

**Chambers**  
RANKING GUIDE

# Global

The World's Leading  
Business Lawyers

Iran

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**2020**



## How lawyers are ranked

Every year we carry out thousands of in-depth interviews with clients in order to assess the reputations and expertise of business lawyers worldwide. The qualities we look for (and which determine rankings) include technical legal ability, professional conduct, client service, commercial awareness/astuteness, diligence, commitment, and other qualities most valued by the client.

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## GENERAL BUSINESS LAW

General Business Law
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Atieh Associates Law Firm
T&S Associates
<b>Band 2</b>
Atai & Associates*
International Law Office*
Torossian, Avanesian & Associates
<b>Band 3</b>
Dr. Ali Hatami & Associates
EH & Partners
Sabeti & Khatami
Sanglaj International Consultants
<b>Senior Statespeople</b>
<b>Senior Statespeople: distinguished older partners</b>
Akhlaghi Behrooz <i>International Law Office</i>
<b>Leading Individuals</b>
<b>Band 1</b>
Ehtesham Ahmad <i>T&amp;S Associates</i>
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Gheidi Nasim <i>Law Office of Gheidi &amp; Associates (ORL)</i> ◇
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Kani Farid <i>Atieh Associates Law Firm</i>
Khatami Behnam <i>Sabeti &amp; Khatami</i>
Mehrinfar Mahnaz <i>International Law Office</i>
Sabeti Hooman <i>Sabeti &amp; Khatami</i>
Sadr Encyeh <i>Sadr Law &amp; Consulting Office (SALCO) (ORL)</i> ◇
Shahabi Ali <i>Atieh Associates Law Firm</i>
Tavakoli M. Ebrahim <i>Atieh Associates Law Firm</i>
<b>Up-and-coming individuals</b>
Sotoodehnia Sahar <i>International Law Office</i>
* Indicates firm with profile.
◇ (ORL) = Other Ranked Lawyer.
Alphabetical order within each band. Band 1 is highest.

### Band 1

#### Atieh Associates Law Firm

Atieh Associates Law Firm is a pre-eminent Iranian firm with a deep bench and broad range of expertise. Typical matters handled include a variety of commercial advisory, M&A and financing mandates. The team is also well versed in tax and customs issues arising from contracts and acquisitions in the Iranian market. It continues to act for international clients, including in regard to the restructuring of their Iranian investments, and is especially experienced representing clients in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors. Clients find the firm takes a “solution-oriented, pragmatic approach” and is “very, very responsive and quick

at turning work around.” Another source noted: “They respected every deadline. It was a real pleasure to work with them.”

Cyrus Shafizadeh is a distinguished practitioner who has extensive experience in all aspects of corporate and finance. Alongside his broad range of Iranian experience, he is a qualified solicitor in England & Wales, with sources highlighting that he “understands both cultures” and is “very sharp and quick.” Clients further describe him as “charming, switched-on, commercial and very responsive.” Farid Kani is especially experienced acting for clients in the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors. He is praised by one source for being “very astute,” while another referred to him as “brilliant: very helpful, very approachable and very knowledgeable.” Ali Shahabi is a well-respected figure in both contentious and non-contentious matters. Sources enthuse that he is “knowledgeable, and a good team player,” with one client elaborating: “He’s a good technician who has a knack for problem solving.” Ebrahim Tavakoli is known for projects and M&A work, while also continuing to act in litigation. Sources say he is “always available” and “really focused on client interests.”

#### T&S Associates

T&S Associates is a long-standing firm with a strong focus on representing international clients. It is experienced assisting with the full gamut of transactional and commercial advisory matters. Its wide range of experience also covers advice on energy projects, tax structuring, litigation and corporate governance. Clients note that the firm is “very diligent and they take an interest in client care.” Another source added: “They have a tremendous work ethic and are commercially minded.”

Ahmad Ehtesham is a highly regarded senior practitioner. His experience includes advising international clients on corporate transactions and commercial contracting issues. Clients remark that he “has a good perspective on things and is very supportive.”

