

NCRI-US Hosts Los Angeles Press Conference on Iranian Athletes and Sports Governance Ahead of FIFA World Cup

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, June 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- LOS ANGELES, June 10, 2026 — As attention turns to the opening of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the U.S. Representative Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran ([NCRI-US](#)) held a press conference and exhibition on the South Lawn of Los Angeles City Hall to discuss issues related to Iranian athletes, sports governance, and the relationship between politics and sport in Iran.

The event brought together former Iranian national team athletes, youth representatives, members of the Iranian-American community, and [NCRI](#) supporters. Organizers displayed photographs and biographical information about athletes whom they said had faced imprisonment, persecution, or execution because of their political views.

According to NCRI-US, the event was organized to highlight concerns regarding the independence of sports institutions in Iran and the treatment of athletes who have expressed political opinions. Speakers discussed what they described as political influence within Iranian football and other sports organizations and referenced FIFA regulations concerning the autonomy of member associations.

In an earlier interview with Fox News, NCRI-US Deputy Director Alireza Jafarzadeh stated that the organization had presented documentation it says shows connections between current and former Iranian security officials and individuals serving in sports-related positions. He argued that these issues warrant further public discussion regarding sports governance in Iran. He argued that international sports bodies, such as FIFA should look at how Apartheid in South



Los Angeles City Hall, June 10, 2026 – 16-year-old wrestler Milad Sharif, speaking at a conference organized by the US Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, urged FIFA to expel Iran's regime due to IRGC interference in sports & suppression of athletes.

Africa was treated when investigating Iran.

Several speakers shared personal experiences and opinions regarding the role of athletes in public life and political movements.

Hamid Azimi, a member of the NCRI, said that Iranian sports institutions should operate independently of political influence and cited FIFA's principles regarding the autonomy of football associations. He also referenced cases of athletes whom NCRI says were punished because of their political views.



Los Angeles, June 10, 2026 – Athletes Asghar Adibi and Yousef Mahdavi, speaking at a conference organized by the US Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran urging FIFA to expel Iran's regime due to IRGC interference in sports & suppression of athletes.

Former Iranian national team footballer Asghar Adibi and current member of NCRI spoke about his experiences in Iranian football and expressed support for what he described as greater protections for athletes and the separation of sports from political influence. He also discussed athletes who, according to NCRI, faced repercussions because of their political beliefs. Adibi highlighted the NCRI's sports platform, which advocates equal opportunity, non-discrimination, athlete protections, and the separation of sports from political control.

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As a young athlete, I dream of a day when I can compete freely with Iranian athletes—not as victims of a regime, but as equals, as friends, as champions.”

Milad Sharif, a sixteen-year-old wrestler born in the United States

Former Iranian national team goalkeeper Bahram Mavaddat, a member of Iran's 1978 World Cup squad and current member of the NCRI, reflected on his decades-long involvement in football and offered his perspective on changes in Iranian sports organizations following the 1979 revolution. In his Zoom speech, he said that sports institutions should be administered by professional sports

officials and emphasized the importance of athlete rights and independent governance.

Three-time world champion and sixteen-time U.S. national traditional karate champion Dr. Soolmaz Abooli addressed the relationship between athletics and human rights. She said athletes should be able to train and compete without fear of discrimination or political pressure and honored several athletes who have fallen for freedom whose cases have been highlighted by NCRI and other advocacy organizations.

