

AllamehTabatabaei University Tehran/Iran: Living the Spirit of the Vis Moot



After interviewing their coach Phil Ray, it was time to meet the team of AllamehTabatabaei University in Tehran in person. It consisted of NimaNasrollahiShahri, Masood Mahboob, Amir HosseinTanhaei, Ali NaimiZaker and their student coach Ali Dehdashti. We were more than curious to hear about their experience and adventures of the last six months since the Vis Moot ۲۰۱۴/۲۰۱۵ had started.

B&M Thank you so much for agreeing to the interview. I am very, very curious to hear about your experience with the Vis Moot so far. So first of all, Phil already told me his view and his story. But what were the reasons? Why did you apply for the Vis Moot in the first place?

Tehran First of all we want to thank B&M for providing us with a copy of Baker & McKenzie's "*Compete (but Unofficial) Guide to Vis Moot*", which became the foundation for our preparations for the written and oral advocacy phases and also for this interview.

The whole education system in our country is based on memorizing the text books. After [^] years of experience in practicing law in Iran I came back to university for a LLM and when I found out about the Vis Moot concept and competition, I realized that this is a really good opportunity to learn the law by practicing. It was like a completely different education opportunity for all the students. So I proposed participating in the Vis Moot to the university and they happened to like the idea and I was fortunate to find these guys who are so determined and industrious.

B&M And once the team got together, what were the biggest obstacles you had to face?

Tehran We faced a lot of difficulties and to overcome these difficulties we had to be disciplined. It wasn't just financial problems, even for very short sentences from a book, we needed help from outside Iran because we did not have access to the sources. Because of the sanctions and the devaluation of the Iranian Rial, a lot of universities could not afford to pay their annual subscription fees for data bases so the services were cut in most universities. So, we had absolutely no access to any books, no access to online publications and no access to data bases like Westlaw, LexisNexis or Kluwer Arbitration. And due to the sanctions, we even could not buy books online because we were not able to pay money through our credit cards.

B&M So, that was the biggest challenge you had when you were drafting the memorandum.

- Tehran Yes. Especially when we got to the point that we had to add resources to our memos. We had problems because the area of arbitration is something that is growing fast and is in progress and we did not have the access to the books that are updated. So, the thing that we had to do was asking other lawyers out of the country and we specified some pages, for example, we need page ٢٨/٢٩ of book XYZ and ask them to scan and send us a copy of it.
- B&M So, apart from the resources, I mean, of course we don't want to talk about politics, but is there anything else in the political system in Iran that prevented you from competing or that made it a little bit complicated?
- Tehran No, absolutely not.
- B&M Now, that you are here in Vienna, do you see yourselves as ambassadors of your country?
- Tehran We see ourselves as ambassadors of a rich ancient Persian culture and we try to represent that, try to show other the beautiful country we come from and how misunderstood people are about our nation and our country. Because, you know, when we talk to Westerners they have a very distorted image of what things are like in Iran. They think, it is a primitive society with camels on the streets which is really not the case because Tehran is quite a modern capital, very much resembling some European capitals such as Madrid. So that is what we are trying to make people understand.
- B&M Do you think that also in the future, there will be a team from AllamehTabatabaei University?
- Tehran Yeah, for sure. In fact, there are already six students at home now who are practicing and studying together. Five of them are girls.
- What is more, for the next year, we are trying to bring more teams from more Iranian universities to the Vis Moot. Maybe next year, we have like three or four teams from different Iranian universities. Because this is a great learning opportunity for every Iranian law student and if we have more than one team in Iran, we can practice internally.
- B&M If next year's team of AllamehTabatabaei University is already in place, what would be your most valuable advice for the team? What should they keep in mind when participating?
- Tehran For all of us, the Vis Moot was the first time that we really enjoyed education and the most important advice can be: enjoy education and in a way that you feel, this is real life.
- The biggest successful story of our team is that, last year, our team member [*Masood Mahboob*] did not speak a word of English. He has definitely gone the farthest, he's gone a very long road. Now he speaks good English and pleaded in the practice rounds.
- B&M So, I have actually come to my last question: If you could decide now, would you pursue a career in international arbitration?
- Tehran Sure. Yes. We have really developed that interest in advocacy. We have developed a real passion for arbitration.

The team of AllamehTabatabaei University won the "Spirit of the Vis Moot Award" due to their enthusiasm and hard-working endurance during the preparations for the Vis Moot. Congratulations!