

I am Noor Alexandria Abukaram, and I was a Junior this last school year in Sylvania, Ohio. I'd like to share my story with you.

I have participated in many cross country competitions. At one such event, the judges looked over the team uniforms as is the custom. They asked one of my teammates to change her shorts because they did not match the rest of the teams' uniforms. I was immediately concerned, thinking that they were going to say something to me too, since I cover my hair for religious reasons. As a Muslim woman athlete who chooses to wear hijab, this thought crosses my mind alot during these uniform checks. It was never a problem before, and I was relieved that this time as well, the officials did not indicate an issue with my uniform.

Since I was in the clear, the thought never crossed my mind again. I ran a great race achieving a personal best! Our team found out that we were advancing to regionals and we all hugged each other. Me and a few of my teammates headed over to look at the placements of the race. My name was not listed. I was confused, and confident that this was a mistake, I made my way over to the girls on my team to let them know. After an awkward pause, they informed me that I was disqualified because of my hijab. My heart sank immediately as what I had always been afraid of became a reality.

I felt confused, conflicted, angry, and misunderstood. But most of all, I felt humiliated. I was not told in advance that I would not be running to compete like everyone else, and I had just run the best race of my life uninformed of my disqualification.

On October 19th of 2019 a young muslim girl was disqualified from a cross country meet for wearing the hijab. On this same date, the Let Noor Run Initiative was born. I made it my mission to fight all forms of discrimination in sports including my personal struggle with religious discrimination. When we started this initiative, we hoped to offer a platform that invited athletes to speak up on the issues they're facing, and offer different forms of support that will allow them to continue to do what they love. We strive to end discrimination in sports, for all reasons.