

# Iran blames 'political considerations' after US revokes World Cup ticket allocation

## Sports Desk

Iran's Football Federation blamed "non-sporting and political considerations" after the United States revoked its allocation of tickets for Team Melli's World Cup group-stage matches, accusing the co-host of obstructing the attendance of Iranian supporters amid a bitter diplomatic row.

"With less than three days remaining until the start of the 2026 World Cup, the United States has once again acted to obstruct the presence of Iranian supporters at the stadiums hosting the national team's three group-stage matches," the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Depriving Iranian fans of access to their legally allocated and officially designated ticket quota runs counter to the spirit of international competitions and the principle of equal treatment among participating nations. The move raises serious questions about the influence of non-sporting and political con-

siderations on the organization of the world's biggest football event.

"Iranian football fans have consistently been among the national team's greatest assets at international tournaments, attending matches while respecting regulations and upholding professional standards. It is therefore expected that their legitimate rights will be respected in the same manner as those of supporters from other countries," the statement added.

The United States has presented several bureaucratic hurdles for Iran at the global football showpiece, including refusing to issue visas to some members of its support staff, as the two countries have effectively remained at war since the attack on Iranian territory on February 28.

The Iranian football body said FIFA regulations entitle participating federations to an allocation of eight percent of tickets for each match, which are distributed to supporters through official channels. According to the statement, FFIRI had already begun ticket sales for group-stage



Iranian fans look on as the national team bus arrives in Tijuana, Mexico, on June 7, 2026.

● VICTOR MEDINA/REUTERS

matches against New Zealand, Belgium and Egypt — all to be played in the United States — after receiving its allocation, with some fans having already made

the necessary travel arrangements. "However, in an unexpected move, the allocation granted to the Iranian Football Federation has been withdrawn, and under

the current circumstances, the federation is unable to provide even a single ticket to supporters of the national team," it said. FFIRI also called on FIFA and

tournament organizers "to uphold the principles of neutrality, fairness and established regulations, and to provide the necessary conditions for Iranian supporters."

Neither FIFA nor the US organizers have publicly commented on the issue. The complaint is the latest dispute surrounding Iran's participation in the World Cup, following visa issues that have prevented around 15 administrative and management staff members in its delegation from entering the United States.

Rising tensions also prompted Iran to move its World Cup training base to the Mexican border city of Tijuana from Tucson, Arizona, as originally planned.

Iran opens its campaign against New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 15 before facing Belgium in the same city on June 21 and Egypt in Seattle on June 26.

## Piazza out to end Iran's slow-start curse as VNL preliminaries open

### Sports Desk

Iran will open its Volleyball Nations League campaign with a daunting test against Brazil in Brasilia today in what could be a defining international season for the men's national team and head coach Roberto Piazza. The two sides also met on the opening day of the 2025 edition, with the South American powerhouse emerging victorious in straight sets on home soil.

When the Italian coach was appointed to the role on a 2+2-year contract midway through 2024, he said his ultimate goal was to steer his team to a "constant place among the top eight teams in the world."

His first year in charge offered signs that he was delivering on that objective, as Iran produced a late surge to finish eighth in the 2025 VNL preliminary-round standings, having ended up among the bottom three teams in each of the previous two editions.

Iran, however, ultimately missed out on a first appearance in the VNL Finals in four

years, as China secured the final quarterfinal berth as host nation despite finishing 17th in the preliminary standings. Piazza's men went on to build on that promising campaign by reaching the World Championship quarterfinals later in the year before falling to surprise package Czechia.

Piazza showed determination and commitment to his role when he — unlike many other foreign coaches in Iranian sport — returned to Iran in late May, after concluding his club duties in Italy's top flight, amid the country's fragile ceasefire with the United States and Israel.

As the Italian enters the second year of his contract, which could prove decisive for the future of his tenure, he will be eager to break Iran's habit of slow starts in the VNL preliminary phase, which has proved costly in recent years.

Iran had to wait until its fourth and final outing of Week 1 to claim its first victory at last year's tournament — a five-set win over Ukraine — before going on to win three of its four

matches in Week 2.

