



World cup chaos as US denies visas to Iranian team officials

Description

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World Cup

[Iran's Football Federation](#) (IFF) has accused the US of [vindictive behavior](#) after it denied visas to 14 officials and backroom staff from Iran's World Cup team.

Hedayat Mombeini, Iran Football Federation's secretary-general, and Mehdi Mohammad Nabi, its vice president, are among the staff who do not have visas. The country's first game is in Los Angeles on June 16.

The US, Mexico and Canada are jointly hosting the tournament, which starts on June 11.

Iran had already [moved](#) its training camp from Tucson, Arizona, to Tijuana, Mexico, just across the US border. This was because of problems processing visas.

The IFF said the visa denials [have](#)

effectively denied the Iranian national team the opportunity for a level playing field and a competition free from discrimination.

Previously, Tom Barrack, the US Ambassador to Turkey, congratulated his embassy staff for processing the Iranian team's visas. In response, the Iranian Embassy in Ankara said:

You cannot whitewash conduct that violates FIFA regulations and breaches the United States' host obligations merely by praising yourselves.

This represents the worst possible form of politically biased interference in sport.

Iran's football federation [added](#) to those remarks:

The US government, continuing its hostile actions against the national team, made a non-sporting and completely political decision to refuse visas for key managerial and administrative members of the Iranian national football team.

No other teams or their officials have been denied visas. However, fans from Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, Iran, and Senegal are all banned from entering the US due to [Trump's travel bans](#)

Journalists barred

The International Sports Press Association (AIPS) has [written to FIFA](#). It claims that the US has [denied](#) visas to many Iranian and African journalists to cover the World Cup.

Gianni Merlo, president of AIPS, wrote:

There are many cases: Iranian and African colleagues, some of whom have been given single entries, so if their team goes to Canada or Mexico and they follow it, they can no longer return to the States. The cases are unacceptable, and, I repeat, unacceptable. Politicians always say that sport unites and builds bridges between young people in countries in conflict, but in this case, we are going in the opposite direction.

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Detaining players

Now, Iran's squad has been [notified](#) that they must enter and leave US soil on the same day of their matches.

However, after US border agents [detained](#) an Iraqi player for over seven hours, this raises serious questions.

ICE held and searched the phone of Aymen Hussein, Iraq's World Cup striker, at Chicago's O'Hare airport.

Hussein, the man who scored the goal that secured Iraq's qualification for the tournament, was finally allowed in. However, the team's photographer, Talal Salah, was [barred](#) from entering the US after being detained and questioned for more than 10 hours.

In a statement since entering the US, Hussein [questioned](#)

Why is America hosting the World Cup if it is so hostile to foreign nationals?

If Iranian players are held for questioning when they enter the US, it could dramatically impact their ability to get games on time, if at all.

The Iranian squad has three group matches in the United States, in Los Angeles and Seattle.

World cup chaos

The World Cup has already seen more chaos than most previous tournaments, and it hasn't even started yet.

The Japanese team had to move to a new training venue after players [complained](#) that the pitches were unsuitable for play.

In England's pre-tournament friendly, [fans noticed](#) the names of players shown on the big screen were all muddled. Hilariously, according to the screen, Marcus Stones, Djed Bellingham, and Jarrell Rashford were all in England's starting 11.

Aside from the blatant racism involved in travel bans and revoking visas, all of this goes to show that the US under Trump is completely unable to even facilitate a world-renowned sporting event.

Trump's America is a global lockdown, and the World Cup will only make that more obvious.

Featured image via [FRANCE 24 English/Youtube](#)

By [HG](#)

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