

# Iran set for U23 Wrestling Worlds after US issues visas to delegation

## Sports Desk

Iran is set to compete at the upcoming U23 Wrestling World Championships in Las Vegas after the United States issued entry visas to all but one member of the country's 38-strong delegation, Iranian sports news website Varzesh3, citing the national governing body of the sport, reported on Tuesday.

The ninth edition of the annual showpiece will kick off on Monday, with Iran – represented by 20 wrestlers – looking to repeat its 2024 freestyle team title, having finished runner-up to the United States last year, while chasing a fifth Greco-Roman crown – and third in a row – in seven years.

Alireza Dabir, the chairman of the Iranian Wrestling Federation, said last month that the country would withdraw from the event "if even one member of the delegation is denied a US visa."

One of the Iranian coaches is yet to be granted a visa "due to incomplete documents," but the host country is making efforts to issue his visa within the next 48 hours, Varzesh3 wrote.

Abolfazl Mohammadnejad will headline the Iranian freestyle



Iranian freestyle wrestler Abolfazl Mohammadnejad, pictured at the 2025 U23 World Championships, will defend his 125kg title in Las Vegas, Nevada, United States.  
● UWW

squad in Las Vegas, entering the 125kg event as the defending champion and fresh off a gold medal at the U20 Worlds in Bratislava, Slovakia, in August. Mobin Azimi, who won the 92kg gold at last year's edition as well as the Asian Senior Championships in April, will be among the favorites in the 97kg class.

Abolfazl Rahmani will compete

in the 92kg class, looking to improve on his U20 world silver in the Slovakian capital, while Reza Afshar will be part of the 86kg division.

Mahdi Yousefi will chase a third medal at the competition, having won gold in 2024 before settling for bronze last year, when he gets his campaign underway in the 79kg category.

Ali Karampour, a world U20

bronze medalist in 2024, will be the Iranian wrestler in the 74kg class, while Ebrahim Elahi (70kg) will vie for the third world age-group medal of his

career, having won U17 gold in 2022 plus U20 bronze last year. Ahoura Khateri will be among the wrestlers to watch in the 65kg class, following his two bronzes at the U20 Worlds and the Ranking Series event in Ulaanbaatar earlier this year.

Ebrahim Khari (61kg) – a bronze medalist at the 2024 edition – and Ali Yahyapour (57kg) complete the Iranian freestyle roster in Las Vegas.

In the Greco-Roman competition, Armin Shamsipour will be a hopeful in the 55kg class after he bagged an impressive gold medal in Bratislava, while Morad Ashiri will be an unheralded competitor in the 60kg class.

Erfan Jarkani (63kg) will go after his third medal of the international season to add to his Zagreb Open gold and the Asian Championships silver at senior level.

Mohammad Kamali will compete in the 67kg class, with Ahmadreza Mohsennejad entering the 72kg contest as the reigning senior Asian bronze medalist.

Former world U17 and U20 silver medalist Ahoura Boveiri will represent the Iranian squad in the 77kg class, while 17-year-old Abolfazl Mohmadi will take part in the 82kg division.

Yasin Yazdi will fancy his chances in the 87kg class after winning an impressive silver at last year's Asian Senior Championships, with Mohammad-Hadi Seydi looking to build on his bronze at February's Zagreb Open Ranking Series event.

Abolfazl Fat'hi – an U20 world bronze medalist last year – completes the Iranian GR squad in the 130kg class.

Iranian sport has struggled with entry visa complications for international tournaments in recent years, especially since a military conflict between Iran and a US-Israeli coalition began on February 28.

The Iranian wrestling squad missed out on the 2023 U23 Worlds in Tirana, Albania, due to the same issue, while members of the national team's support staff were prevented from entering the United States for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in June.

In the latest development, Iran's men's wheelchair basketball team had to withdraw from the IWBF World Championships in Ottawa earlier this month after host Canada refused to issue entry visas to head coach Behrouz Soltani and his assistant, Mohammadreza Dastyar.

## Taekwondo Federation election annulled in preliminary court ruling

### Sports Desk

The election of the Iranian Taekwondo Federation, which saw Hadi Saei voted in as chairman of the sport's national governing body for a second consecutive term in May, has been annulled in a preliminary ruling by the country's Administrative Justice Court, although the federation's current leadership remains in place pending an appeal.

