

US Editors and Reviewers can no Longer Handle Submissions by Authors Employed by the Government of Iran: Is it Fair and Logical?

We have recently become aware that the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the US Department of the Treasury has imposed new sanctions against Iran. Regulation 560.538 provides that US persons should not handle publishing services for written publications (whether journals or books) if any of the authors of the manuscript are employed by the Government of Iran. The Government of Iran is defined in Regulation 560.304. The regulation does not include authors at academic and research institutions or authors based in clinical settings such as hospitals, and should therefore only affect a very small number of submissions. Nevertheless, some editors reject the manuscripts from Iran even from academic settings with abovementioned sanction.

In practice the result of these sanctions will mean that:

- Submissions where any author is based in Iran, and is not at an academic and research institution, cannot be handled by US-based editors, US Elsevier staff, US reviewers, or any US citizens based outside of the US.
- If an Iranian author has dual affiliations (Eg. University and government), their submission cannot be handled by US-based editors, US Elsevier staff, US reviewers, or any US citizens based outside of the US.
- Affiliations of Iranian authors should therefore be checked, and any manuscripts which fall under this OFAC regulation delegated to a non-US editor, before handling.
- When assigning reviewers, affiliations of Iranian authors should also be checked, and any papers which fall under this OFAC regulation should only be sent to non-US reviewers. (As an editor you should do what is reasonable to determine the nationalities of a reviewer *e.g.* check their email address. This check does not extend to emailing reviewers directly to confirm their nationality or location). Unless there is specific knowledge that a non-US-based reviewer is a US citizen, editors can send such submissions to reviewers based outside the US.

Iranian researchers and academicians are disappointed that some publishers have created the impression that work from Iran should be discriminated against. This attitude is contrary to the spirit and values of global science. Over the last two decades everyone has spoken regarding global village and this action is against that. As an editor from Iran I ask my counterparts over the world that do you think this behavior and action is fair and logical.

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