### Band 2

#### Atai & Associates

See profile on p.1479

Atai & Associates is a respected family-run firm that has many years’ experience representing domestic and international clients. It is especially well recognised in the market for oil and gas transactions. Fellow lawyers note the firm as a prominent player in Iran and cite it as one of their first choices when making conflict-of-interest referrals.

Ali Akbar Atai is a veteran practitioner who has strong expertise within the oil and gas sector. He is also adept at a wide range of transactional and commercial contracting work, and sources note his experience advising on large-scale projects.

#### International Law Office

See profile on p.1480

International Law Office is best known for its expertise in international trade and foreign investment matters. In addition, the firm offers considerable strengths in banking and finance, commercial contracts, tax, intellectual property and litigation. Sources agree that “their big strength is in commercial law and M&A projects; they’re very good in negotiations.” Commentators go on to describe the team as “great lawyers who are very hands-on,” adding that “communication is fast, deadlines are respected and the advice is very, very precise.”

Behrooz Akhlaghi is a highly distinguished practitioner who continues to act on major foreign investment matters. A noted academic, he is also an experienced adviser on M&A and finance transactions, and counsels clients in regard to a variety of disputes. Senior partner Mahnaz Mehrinfar is well versed in foreign investment, commercial contracts and joint ventures. Sources praise her client service, with one commentator noting that she is “responsive to customer needs and willing to provide support on all aspects of any matter.” Sahar Sotoodehnia is an increasingly prominent practitioner who is esteemed for her strengths in foreign investment. She is also adept at litigation. Interviewees laud her responsiveness and technical grasp of the law. “She’s very good at problem solving,” said a source.

#### Torossian, Avanesian & Associates

This full-service practice is noted for its bench of seasoned practitioners. The highly experienced team assists with all aspects of commercial law and is especially praised for its handling of arbitration cases. Fellow practitioners hold the firm’s senior lawyers in particularly high regard, while clients praise the high quality of its work.

Vrej Torossian is well established as one of Iran’s most respected practitioners. He is experienced advising on a variety of corporate transactions and is also recognised by sources for his capabilities in arbitration.

### Band 3

#### Dr. Ali Hatami & Associates

Representing an impressive list of clients, Hatami & Associates possesses notable strengths in construction, oil and gas and international trade. Recent work includes continuing to act for the project operator on all aspects of the Iran Mall construction project, including in regard to the retail lease agreements and design and maintenance contracts. One client lauded the firm for its “very good team-based approach, which leads to them completing tasks in an efficient and effective manner.”

The “very knowledgeable” Ali Hatami is much esteemed for his work on oil and gas and construction projects. He frequently acts on behalf of international clients and is said by sources to be “very prompt in replying.”

## EH & Partners

This increasingly prominent firm is adept at commercial contracts, M&A and banking and finance. It is well known in the Iranian market for its strengths in the energy sector, especially in regard to oil and gas transactions. Its additional areas of expertise include transportation, construction and mining.

**Elham Hassanzadeh** is a well-regarded lawyer with recognised experience in oil and gas. Sources are highly impressed by her performance, with one commenting that she is “well renowned – a very knowledgeable person, both academically and professionally; she’s one of the best.”

## Sabeti & Khatami

This is an up-and-coming firm founded in 2017 by experienced partners best known for their expertise in energy projects. The team also has further strengths in a broad array of M&A and banking and finance matters. Recent highlights include advising a state-owned oil company on issues arising from its commitment to a gas field development contract following its joint venture partner’s withdrawal from Iran. One source enthused: “They understand what foreign clients require and expect. They respond to those

needs very well and are extremely responsive.”

**Behnam Khatami** has experience advising on a range of issues, including M&A, financings and project development. In such matters he regularly advises international entities hailing from the power, mining, hospitality and automotive sectors. One commentator described him as “a responsive, diligent lawyer” who “understands the needs of global clients.” **Hooman Sabeti** has considerable experience of international banking and finance and capital markets matters. He frequently represents domestic financial institutions and investors, as well as international corporations. Sources laud him as “one of the finest finance lawyers,” elaborating: “Intellectually, he’s extremely strong.”

