Flight carrying family of Iranian soccer legend Ali Daei forced to return

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<https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/27/football/ali-daei-iran-family-flight-intl/index.html>

The family of an Iranian soccer great was prevented by authorities in the Islamic Republic from leaving the country on Monday.

A Dubai-bound flight carrying the wife and daughter of Ali Daei was forced to return to [Iran](https://www.cnn.com/specials/middleeast/iran), the country’s semi-official Tasnim news agency reported. Daei is a [critic of the government](https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/24/asia/iran-protesters-protection-underground-network-intl-hnk-dst/index.html).

His wife and daughter were barred from traveling as “they hadn’t informed relevant authorities of their decision to leave despite being ordered to do so,” the official news agency IRNA initially reported in an article it later retracted.

The flight, which took off from Tehran, was ordered to land on the Iranian island of Kish in the Persian Gulf, where the family was ordered to disembark, said IRNA. It was originally destined for Dubai.

Daei, 53, is a former captain of the Iranian national soccer team and once held the record for the most international goals. He has been a vocal supporter of the [ongoing protests in Iran](https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/23/middleeast/iran-footballer-amir-nasr-azadani-execution-intl/index.html), which broke out after 22-year-old Mahsa Amini died in September while in the custody of the country’s [morality police](https://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2022/11/21/iran-protests-sexual-violence-investigation-nima-elbagir-pkg-intl-ldn-vpx.cnn).

Tasnim reported that his wife’s final destination was the United States but Daei, in comments published by the semi-official ISNA news agency, said his wife and daughter were only planning a short visit to Dubai.

Daei’s wife and daughter are not under arrest.

Daei said he wasn’t aware of a travel ban on his wife. “No one has given me an answer about this. I really don’t know what the reason for this is,” he said.

Daei had refused to attend the[FIFA World Cup](https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/28/football/iran-soccer-family-threats-intl-spt/index.html) in Qatar – where Iran was one of the 32 competing teams – in solidarity with Iranian protesters. “Instead of repression, violence and arresting the Iranian people, solve their problems,” Daei wrote in an Instagram post in September.