

Iran protests FIBA over World Cup hosting arrangements

Sports Desk

The Basketball Federation of Iran has lodged a protest to the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) over the allocation of hosting rights and the conditions provided to the national team during the FIBA World Cup Asian qualifiers, calling for the matter to be reviewed.

Iran's home game against New Zealand in the second-round Group E of the qualifiers on Aug. 28 was moved to Pasay, Philippines, over security concerns amid the wartime circumstances in the region – the same reason that forced the country to host Syria in Amman, Jordan, in the previous group phase in June.

In a letter to FIBA Secretary General Andreas Zagklis on Monday, the national governing body of the sport stressed the need to uphold "fairness, equal treatment of teams and competitive balance," while expressing concern over the Philippines being repeatedly awarded hosting rights despite being one of the teams in Iran's group.

Entering the second round on the back of a top-spot finish in the preliminary Group C – thanks to a 5-1 run – Iran got off to a disappointing start in the fourth window of the qualifiers, suffering an overtime 93-91 setback against New Zealand before losing 68-56 to the Philippines three days later in Pasay.

"The repeated allocation of hosting rights to the Philippines, given that the team is one of the direct rivals of the other teams in the group, raises concerns over the principles of neutrality and equality of competition," the letter read.

Iran has asked FIBA to formally review the hosting arrangements for the group and insisted that its home fixtures against Australia and the Philippines in late November should be played in Tehran in line with the principle of fairness and equal competitive conditions.

The federation also argued that Iran's ability to host games should be assessed under the same standards applied to countries such as Lebanon, Qatar and



Saudi Arabia, calling for uniform criteria to be used in determining hosting rights for all teams. The Iranian federation also called on FIBA to investigate the poor conditions provided for its national team during recent competitions, though it did not elaborate on the matter. The letter concluded by reaffirm-

ing Iran's commitment to FIBA, fair play and equal treatment of all teams, saying the purpose of raising the issue was to safeguard the integrity of the competition and ensure fair and appropriate conditions for all teams participating in the 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup qualifiers. Iran called on FIBA to review the

issues as soon as possible and take the necessary measures to protect the rights of Iran and the other teams competing in the World Cup qualifiers. The recent setbacks left Iran third in the Group E standings with 13 points – three and one behind Australia and New Zealand, respectively, and level with

fourth-placed Jordan. The top three in each of the two qualifying groups, plus the best fourth-placed team, will secure a spot at the 2027 World Cup in Qatar next summer.

Iran will open its bid for a fifth men's basketball medal in six Asian Games editions against Qatar on Thursday at Nagoya's Aichi International Arena.

Iran will then take on Chinese Taipei on Sept. 12 in a repeat of the thrilling quarterfinal clash at last year's FIBA Asia Cup in Saudi Arabia, where Iran produced an epic fightback to overcome a 21-point deficit and win 78-75.

The final round of the Group B fixtures will see Iran take on Jordan on Sept. 13. The two sides met at the World Cup Asian qualifiers in July. Iran comprehensively won 67-49, making amends for the 73-60 setback against its familiar West Asian foe earlier in the qualifiers in February.

The top two teams from each group will be joined by the two best third-placed teams in the quarterfinals.

World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series:

Salimi wins bronze but red flag raised for Iran ahead of Asian Games



Iran's Arian Salimi (red) is seen in action against Russia's Vladislav Larin in the men's +80kg semifinals at the World Taekwondo Grand Prix in Muju, South Korea, on September 7, 2026.

WORLD TAEKWONDO

day.

Reigning world and Asian champion Zandi opened his campaign with a 2-0 win over Saudi Arabia's Riad Nasser Hamdi before losing 2-1 to two-time world champion Bae Jun-seo of South Korea.

Razmian, meanwhile, defeated Chinese Taipei's Pan Kuei-en 2-1 in his first outing but fell to Croatia's Josip Teskera by the same scoreline.

The second day of action was also one to forget for Mehran Barkhordari and Nahid Kiani – silver medalists at the Paris 2024 Olympics – as well as reigning Asian champion Amir-sina Bakhtiari.