## Sanglaj International Consultants

Sanglaj is respected for its work acting on behalf of clients in high-stakes arbitrations, and is also highlighted for its expertise relating to sanctions. The team often works closely with leading international law firms in such matters. One source was highly impressed by the firm’s abilities, stating: “They do an excellent job and their standards are high.” Moshkan Mashkour is a key contact.

## Other Ranked Lawyers

**Nasim Gheidi** is widely acknowledged for her abilities in transactions, dispute resolution and commercial contracts. She is also particularly respected for her prowess in immigration cases. Sources agree that she is “very strong,” with one adding: “I have a lot of respect for her.”

**Encyeh Sadr** advises clients on a variety of matters, including financings, commercial contracts and foreign investment. Sources refer to her as “really passionate about her work,” with one commentator elaborating: “She’s excellent – very good indeed when it comes to foreign investment and aviation.”

## GENERAL BUSINESS LAW Foreign Experts (Based Abroad)

Foreign Desks (Based Abroad) General Business Law
Iranian expertise based in countries listed below
France Dentons *
France Eversheds Sutherland *
Germany CMS *
UK Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP *
UK Herbert Smith Freehills
UK Stephenson Harwood LLP *

Foreign Experts (Based Abroad) General Business Law
Iranian expertise based in countries listed below
France Parvine Pirouzan Dentons
United Arab Emirates Mahmoudpour Atousa Eversheds Sutherland
* Indicates firm with profile.

## Foreign Desks (Based Abroad)

### CMS

See profile on p.2613

CMS maintains an Iran-focused foreign desk based primarily out of Düsseldorf. It regularly advises European clients on foreign investment into Iran as well as having experience assisting with market exit arrangements. The Iran team has also represented clients in international arbitrations. One client was highly impressed and stated: “The quality of advice was absolutely perfect.” Düsseldorf-based Shaghayegh Smousavi is a key point of contact.

### Dentons

See profile on p.1003

Dentons possesses a significant Iran desk which comprises seasoned practitioners based across Europe. It frequently handles matters relating to sanctions and compliance, as well as advising clients on market exits. The Iran group also acts for a number of clients hailing from sectors not sanctioned, including pharmaceuticals, agriculture, food and beverages and tourism. One source praised the team’s “very good advice” and agreed that the firm’s Iranian desk is “very experienced and very strong on these matters.”

**Pirouzan Parvine** is a key lawyer for Dentons’ Iran desk and splits his time between the Paris and Warsaw offices. He advises a number of major European clients on all aspects of their Iranian operations, including market exits. He is particularly experienced advising clients hailing from the transportation and automotive sectors.

### Eversheds Sutherland

See profile on p.337

Eversheds Sutherland possesses a notable Iran desk drawing on the expertise of practitioners based throughout Europe and the Middle East. It is frequently active advising multinationals on sanctions compliance, and also assists domestic Iranian entities with corporate/M&A transactions. Recent work includes representing Iranian Offshore Engineering in its pursuit of an USD87 million fraud claim. One of the firm’s clients enthused: “They have a very good perspective, and a willingness to go the extra mile.”

**Atousa Mahmoudpour** is based in Dubai and co-heads the Iran desk. She is experienced advising on the full spectrum of corporate and commercial law, including group restructurings, energy projects and foreign investment mandates. One source lauded the high quality of her client service, stating: “She really impressed me. She understood our business and the risks. The service was so good, it was as if she was our in-house counsel.”

### Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP

See profile on p.339

The Iran desk of Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer consists of practitioners based worldwide. The team is highly experienced advising international clients on Iranian M&A transactions. It is well versed in advice relating to sanctions, as well as transactions in the telecoms, oil and gas, aviation and automotive sectors. Vienna-based Farid Sigari-Majd heads the firm’s global country group for Iran.

### Herbert Smith Freehills

Herbert Smith Freehills continues to act on a number of major Iran-related matters, most notably representing clients based in China and East Asia. The firm’s Iran desk continues to benefit from the expertise of numerous practitioners based across Europe and Asia. One client observed: “They’ve always been our go-to firm for Iran.” London-based partners William Breeze and Thomas Bethel are key contacts.

