# Buttler: Afghan women plight saddening




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England cricket captain Jos Buttler Tuesday said the "plight of women" in Afghanistan is "saddening", as the teams prepare to meet in their second group-stage match of the Champions Trophy.

Ahead of the contest, more than 160 British politicians have called for England to boycott the game in protest against the Taliban government's restrictions on women's rights in AfghanistaIt's very saddening the plight of women and girls in Afghanistan at the moment and the struggles that they're facing," the English skipper said addressing a press conference in Lahore.But we hope that the game tomorrow can be a source of hope and enjoyment. It's obviously a tough time at the moment, so I think we're really excited about the match," added the 34-year old.

Female participation in sport has effectively been outlawed since the Taliban returned to power in 2021.That puts the Afghanistan cricket board at odds with International Cricket Council rules, though the men's team are still allowed to compete.

The England and Wales Cricket Board resisted the demand to boycott their Champions Trophy group game but said they would not schedule a bilateral series against Afghanistan.Both teams need a win Wednesday in Lahore to keep alive the hopes of reaching the semi-finals in the 50-over tournament after losing their respective openers.

"Sport has a great power to unite people and give hope and that's what we hope this game will do," Buttler added.Earlier Afghanistan's English coach told media Afghan players are facing a "tricky situation" and know there are "things that are not correct" in their country.

"They know the difference between right and wrong. It is a real tricky situation for them," head coach and former England batsman Jonathan Trott told the British Broadcasting Corporation from Lahore."They know who they are playing for and representing.

"We work hard to bring joy to the country and the guys are passionate, brave and proud of being able to do that, but knowing full well that there are things that are not correct."Afghan skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi sidestepped direct questions Tuesday, also addressing a presser in Lahore, regarding the boycott calls against his team."We are cricket players, we are sportsmen," said Shahidi."What we control is what we do on the ground, we don't worry about what is happening off the ground. So our confidence is good."

Last month South Africa Sports Minister Gayton McKenzie backed demands from British politicians for a playing boycott of Afghanistan.Everyone likes to see everyone play...we are only cricket players we can control things in the ground and we are always trying to give our best when we play," Shahidi said when asked about support for female cricket.