

Analytical Report

Iran's FY 2026/27 Budget Bill

From the Perspective of the Labor Force's Interests

Iran Labor Confederation - Abroad

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Executive Summary

Iran's government drafted its **budget bill for the Iranian year 1405 (March 21, 2026–March 20, 2027)** amid **chronic inflation**, an **unprecedented collapse in the national currency's value**, a **sharp contraction in the real (inflation-adjusted) budget**, a **structural operating-balance deficit**, and **deepening poverty among wage earners**.

This report argues that the Iranian state is **consciously and systematically** managing its fiscal crisis through: **real wage compression**, **higher tax pressure on salaried workers**, **shifting inflation's burden onto consumers**, **weakening social services**, and **locking in job insecurity**.

A **nominal 20% pay rise** for public-sector employees and retirees is proposed, even as:

- **Official annual inflation reached 42.2% by December 2025** (i.e., by the end of the Iranian month Azar 1404).
- **Point-to-point inflation is reported at 52.6%**,
- And **independent estimates** place actual inflation **above 60–70%**.

The draft budget's projected **minimum wage** (around **15.6 million tomans (≈ \$116)**) is **less than one-third** of the cost of a basic living basket for a working-class household—an amount that, under continuing inflation and the removal of the preferential exchange rate, had risen to **over 50 million tomans per month (≈ \$370+) by the end of 2025**.

At the same time, the government's bill:

- Targets a **62.6% increase in tax revenues**,
- Raises the **VAT rate from 10% to 12%**,
- And shifts the main burden of meeting these targets onto **wage earners and end consumers**.

These policies are being implemented in a context where:

- The government's **operating-balance deficit** has reached roughly **616 trillion tomans (≈ \$4.6 billion)**,
- A substantial share of that gap is covered through withdrawals from the National Development Fund, debt issuance, and other **inflationary** mechanisms.
- And the country's **general budget**, in real terms, has **contracted by about 30–35%** compared to previous years, with its dollar equivalent falling to roughly **\$37–40 billion**.

The **1405 (2026/27) budget bill** includes no effective measures to:

- Improve job security,
- Abolish the contractor/subcontractor system,
- Reduce unemployment,
- Upgrade workplace safety,
- Invest in training and workforce development,
- Or provide durable support for retirees.

Instead, major resources are allocated to **military and security institutions, state-owned enterprises, and non-productive cultural–religious bodies**.

The report concludes that the **1405 (2026/27) budget bill** is not the result of policy error, but a **deliberate choice** aimed at **stabilizing the class structure, disciplining labor through poverty and insecurity**, and **systematically violating Iran's international commitments** on fundamental labor rights.

*** Note on currency conversions:** Dollar figures in these reports are approximate, using a **free-market rate** of about **135,050 tomans per \$1 (Jan 2, 2026)**.

Introduction

The **Iran Labor Confederation – Abroad** has prepared this report to expose the anti-worker character of the Iranian government's **FY 2026/27 budget bill**. The report is based on the bill's official text and measures its provisions against the economic, livelihood, and social realities facing Iran's labor force.

The report focuses on the budget's anti-worker features, including:

- inadequate wage increases;
- tax pressure on already meager incomes;
- neglect of retirees' living conditions;
- job insecurity and the contractor/subcontractor system;
- unsafe working environments;
- the livelihood crisis confronting teachers and nurses;
- the absence of serious policies for reducing unemployment and training the workforce;
- and the intensification of discrimination against women, working children, and migrant workers.

This bill has been drafted at a moment when Iran's labor force—from oil workers and municipal workers to teachers, nurses, and industrial workers—has continuously mobilized in protest against poverty, inflation, job insecurity, and the violation of their most basic rights. A **more-than-40-day protest by Arak aluminum workers in August–September 2025**, the **strike by Zarshouran gold mine workers in Takab in late November 2025 through January 2026**, the **strike by thousands of oil and gas workers in Asaluyeh in December 2025**, and **railway workers' protests in Lorestan** are only a few examples among hundreds of recorded actions.

Even official state statistics—systematically underreported due to the absence of press freedom, the repression of independent unions, and restrictions on field research—have been forced to acknowledge the depth of the livelihood crisis.

The budget's macro context: a structural deficit and the transfer of crisis onto labor

The **FY 2026/27 (1405) budget bill** must be analyzed against the backdrop of Iran's chronic operating-balance deficit: a structural gap between stable revenues and current expenditures, which in FY 2026/27 has reached roughly **616 trillion tomans (≈ \$4.6 billion)**. Over recent years, this deficit has been covered not through reforming the state's revenue structure, but through:

- the real (inflation-adjusted) reduction of wages;
- higher indirect taxes;
- subsidy removal;
- withdrawals from the National Development Fund;
- and debt expansion through the issuance of Islamic financial securities.