### Stephenson Harwood LLP

See profile on p.2890

Stephenson Harwood is distinguished for its considerable experience representing Iranian clients in court challenges to international sanctions. In this regard, the firm most often represents clients in the EU courts, and is especially noted for its work on behalf of financial institutions. Recent work includes continuing to represent Bank Saderat in its challenge to EU sanctions in the ECJ, in which the bank sought damages in excess of EUR130 million. The firm also provides compliance advice and strategic guidance in response to sanctions. London-based Sue Millar and Dubai-based Rovine Chandrasekera co-head the Iran country group.

# ATAI & ASSOCIATES LAW FIRM

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**Senior Partner:** A A Atai

Number of partners: 3 Number of lawyers: 10

Language: *English, Farsi*

## Firm Overview:

Atai & Associates Law Firm was established in 1975 as a full service law firm specialised in international trade and investment law. The firm combines knowledge with industry expertise to deliver practical legal solutions to its clients. The firm has gained the trust and confidence of multinational companies involved in complex commercial transactions through provision of efficient and high quality legal services. The firm's lawyers are experts in laws and regulations concerning banking, insurance, capital markets and financial transactions. The firm represents multinational clients active in broad range of industries and sectors: automotive, communications, construction, digital business, energy, food & beverages, hospitality, pharmaceuticals, petrochemical, petroleum, media, technology and telecom.

## Main Areas of Practice:

### Banking:

The firm advises banks and financial institutions on laws and regulations concerning financial and banking transactions. The firm's lawyers advise clients regarding loan agreements, secured transactions and financial framework agreements. The firm's attorney's conduct due diligence and prepares legal opinions concerning financing of investment projects.

### Finance:

The firm advises clients on the laws and regulations governing financial transactions. The firm's lawyers have the practical skills and knowledge for structuring appropriate vehicle for financing investment projects. The firm's attorneys assist clients with preparation and drafting of guarantees under financial instruments.

### Capital Markets:

The firm advises and represents investors and venture capitals on legal issues relating to various fund raising techniques. The firm provides advisory services on project finance, private equity and debt investments. The firm advises underwriters and issuers on placement and subscription of shares for public offering, IPOs and securities transactions.

### Commercial:

The firm's attorneys represent and act for clients in relation to business and commercial law matters. The firm's counsels provide assistance with drafting and preparation of various commercial agreements including agency and distributorship, joint ventures and partnerships, share purchase agreements, licensing and transfer of technology.

### Corporate:

The firm's corporate practice covers legal advisory services concerning establishment and operation of various types of commercial entities, setting-up local branch and representative offices and registration of subsidiaries. The firm assists clients with applications for permits and licenses and authorisations for conducting commercial and investment activities.

### Digital Business & E-Commerce:

The firm advises digital business and e-commerce companies in relation to internet-based commercial activities including sale of goods and services. The firm advises clients on the laws and regulations concerning payment services, consumer protection, digital advertising and production of audio, visual and written contents.

### Computers & Information Technology:

The firm's lawyers have experience in drafting and preparation of software development agreements, customer license and distribution agreements and service level agreements. The firm's counsels provide assistance to clients on the rules and regulations governing data protection, privacy, cybersecurity and fraud.

### Intellectual Property:

In the IP sector, the firm's lawyers assist and represent clients on laws and regulations relating to IP protection including unauthorised use of domain names and misrepresentation of foreign brand names by third parties. The firm's counsels represent clients in cases involving IP infringements including preparation of defense in litigation and arbitration proceedings. The firm's lawyers advise clients on agreements relating to assignment of proprietary rights between foreign and local businesses.

### Dispute Resolution & Litigation:

The firm has a highly respected dispute resolution and litigation department. The counsels of the firm have extensive experience in representing foreign companies in litigation proceedings involving complex and multi-disciplinary areas of law. The firm's advocates advise clients on disputes concerning breach of shareholders' agreement, contract termination, force majeure events, and violation of payment obligations. The firm provides assistance in regards to debt collection and enforcement action against judgment debtors.