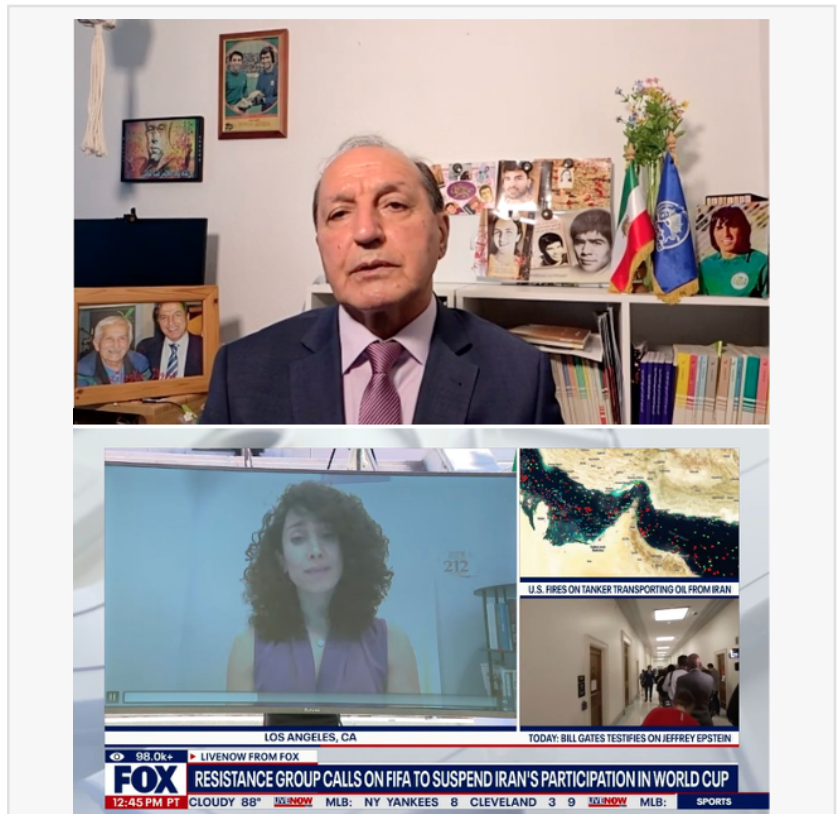
Milad Sharif, a 17-year-old wrestler from the United States, spoke about the impact that reports

concerning Iranian athletes have had on younger generations of Iranian-Americans. He discussed the case of wrestler Saleh Mohammadi, whom the NCRI says was executed because of his political views. Despite the tragedies discussed throughout the event, Sharif expressed optimism about Iran's future and referenced [Maryam Rajavi's](#) Ten-Point Plan as a vision for a country without executions, discrimination, or political repression.

“As a young athlete, I dream of a day when I can compete freely with Iranian athletes—not as victims of a regime, but as equals, as friends, as champions,” he said.

The event also included remarks from individuals who knew former Iranian national football captain Habib Khabiri. Speakers shared personal memories and described him as an athlete who remained committed to his beliefs despite political pressures. According to the UN and human rights organizations, Khabiri was executed in 1984 because of his affiliation with the Iranian opposition movement, the MEK.

Following the press conference, participants held a march and flower-laying ceremony honoring athletes whom organizers said had been imprisoned, persecuted, or executed. Organizers stated that the event was intended to raise awareness about the experiences of Iranian athletes and encourage discussion about the relationship between sports, governance, and human rights.



Los Angeles, June 10, 2026 – Athletes Bahram Mavaddat and Soolmaz Abooli, speaking at a conference organized by the US Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran urging FIFA to expel Iran’s regime due to IRGC interference in sports & suppression of athletes.



Los Angeles, June 10, 2026 – Hamid Azimi speaking at a conference organized by the US Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran to urge FIFA to expel Iran’s regime due to IRGC interference in sports and suppression of athletes.

NCRI-US said it will continue to advocate for athlete protections, equal opportunity in sports, and the independence of sports organizations from political influence, which it said can only happen in a democratic, free republic of Iran.

NCRI-US

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Los Angeles, June 10, 2026–Former footballer Shahram Homayounfar speaking at a conference organized by the US Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran to urge FIFA to expel Iran’s regime due to IRGC interference in sports & suppression of athletes.



Los Angeles City Hall, June 10, 2026 - The US Representative Office of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI-US) holds a press conference to call on FIFA to expel Iran’s regime because of IRGC interference in sports and suppression of athletes.



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