"Ms Semenya, and other female athletes with a similar physique, are being targeted due to their performance in particular athletic codes. Ms Semenya, and before her, athletes like Ms Dutee Chand have been brave enough to challenge the IAAF but this has come at great personal cost. To be told you cannot be who you were born as, if you want to compete, is to be told that you are not considered a human being. With this ruling the IAAF is attempting to strip female athletes of their human dignity, and this must be denounced in the strongest possible terms," added Minister Dlamini.

This ruling is more than the eligibility of Caster Semenya to compete in restricted codes, as defined by the IAAF. It is about human dignity and ownership over the African female body, which has been a contested site for generations. Women, and in particular African women, bear the brunt of compounded discrimination in society. This discrimination is given life through institutionalised patriarchy in schools, universities, places of worship, in the workplace, and in the home. Sexism also rears its head on the sports field where we are expected to accept pay disparities for male and female teams, the relegation of female sporting codes to second-tier events not worthy of coverage on television etc. The professionalism of women athletes also continues to be questioned because this goes against deeply ingrained ideas of the roles of women in society. Simply allowing all women to compete, unabated, will naturally allow competitive levels to increase without interference from misogynistic institutions.

The Department of Women once again wishes to place on record its support for South Africa's star athlete, Caster Semenya.

The department calls on South African government, organisations and wider society, as well as the international community to boycott this ruling by once again proclaiming loudly #HandsOffCaster.

ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN

Media enquiries may be forwarded to Mr Shalen Gajadhar on 060 979 4235 or shalen.gajadhar@women.gov.za

ENDS

Important numbers to note:

Police: 10111

Stop Gender Violence: 0800 150 150

Gender Based Violence Command Centre: 0800 428 428 or Please Call Me
- *120*7867#

Childline: 0800 055 555

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