Desperate to bounce back from a shock first-round defeat at the WT Women's Open Championships last week in Taiyuan, China, Kiani opened with a 2-0 victory over Poland's Niko Lisowska in the women's -57kg division but was beaten in consecutive rounds by fifth-seeded Amina Dehhaoui – the Iranian's second defeat to the young Moroccan following the Chuncheon Korea Open setback in July.

Barkhordari bowed out early in the men's -80kg class, losing 2-1 to American Isaiah Young in his first bout. Bakhtiari had a better run in the -80kg class, beating Spain's Juan Antonio Canovas 2-0 and Jordanian Saleh El-Sharabaty – an Olympic silver medalist in Tokyo 2020 – 2-1, but was ultimately undone by Young in the quarterfinals.

Salimi emerged victorious in successive rounds against his compatriot but saw his campaign end in the semifinals after a 2-1 defeat to Russia's Vladislav Larin.

Salimi bounced back from a 4-0 loss to the Russian – an Olympic gold medalist in Tokyo 2020 – in the first round to win 7-2 in the second, but ultimately fell short 16-8 in a thrilling decider to settle for a joint third-place finish alongside Vasileios Tholiotis of Greece.

Larin was beaten in back-to-back rounds by Egypt's Seif Eissa – a -87kg world champion in Wuxi last year – in the final.

Earlier in the competition, Iran's Abolfazl Zandi and Mahdi Razmian suffered second-round exits in the men's -58kg category on the opening

Iran eyes U20 World Cup spot after Asian Cup qualification, Zadeh-Attar says

Sports Desk

Iran U20 captain Abolfazl Zadeh-Attar says reaching the 2027 FIFA U20 World Cup is the team's main objective after securing a place at next year's AFC U20 Asian Cup.

The Foolad Khuzestan striker was on target from the spot in 95th-minute as Iran came from behind to beat hosts Vietnam 3-1 in Viet Tri on Sunday and finish second to North Korea in Group C with six points and qualify as one of the seven best runners-up across the eight groups.

"We were in one of the toughest groups in Asia, and all four teams had a high level of quality," Zadeh-Attar told the official website of the Iranian Football Federation. "Fortunately, thanks to the efforts of the players and coaching staff, as well as the support we received, we managed to get through the group and qualify for the Asian Cup."

The Iran captain said none of the three matches was straightforward, highlighting the quality of the opponents.

In the 2-1 victory over Palestine on the opening day, Iran faced a side "with several players born in Europe and involved in European football," he said. Despite that, Iran created numerous chances and could have won by a bigger margin with more accuracy and luck in front of goal. Zadeh-Attar described North Korea as one of Asia's strongest teams, pointing to the continuity within its squad and its recent success at youth level.

"They have played together for several years, and their U17 team had also reached the round of 16 at the World Cup, which shows the quality of the team we faced," he said.



Iran led North Korea until the 92nd minute but conceded twice late on to suffer a painful defeat. Zadeh-Attar said the team lost concentration in the closing stages and argued that Iran did not deserve to lose. He also claimed that a second Iran goal was incorrectly ruled out for offside, which he felt could have effectively sealed victory. The forward said the squad quickly put the setback behind it and turned its attention to Vietnam.

"Vietnam proved a difficult opponent in front of its home fans, using its pace to put Iran under pressure at times," Zadeh-Attar said, adding: "The players regrouped at half-time and committed themselves to defending Iran's reputation."

Zadeh-Attar warned that Iran could not afford to become complacent, stressing that there

are no easy opponents in Asian football anymore. He pointed to Australia, the defending champion, as well as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates among the teams that failed to qualify. "We have only taken one step," he said. "Our main goal from the first day of forming this team has been to qualify for the World Cup."

Iran head coach Qassem Haddadifar has repeatedly urged the players to progress step by step, Zadeh-Attar added, saying the team would need continued support as it prepares for the Asian Cup and its bid to reach the World Cup.

The tournament will also serve as the qualification pathway for the 2027 FIFA U20 World Cup, with the four semifinalists at next March's Asian Cup finals will secure places in the global showcase in Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.