

Iran threatens to suspend World Cup matches over unofficial flags, political chants

Sports Desk

Iran will halt matches at the upcoming FIFA World Cup and may refuse to continue playing if unofficial flags are displayed or political chants are heard in the stands, Iranian Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali has said.

Team Melli will open its Group G campaign at the global showpiece – co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada – against New Zealand on Monday at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, California, home to a large Iranian diaspora community. Iran will then face Belgium at the same venue six days later before taking on Egypt at Lumen Field in Seattle, Washington, on June 26.

"We have made it clear that if, in any stadium where we play, we see a flag or symbol other than our own national flag, or hear chants that violate accepted norms, the team manager is bound to halt the match," Donyamali said, referring to the Lion and Sun flag – Iran's national flag before the 1979 Islamic Revolution – as well as pos-

sible pro-monarchy chants directed against the Islamic Republic.

"It is the responsibility of the organizers to address and rectify such situations. The security apparatus overseeing the competition is responsible for ensuring suitable conditions for our team and, if necessary, suspending the game. Until these issues are resolved, we reserve the right not to continue playing. I hope such incidents do not occur, as we have been assured that all requirements and regulations will be fully observed," the minister added.

The Iranian national team has faced a series of obstacles in the buildup to what is arguably the most politically charged event in the country's sporting history, as it will be the first FIFA World Cup hosted by a nation receiving the team of a country with which it is at war.

The conflict prompted Iran to move its World Cup training base to the Mexican border city of Tijuana from Tucson, Arizona, as originally planned – a measure taken by the Iranian Football Federation (FFIRI) to avoid possible visa denials for members of the delegation.

The United States nevertheless declined to issue visas to 15 members of the team's support staff,



Iranian players are pictured during a first training session in Tijuana, Mexico, on June 8, 2026.

● MOHSEN DAVOUDI/FFIRI

including FFIRI Secretary-General Hedayat Mombeini and Vice President Mahdi Mohammad Nabi. Upon arriving at Tijuana airport on Sunday, Iran head coach Amir Qalenoee complained that his team "should have been here last week

because a 12-hour time difference requires two weeks to adjust to." "Usually in these tournaments, ethical and human considerations should be respected before technical matters, and I do not think that has been the case for us," the

Iranian coach added.

Adding to the tensions, Iran's ambassador to Mexico, Abolfazl Pasandideh, said last week that the squad had been informed that, under the terms of their visas, the team must enter and leave U.S.

soil on the same day as its matches, raising questions about logistics and whether the restrictions could affect performance.

However, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security dismissed the envoy's claim as "untrue" on Tuesday, saying the Iranian team "will be able to arrive the day before their matches."

Meanwhile, the FFIRI announced on Tuesday that the United States had revoked its allocation of tickets for Iran's three matches, alleging that the decision was driven by "non-sporting and political considerations."

"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 federation said in a statement.

IWBF Men's Repechage:

Iran beats Poland to secure World Championship spot

Sports Desk

Iran's wheelchair basketball team booked its place at September's World Championship after defeating Poland 81-59 in its final Group B game at the IWBF Men's Repechage in Suphan Buri, Thailand, on Wednesday.

Team captain Morteza Abdi led the scoring for Iran with a game-high 25 points, while Mohammad-Hassan Sayyari posted a double-double of 18 points and 11 assists. Mahdi Abbasi, meanwhile, added 12 points

as Iran finished atop the group standings with a perfect record of three victories.

Poland's Mateusz Filipski also recorded a double-double with 13 points and 11 assists, while teammates Andrzej Macek and Krzysztof Grzegorz Kozaryna contributed 12 points apiece.

Iran began its campaign with an emphatic 77-24 victory over Senegal on Monday before defeating Brazil 75-63 the following day at Suphan Buri Indoor Stadium.

Under the tournament format, the top team in each group was due to face the

bottom-placed team from the opposite group, while the runners-up were to meet the third-placed team from the other pool, with the winners of the four crossover matches qualifying for the World Championship in Ottawa, Canada.

However, Wednesday's victory handed Iran direct qualification after Venezuela's late withdrawal from the tournament left Group A without a fourth-placed team. The World Championship will also serve as a qualification pathway for the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games.



