

OUT FOR A STRIKE

*Cricket is the only sport most of the Taliban fighters enjoy and it attracts hundreds of spectators from nearby villages*



Afghan men play cricket on a field covered in snow on the outskirts of Kabul, Afghanistan

## Swapping [br] Afghan cr

Reuters | Jalalabad, Afghanistan

During a lull in Afghanistan's never-ending war, before the fighting season resumes once again in the spring, Taliban fighters recall laying down their Kalashnikovs and, for a brief moment, enjoying a game of cricket.

The sport is the only one most of the fighters enjoy, commanders say, with matches attracting hundreds of spectators from Taliban-controlled villages when there is no fighting. They are also fans of the increasingly successful national team.

"I love cricket," said Mullah Badruddin, a Taliban commander in Khogyani district of Nangarhar, on the border with Pakistan, where a tournament organized by the militants at the start of last winter drew large crowds.

"When Afghanistan play against another team, we listen to the radio with great interest and we also check for scores in social media and follow those in Facebook who give live updates," he told Reuters by telephone.

First played in Afghanistan by British troops in the 19th Century, the game was adopted by Afghans in the refugee camps of cricket-loving Pakistan, where more than 3 million fled a Soviet invasion and civil war in the 1980s and 1990s, and has since made huge strides in the country, particularly among ethnic Pashtuns in the eastern border provinces.

Taj Malook Khan, who helped set up the Afghan Cricket Club in Kacha Gari refugee camp outside the Pakistani city of Peshawar in the 1980s, and a small group of players used to cross into Afghanistan during the 1990s Taliban era to play and promote cricket.

The Taliban had banned games such as cricket and football in the early years of their austere rule because they believed they kept



Afghan men play cricket on

First played in Afg troops in the 19th Ce adopted by Afghans i of cricket-loving Pal than 3 million fled a civil war in the 1980s since made huge str particularly among et eastern bord

*Christina Atik began creating poignant illustrations after her mother made a comment about her sister's nose*

## Lebanese illustrator challenges views c



"This nose isn't nice for a girl" by Christina Atik

Reuters | Beirut

Lebanese artist Christina Atik has produced a series of digital pictures to illustrate sentences to criticize women with the aim of empowering women.

The project tackles issues of female freedom, beauty and sexuality in the traditional societies.

Atik, 27, said she conceived the project last year after her younger sister Maria faced criticism from their mother.

"She has a big nose and my mum always made fun of her saying 'when are you going to do an operation for your nose?', 'your nose is not nice for a girl'," the graphic designer said.

"I decided to do a drawing for my sister to show her that her nose is beautiful and she doesn't have to listen to mum. And this worked, she did not do an operation for her nose."

The picture won praise from local art supporters and quickly turned into a series so far comprising seven illustrations.

Other illustrations read: "It's not nice for a

My sister has a big nose mum always made fun saying 'when are you do an operation for yo 'your nose is not nice f I decided to do a drawi sister to show her that is beautiful and she have to listen to mu this worked, she did r operation for her

CHRISTINA ATK

girl to have (body) hair", "It's girl to like another girl!" or "It a girl to live alone". They ea sketch, digitally drawn by At a comment.

"I think it's very important