### Arbitration:

The firm's advocates represent and defend client's rights before domestic and international arbitral tribunals in relation to commercial and contractual disputes. The firm's arbitration practice covers jurisdictional and pre-hearing procedural stage of proceedings, substantive and merits of dispute and post-award enforcement.

### Renewable & Clean Energy:

The firm has a broad experience in renewable and clean energy. The firm advises clients on laws and regulations concerning establishment and operation of wind turbine, photovoltaic and solar, biomass and combined cycle power plants. The firm assists clients on legal issues relating to financial arrangements, bankability and assignment of land for construction of power plants. The firm acts for and represents clients regarding applications for licenses and permits and authorisations for operation of power plants. The firm advises clients on power purchase agreements (PPAs), feed in tariff and connection to the power grid.

## PRACTICE AREAS

Acquisitions  
Banking & Finance  
Corporate & Commercial  
E-Commerce & Information Technology  
Intellectual Property  
Litigation & Arbitration  
Petroleum, Oil & Gas

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### IRAN

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### Petroleum, Oil & Gas:

In the fossil fuel sector, the firm advises IOCs on laws and regulations concerning exploration and development (E&D), onshore and offshore oil drillings and LNG production. In the upstream sector, the firm assists clients with the drafting of PSA, IPC and buyback contracts. In the downstream petroleum, the firm advises clients on preparation and drafting EPC, BOT and JV agreements and other financing methods for construction of oil and gas refineries.

### Shipping:

The firm has a long history of providing advice and assistance to domestic and international shipping companies in relation to international sale of goods and transportation. The firm advises companies on legal aspects of shipping including freight forwarding, contract of carriage and bill of lading, marine insurance, trade finance and letters of credit, and bank guarantees. The firm's attorneys act for and represent clients in disputes concerning CIF & FOB contracts, ship arrest, demurrage, charterparties and contract of affreightment.

### Key Clients:

The firm's clients are mostly multinational companies interested in conducting business and investments in emerging market. The firm implements KYC and conducts due diligence to ensure compliance with the international sanctions regulations. The firm's policy is to protect client interest and minimise risks associated with doing business.





# INTERNATIONAL LAW OFFICE OF DR BEHROOZ AKHLAGHI AND ASSOCIATES

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**Chairman:** Dr Behrooz Akhlaghi

**Managing Partner:** Dr Mahnaz Mehrinfar

Number of partners: 2 Number of lawyers: 15

Languages: Arabic, English, French, Persian

## Firm Overview:

The International Law Office (ILO) renders legal services in the areas of international trade law, foreign investment, banking, finance, corporations, taxation, intellectual property, telecommunication, arbitration and litigation. The firm's strong litigation team is well-versed in disputes on international commercial contracts, employment contracts, international trade, shareholder agreements, business restructuring and other commercial matters.

ILO's lawyers have an excellent command of English language and have obtained law degrees from top universities in Iran and overseas. Dr Behrooz Akhlaghi, the Founder of the firm received his LLB from Law Faculty of Tehran University, Iran, and PHD from Aix-en-Provence University, France. He has also followed some specialised courses in International Trade Law in Oxford Law Faculty in the United Kingdom. He taught business law, international trade law, aviation law and other relevant subjects at the Law Faculty of Tehran University and other universities. He is an attorney-at-law having certificate from Iranian Central Bar Association and has over 30 years of experience in corporate law, international trade law and commercial affairs.

## Main Areas of Practice:

### Foreign Investment:

ILO has been involved in several foreign investments and with high level experience in this regard and could obtain investment licenses on the basis of Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Act (FIPPA) for reputable foreign investors through Organisation for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran (OIETAI).

**Key Clients:** Petronas (Malaysia), Union Resources Limited (Australia), Persian Gold Limited (Ireland), Turkish Telecommunication Company ("Turkcell"), Emirates Telecommunication Corporation ("Etisalat"), Vestel Co. (Turkey), Mineral Commodities LTD (MRC)

**Contact:** Dr Mahnaz Mehrinfar

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### Aviation & Transport:

ILO has been dealing with international aviation matters since 1980. ILO has had cooperation with well known foreign law firms and underwriters in this respect through out these years.