● paralympic.ir

FISU World University Championship Combat Sports: Iran sweeps 10 medals to dominate freestyle wrestling

Sports Desk

Iran dominated the freestyle wrestling competition at the FISU World University Championship Combat Sports in Brasilia, Brazil, securing medals in all 10 weight classes, including seven golds.

Four Iranians stole the show on Tuesday by claiming gold in their respective divisions.

Mahdi Rahimi opened Iran's account for the day by winning the 61kg final, while Mohammad Bakhshi defeated his Russian opponent to claim the title in the 70kg category.

Adel Panahian suffered a second-round defeat to a Russian wrestler but bounced back to beat the same opponent in the final and take gold in the 79kg Nordic bracket.

Erfan Alizadeh, meanwhile, defeated opponents from Canada, Brazil and Russia before capping Iran's remarkable campaign with a victory over a Turkish rival in the 97kg final.



success of Mahdi Veisi (57kg), Mohammadreza Hosseini (65kg) and Mohammad-Javad Salehi (92kg), who had claimed three gold medals for Iran on the opening day of competition in the Brazilian capital.

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

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

Mahdi Abbaspour, meanwhile, finished his 74kg campaign with a bronze medal. The Iranian defeated a German wrestler in his opening match before losing to a Russian opponent in the next round. He recovered in the bronze-medal match against a Moldovan rival to secure a place on the podium.

UWW World Rankings:

Amouzad rises to No. 1 in freestyle 65kg

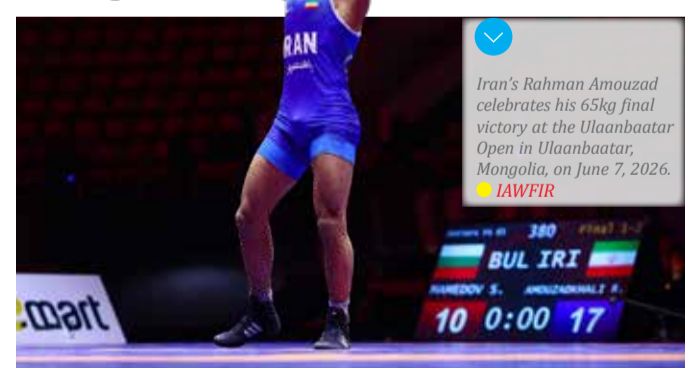
Sports Desk

Iranian freestyle wrestler Rahman Amouzad has climbed to the top of the UWW World Rankings in the 65kg division following his gold-medal triumph at the Ulaanbaatar Open in Mongolia.

The world champion made a spectacular return to international competition since the 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games, capping his campaign on Sunday with a remarkable comeback victory over Bulgaria's Shamil Mamedov in the final.

Trailing 8-1 at the break and 10-3 with just 1:22 remaining, the 23-year-old Iranian produced a sensational late surge to secure a 17-10 victory and avenge his defeat to the Russian-born wrestler in the bronze-medal match at the 2023 World Championships.

The result further underlined Amouzad's consistency on the international stage. The Iranian, who won silver at the Paris 2024 Olympics, has now lost only two of his last 30 international bouts. Speaking after the final, Amou-



Iran's Rahman Amouzad celebrates his 65kg final victory at the Ulaanbaatar Open in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on June 7, 2026.

● IAWFIR

zad said he would prefer not to compete at September's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games, opting instead to focus fully on pursuing the third World Championship gold medal of his career at October's event in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Iran's five-man squad completed a clean sweep of freestyle medals at the latest Ranking Series tournament in the Mongolian capital.

Mohammad Nokhodi claimed gold in the 86kg category, while Mahdi Yousefi took silver at 79kg.

Ahoura Khateri (61kg) and Abolfazl Rahmani (92kg) added bronze medals to Iran's tally. Elsewhere in the freestyle rankings, Iran's Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan is ranked second behind Russia's Zavur Uguev in the 61kg division, while Amirali Azarpira (97kg) and world champion Amirhossein Zare (125kg) occupy second place in their respective weight classes. Kamaran Qasempour sits third in the 86kg rankings behind American Zahid Valencia and Azerbaijan's Arsenid Dhiocv.