In 2024, Iran went winless through its first eight matches across the opening two weeks, and back-to-back victories over the United States and the Netherlands in the final week did little to alter the team's fate as it finished second from bottom of the table.

The situation was not much different in the 2023 campaign. Iran's only Week 1 victory came against relative minnows China, and the team managed just one more win in its remaining preliminary matches to finish above only Bulgaria and China in the standings.

Tricky tests will come thick and fast in Week 1 for Piazza's men, who will take on Bulgaria — last year's World Championship runner-up — on Thursday before facing Argentina and Belgium later in the week at the Nilson Nelson Gymnasium. Iran also faced both Argentina and Bulgaria in the previous edition, beating the South Americans 3-1 before sweeping Bulgaria in straight sets on the final day of the preliminary round.

## Iran women rout Lebanon, get off the mark in AVC Nations Cup

### Sports Desk

Iran secured its first victory at the AVC Women's Nations Cup in Candon, Philippines, with a comfortable straight-sets win over Lebanon (25-9, 25-8, 25-15) on Tuesday. Outside hitter Fatemeh Khalili led the scoring for Iran with 10 points, while opposite spiker Elaheh Poursaleh added nine.

The victory lifted Iran to fourth in the Pool B standings, although South Korean coach Lee Doh-ee's side still faces a daunting task in its bid to secure a semifinal berth, with two rounds of matches remaining in the preliminary phase.

Fresh from winning the CAVA Championship title last week, Iran opened its campaign with a 3-1 defeat to Indonesia (25-15, 21-25, 25-21, 25-22) on Saturday before surrendering a one-set lead in a 3-1 loss to Kazakhstan (13-25, 25-20, 25-14, 25-19) on Monday.

Kazakhstan, which Iran defeated twice at the CAVA Championship, tops the group standings on three wins, level with second-placed Vietnam, which edged Indonesia in a thrilling five-set encounter



● volleyball.ir

on Monday. Iran will return to action against defending champion Vietnam at the Candon City Arena on Thursday before taking on Hong Kong, China, in its final group-stage match on Friday. The top two teams from each of the two groups will advance to the semifinals.

South Korea and Chinese Taipei occupy the top two spots in Pool A, respectively, having won all three of their matches.

### FISU World University Championship Combat Sports:

## Iranians win six medals in freestyle wrestling

### Sports Desk

Iran enjoyed a strong start to freestyle wrestling competition at the FISU World University Championship Combat Sports in Brasilia, Brazil, collecting three gold medals, two silvers and one bronze across six weight classes on Monday.

Mahdi Veisi delivered Iran's first gold medal in the 57kg category. The Iranian wrestler opened his campaign with a dominant 10-0 victory over his German opponent before defeating a Turkish rival in the second round. Veisi then cruised past a Canadian wrestler by the same scoreline to reach the final, where he once again faced the Turkish competitor and emerged victorious to claim the title.

In the 65kg division, Mohammadreza Hosseini secured Iran's second gold medal. Hosseini defeated opponents from Russia and Moldova en route to the final, where he overcame a wrestler from Turkey to top the podium.

Mohammad-Javad Salehi added a third gold for Iran in the 92kg weight class. After recording victories over wrestlers from Russia and Poland and then defeating a Moldovan opponent in the semi-finals, Salehi beat Canada's representative in the final to seal the championship.

At 125kg, Morteza Janmohammadzadeh advanced to the final with commanding 10-0 wins over wrestlers from Hungary and Mongolia before defeating a Russian opponent in the third round. He was ultimately beaten by a Turkish wrestler in the gold-medal bout and had to settle for silver.

Mohammad-Hossein Norouzi also earned a silver medal in the 86kg category. He defeated opponents from Finland and Spain to reach the final, where he fell to a Turkish rival.

Meanwhile, Mahdi Abbaspour claimed bronze in the 74kg division. Abbaspour beat a German wrestler in his opening match but lost to a Russian opponent in the next round. He bounced back in the bronze-medal contest against a wrestler from Moldova to secure a place on the podium.



● IAWFIR



Head coach Roberto Piazza (L) gives instruction to Iranian national volleyball team players during a training session in Brasilia, Brazil, on June 8, 2026.

● PAYAM SANI/volleyball.ir