Iran threatened families of national soccer team, according to security source

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<https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/28/football/iran-soccer-family-threats-intl-spt>

The families of Iran’s [World Cup soccer team](https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/27/football/iran-us-flag-protesters-klinsmann-2022-world-cup-spt-intl) have been threatened with imprisonment and torture if the players fail to “behave” ahead of the match against the USA on Tuesday, a source involved in the security of the games said.

Following the refusal of Iranian players to sing the nation’s national anthem in their opening match against England [on November 21](https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/21/football/iran-national-anthem-england-2022-world-cup-spt-intl), the source said that the players were called to a meeting with members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

The source said that they were told that their families would face “violence and and torture” if they did not sing the national anthem or if they joined any political protest against the Tehran regime.

The players sang the anthem before their second game against Wales last Friday, which saw 2-0 victory for Iran.

The source, who is closely monitoring Iran’s security agencies operating in Qatar over the World Cup period, said that dozens of officers from the IRGC had been drafted in to monitor the Iranian players who are not allowed to mingle outside the squad or meet with foreigners.

“There are a large number of Iranian security officers in Qatar collecting information and monitoring the players,” the source said.

Carlos Queiroz, the Portuguese coach of Iran’s national team, met separately with IRGC officers following their threats to Iranian players and their families, the source said.

The source did not say what the content of that alleged conversation had been. Queiroz has said Iranian players can protest at the World Cup, but only within FIFA regulations.

The players, the source said, had been promised “presents and cars” ahead of the England game but the regime, the source alleged, had switched to threatening players and their families after the humiliation of the team’s refusal to sing their national anthem.

“In the last game against Wales, the regime sent over hundreds of these actor supporters in order to create a false sense of support and favor amongst the fans. For the next game against the U.S, the regime is planning to significantly increase the number of actors into the thousands,” the source said.

Iran and the US play each other on Tuesday in a crucial Group B match.

Iran is appearing at this World Cup [under the shadow](https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/27/football/iran-us-flag-protesters-klinsmann-2022-world-cup-spt-intl) of domestic turmoil. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Chief, Volker Turk, has said that the country is in a “full-fledged human rights crisis” as authorities clamp down on anti-regime dissidents.

Protests, referred to by experts as the most significant since the establishment of clerical rule following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, have rocked Iran in recent months and threatened the country’s regime, which has been in power for more than 40 years.

The movement was sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who died after being detained by Iran’s morality police, allegedly for not abiding by the country’s conservative dress code. Iranian security forces have unleashed a violent response.

On Sunday, Iran state media called for the US to be kicked out of the 2022 World Cup after the United States Soccer Federation changed Iran’s flag on its social media platforms to show support for protesters in Iran.

The federation had temporarily displayed Iran’s national flag on its official Twitter, Instagram and Facebook accounts without the emblem of the Islamic Republic. A now-deleted graphic of the Group B standings posted on Saturday displayed the Iranian flag only bearing its green, white and red colors.

US Soccer told CNN on Sunday that it wanted to change the official flag for 24 hours to show “support for the women in Iran fighting for basic human rights” but always planned to go back to the original flag.

The change “was a one-time graphic,” US Soccer told CNN. “We have the main flag on our website and other places.” The emblem is currently back on the flag on US Soccer’s social media channels.

A spokesperson for the State Department told CNN it did not coordinate with US Soccer in the sporting body’s decision to change Iran’s flag on its social media accounts to show support for protesters in Iran.