



The war against Iran may have ended, but Trump's war against anti-war Iranians continues

## Description

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Iran football fans at World Cup 2026

It was upsetting for fans to learn that Team Melli – the affectionate nickname for Iran's national football team – was forced by US immigration authorities [to leave immediately](#) after their World Cup match in Los Angeles against New Zealand. Previously, the Iranian national football team was supposed to stay in Los Angeles after the match to recover. This incident follows several Iranian football personnel being [denied visas](#) to enter the US.

When the US and Israel were still at war with Iran, Team Melli was forced to abandon its Arizona training base. At the invitation of Mexico's president, Claudia Sheinbaum, they established a base in Tijuana instead, where its citizens have given them [a warm welcome](#). However, the shifting US immigration policy concerning the Iranian football team and lack of support from FIFA has prompted Amir Ghalenoei, head coach for Team Melli, to [remark](#)

Our team is the most oppressed one in the whole World Cup.

I can't help but think that the barriers imposed on Team Melli also have to do with them [reminding the US](#) of the 168 children and civilians killed by a US double-tap missile on a school in Minab. The US government doesn't just view Iranian football players as the [fifth column](#) it has also weaponised immigration during the early days of its war on anti-war Iranians.

## Yousof Azizi

Yousof Azizi is an Iranian PhD student at Virginia Tech University. He has used his research on US nuclear policy on Iran to make frequent appearances on [BBC Persian Service](#) and [VOA Farsi](#)

advocating against continued sanctions and war in Iran. Azizi [was detained by ICE](#) on 13 April in the driveway of his home after dropping off his children at school. Despite having no warrant, ICE detained Azizi under the pretext of having a visa issue.

The [Free Yousof Azizi campaign](#) maintains that, a few weeks before his arrest, an FBI agent spoke to Azizi's wife, asking about the dates when he was a student in Iran at Sharif University. Because his wife could not recall the dates of Azizi's university attendance, the US authorities are using this to fabricate charges that Azizi was a member of the [Student Basij Organisation](#) (SBO) from 2006-2010. The US government designates the SBO as a terrorist organisation. The Free Yousof Azizi campaign insists that he was never a member of the SBO.

When Azizi was detained, he was sent to various detention centres, first in Maryland, then moved to Louisiana, and finally sent to an ICE facility in Arizona. This constant displacement is a form of psychological harm intended to disorient Azizi and limit his campaign and legal team from being able to provide effective support to free him and prevent his deportation.

## Soleimani Afshar **default watermark**

Another Kafkaesque case involves Hamideh Soleimani Afshar and her daughter, Sarina Hosseiny, who were detained by ICE on 3 April. This came after American commentator [Laura Loomer](#) [claimed on X](#) that Soleimani Afshar and her daughter are the relatives of Qasem Soleimani - the prominent Iranian military officer of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), who was [assassinated](#) by a drone strike ordered by President Donald Trump during his first term in office.

Loomer tagged US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in her X post, claiming that Soleimani Afshar was banned from Instagram for spreading "Islamic terrorism", as well as for writing critical posts against the US-Israel war against Iran and against Reza Pahlavi, the crown prince of Iran, who rubs shoulders with [Zionists and European fascists](#) to enact regime change.

After an investigation by [Drop Site](#) it was found that Soleimani Afshar shares no relation to Qasem Soleimani. The reality is that these women were forced to leave Iran after a dance recital that Hosseiny participated in at the age of 12 went viral on an Iranian diasporic satellite television station, jeopardising her safety within Iran.

Currently, Soleimani Afshar and Hosseiny are in a South Texas ICE processing centre, victims not only of misidentification, but of the Trump administration's violence against anti-war Iranians in general.

## Which Iranians count?

Days into the war against Iran, Rubio had removed the legal status of Dr Fatemeh Ardeshir-Larijani - a cancer specialist formerly based at Emory University and the daughter of Iranian politician and Kant scholar, Dr. Ali Larijani.

Pro-Pahlavi fascists [launched a campaign of intimidation](#) to get Larijani removed from her university position. This prompted Rubio to revoke the [citizenship of Larijani](#) and her family, just for being the daughter of Ali Larijani. All of this happened weeks after [an Israeli airstrike assassinated her father](#)

Meanwhile, Parviz Sabeti — the deputy head of SAVAK, Iran’s secret police under Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, and one of the most feared men responsible for torturing and killing many Iranian political prisoners — has been able to live a quiet lifestyle in Florida for nearly 50 years.

Only now [has his brutal past](#) caught up with him. With the knowledge of the US State Department, Sabeti was able to transfer up to \$20 million from Iran into the US using an alias name to live comfortably away from prying eyes.

## Anti-war does not equate to pro-government

The weaponization of visas and citizenship by the Trump administration has its supporters among the pro-Pahlavis. Sana Ebrahimi Ledene, a pro-Pahlavi activist, [remarked in April on X](#) that the Iranian diaspora should make a deal with the Trump administration to:

track down and deport every regime[-]affiliated Iranian in the United States.

If this plan were in place, the likes of Azizi, Hamideh Soleimani Afshar and her daughter, Sarina Hosseini, would already be deported.

Pro-Pahlavi fascists regularly conflated those Iranians who were against Trump’s war as being pro-Iranian government, when many of us did not want to see the US and Israel harm Iran’s sovereignty and commit war crimes, following Trump’s [genocidal threats](#) against Iran in April that:

a whole civilisation will die tonight.

Meanwhile, the likes of Parviz Sabeti, who has committed crimes against humanity, would remain protected in this system because of his anti-Iranian government position. Pro-Pahlavi fascists may have stopped their [public goose-stepping and black shirt parades](#) in Manchester and London, but we cannot let them and politicians use existing draconian immigration policy in the US, UK, and the EU to criminalise dissent and intimidate anti-war Iranians.

*Featured image via the Canary*

By [Sanaz Raji](#)

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