**Key Clients:** Clyde & Co, Gates & Partners, British Airways, Emirates Airline, Al Etihad Airline, Gulf Air Airline, Qatar Airways

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### IT & Telecoms:

IT and telecoms is a highly demanding sector in Iran. ILO has been actively involved in IT and telecom projects, specially during the course of the State Development Plans; as a matter of reforming the economic structure of the country, this sector is on the course of privatisation and any activity in this field requires to be equipped with a highly experienced legal team.

**Key Clients:** Emirates Telecommunications Corporation (Etisalat), Turkcell Iletisim

**Contact:** Dr Behrooz Akhlaghi

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### Oil & Gas:

Oil and gas sector is the most attractive sector in Iran. Apart from the importance of oil industry, gas and its related LPG, LNG and CNG industries indicate highly demanding and huge investment absorbing sector in Iran.

The gigantic and very well-known oil industry clients of ILO are vital and ongoing testimonials on the ILO's well-educated, professional, efficient and experienced members of oil industry legal team.

**Key Clients:** Petronas (Malaysia), CPECC, CPTDC, Eni S.P.A, CNPC, Sinopec

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### Banking & Finance:

The banks and financial institutions follow different regulations and procedure due to their monetary and Central Bank policies. When the privatisation idea found its way to the State Development Plans, the laws and regulations were becoming somehow more flexible. The intention was to let the foreign private and international banks to start their work in Iran.

Banking in Iran, due to quick changes of monetary policy, will definitely require a high standing legal consultant team that is reachable through ILO with a reference to international banks among ILO's clients.

**Key Clients:** World Bank, International Finance Corporation (IFC), International Monetary Fund (IMF), HSBC Bank, Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS), Banco Sabadell

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### Corporate:

Beside the fact that corporate law has always been a key area in law, the regulations of commercial law are expected to be changed in Iran in the near future and the areas of high importance such as corporate merger and acquisition are observed with more consideration in the new regulations. Understanding and applying the new regulations in each case when required, necessitates a distinguished legal team to deal with those aspects of Iran corporate law. ILO with extensive expertise in this area has been consistently assisting well-known corporations regarding their legal issues.

**Key Clients:** Swiran, Halcrow, British American Tobacco (BAT), Changan International Corporation, Nokia Solutions & Networks, Samsung Engineering, Chery, Novo Nordisk, Dnata, Evyap, CHR HANSEN, Omni Law Firm

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### Intellectual Property:

Intellectual property is one of the areas that ILO has been actively involved in and has been assisting its clients in the management of their intellectual property rights.

**Key Clients:** various trading companies and publication institutions.

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### Litigation & Arbitration:

ILO has a reputation for excellence in both areas of dispute resolution. As alternative dispute resolutions particularly arbitration are becoming more popular as methods of dispute resolution in Iran especially with Iran having its own arbitration centre: Arbitration Centre of Iran Chamber (ACIC) as well as Tehran Regional Arbitration Centre (TRAC), the need for experts in this area is more felt.

## PRACTICE AREAS

Arbitration & Litigation  
Aviation & Transport  
Banking & Investment  
Bankruptcy Law  
Biotechnology Law  
Business Law  
Contract & Commercial  
Company & Corporate Law  
Construction  
Energy  
Environmental Law  
Foreign Investment  
Free Trade Zones  
General Civil Law  
International Trade  
International Commercial Contracts  
Insurance Law  
Intellectual Property  
Joint Venture Agreements  
Labour & Social Security  
Maritime Law  
Mediation  
Media & Entertainment  
Mining Law

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Furthermore, ILO had been involved in many important cases in Iran-United States Claim Tribunal.

**Key Clients:** Daryakoosh Trading Co. vs. Spec Company, Metatech International Luxemburg vs. Esfahan Petrochemical Company, LG Electronics, Fujitsu Services Limited (Formerly known as International Computers Limited- ICL-UK), Nokia Solutions & Networks, various Iranian companies and governmental organisations

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**International Law Office**  
Dr. Behrooz AKHLAGHI & Associates