The federation's electoral assembly was held on May 11, with Saei, the most decorated Iranian in the history of the Olympic Games with two golds and one bronze, securing enough votes from members to retain the presidency. However, candidates Fariborz Asgari and Majid Nayyeri subsequently filed complaints against the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, challenging aspects of the election process and, in particular, the approval of Saei's candidacy.

The 45th Branch of the Administrative Justice Court has now ruled to annul the election, according to Iranian media reports. The ruling, however, is not final and can be challenged through the appeals process.

Asgari and Nayyeri were among 10 final candidates for the presidency, alongside Asghar Rahimi, Yousef Karami, Ali Nouri, Hossein Hosseinzadeh, Ahmad Larjani, Sirous Rezaei, Seyyed Hossein Zahedi and Saei.

Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali sought to play down the significance of the ruling, stressing that it was only an initial decision and that the ministry had a legal opportunity to defend the election process.

"This does not mean the election has been annulled. The court has issued an initial ruling and we have three weeks to pursue the matter," Donyamali told reporters on Tuesday. "There is no

cause for concern and, God willing, the issue will be resolved."

Donyamali added that he had personally reviewed the relevant documents and expressed confidence about the outcome of the appeals process.

Meanwhile, Hadi Afshar, secretary general of the Taekwondo Federation, also emphasized that the legal process had not yet been concluded and said the federation had not received an official notification of the election's annulment.

He said the Administrative Justice Court had its own legal procedures and that the Sports Ministry, as the body responsible for approving candidates' eligibility and overseeing the election, had the right to defend its decisions.

"If something is officially communicated to us, we have a duty to study it and, if necessary, prepare the relevant legal submission," Afshar told ANA. "The Ministry of Sport will also defend the actions it took as the responsible authority."

Afshar said the ministry had supporting documents regarding the approval process and could present them to the relevant authorities. He added that receiving requests for explanations or documents from bodies such as the Administrative Justice Court or the General Inspection Organization was not unusual in administrative matters. For now, Saei remains at the helm of the federation while the appeal is considered.

The court ruling comes at a

particularly important time for Iranian taekwondo. The national team recently returned from the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games with two gold medals, one silver and one bronze, while preparations for the Olympic qualification cycle are also getting underway. The uncertainty surrounding the federation's leadership could therefore add tension to an already busy period for Iranian taekwondo. The final outcome will depend on the appeals process and any subsequent ruling by the court.

Hadi Saei was elected as the Iranian Taekwondo Federation president for a second term in May.  
● VARZESH3



## Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games:

## Iran facing reduced athletics gold prospects amid merged classes

### Sports Desk

Iran's para-athletics team will compete at the upcoming Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games with 44 athletes, but the merging of classes and removal of some events by the host country are expected to reduce the country's gold-medal tally compared with the previous edition.

The Iranian athletics squad will be represented by 25 men and 19 women at the fifth edition of the multi-sport event, which will open at Nagoya's Paloma Mizuho Stadium on October 18. "The team is currently in very good condition and the athletes have posted impressive marks in training," Iranian coach Bahman Rezaei told ISNA. "If they can reproduce those results at the Games, we will certainly achieve satisfactory results."

However, he acknowledged that predicting Iran's medal haul would be difficult because of changes to the competition program in Nagoya. "Considering the merging of classes and the absence of some of the medalists from the previous edition, it is



Sprinter Hajar Safarzadeh, a silver medalist at the Paris 2024 Paralympics, will be among Iran's hopefuls at the upcoming Asian Para Games.  
● GETTY IMAGES

difficult to predict the number of para-athletics medals," Rezaei said. "But it appears that our medal tally will be lower than in Hangzhou."

"We won 21 gold, 20 silver and 11 bronze medals in Hangzhou 2022 with 52 athletes, but this time, with 44 athletes and some of the previous medalists missing, the conditions will certainly be more difficult," he said. "Repeating the Hangzhou gold-medal tally will not be easy because some events have been removed by the host country and will not be held."

Asked about the prospects of record-breaking performances in Nagoya, he said the athletes could achieve sev-

eral new marks "if they reproduce the form they have shown in domestic competitions."

Iran's para-athletics team will be one of the largest components of the country's delegation to the Asian Para Games, placing considerable responsibility on the squad to contribute to the overall medal tally. Rezaei expressed hope that the team could once again play a significant role in Iran's campaign and help the delegation improve its position in the medal standings.

"I hope that in Nagoya, we can perform successfully as we did in Hangzhou and play a major role in improving Iran's position at the Asian Para Games," he said.