In the FY 2026/27 budget bill as well, instead of taxing wealth, profits, rents, dominant economic institutions, and large شبه‌دولتی (quasi-state) companies, the government has deliberately shifted the burden of the crisis onto workers and consumers—a policy that deepens poverty, widens inequality, and intensifies social insecurity.

1. Pay rises: an open insult to labor in the face of runaway inflation

The **FY 2026/27 budget bill** sets a **nominal 20%** increase in pay for government employees, teachers, nurses, and retirees (as reflected in the salary-and-benefits tables on pages 32–33 of the bill). This increase is proposed at a moment when the gap between wages and the real cost of living has reached an unprecedented scale.

A numerical snapshot of the livelihood gap

- **Nominal wage increase:** 20%
- **Official annual inflation (Azar 1404; Nov 22–Dec 21, 2025):** 42.2%
- **Official point-to-point (year-on-year) inflation:** 52.6%
- **Food inflation (year-on-year):** about 72%
- **Estimated real inflation (field-based/independent):** 60–70%
- **Cost of a working-class household “living basket” (end of 2025):** over 50 million tomans (\approx \$357) per month
- **Minimum salary projected in the bill:** about 15.6 million tomans (\approx \$111)

These figures show that even if one accepts the official data at face value, a **20%** nominal increase translates into a **20–40% real wage cut**. In practice, the projected minimum salary is **less than one-third** of the actual cost of a basic living basket—structurally locking the labor force into poverty.

How the budget shapes minimum wages for workers covered by the Labor Law

It must be emphasized that the **FY 2026/27 budget bill** does not directly set the wages of workers covered by Iran's Labor Law; the raise specified in the bill formally applies to employees in state and public institutions. In Iran's real wage-setting architecture, however, this separation is largely cosmetic.

Each year, the minimum wage for Labor Law workers is set by the **Supreme Labour Council**—a body whose composition is heavily state-dominated and lacks genuine independence from the government's broader economic and budgetary agenda. Past experience shows that minimum-wage increases for workers have, in practice, tracked the public-sector pay rise embedded in the budget bill, typically hovering around the same figure or only marginally above it.

As a result, the **20%** nominal pay rise in the FY 2026/27 budget bill indirectly—but decisively—sets the ceiling for wage growth across the wider workforce. This mechanism extends real-wage suppression to the entire labor force—employees and workers alike—and institutionalizes wage poverty on a mass scale.

The collapse of the rial and the rapid erosion of any nominal wage increase

This modest pay rise is introduced in a context where the government's currency policies have inflicted an additional blow to workers' purchasing power:

- The **free-market dollar rate** reportedly climbed to around **140,000 tomans per \$1** by **Dey 1404 (Dec 22, 2025–Jan 20, 2026)**.
- The **customs valuation exchange rate** increased to around **85,000 tomans per \$1**.
- The **preferential (subsidized) exchange rate** has been fully removed.

These shifts drive sharp increases in the prices of essential goods, medicine, food, and public services—neutralizing any nominal wage increase within the opening months of the year. In this sense, the 20% raise is not a protective policy; it is an instrument for **stabilizing wage poverty**.

The class consequences of this wage policy

- Real wage cuts function as a direct transfer of the state's fiscal crisis onto labor.
- The wage gap between workers and managers, privileged institutions, and rent-seeking sectors is preserved—and in many cases deepened.
- The "working poor" becomes a structural condition rather than an exception.

In this framework, the wage policy embedded in the FY 2026/27 budget bill is not a miscalculation. It is a deliberate choice: disciplining the labor force through systematic livelihood erosion.

2. Payroll tax and VAT: the organized transfer of crisis onto wage earners

The **FY 2026/27 budget bill** targets a **62.6%** increase in tax revenues. Achieving an increase of this magnitude amid economic stagnation, falling production, and collapsing purchasing power is only realistically possible by applying direct pressure to **wage earners** and **final consumers**.

The wage-tax exemption ceiling and payroll taxation

According to the bill:

- The **tax-exempt threshold for wages** has been raised, but **by less than the official inflation rate**.
- As a result, **more low-income wage earners** are pulled into the taxable bracket in real terms;
- The payroll tax becomes a mechanism for covering the budget deficit **out of workers' and employees' pockets**.

This policy is especially punishing for workers, teachers, and nurses whose income sits only slightly above the minimum wage: it imposes additional pressure and claws back a substantial share of any nominal pay increase.

Raising VAT: taxing poverty

The FY 2026/27 budget bill raises the **Value Added Tax (VAT)** rate from **10% to 12%**. VAT is inherently **regressive**, meaning:

- It consumes a larger share of low-income households' earnings;
- It directly increases the price of consumer goods and services.
- and its burden falls disproportionately on workers and the poor.

In a context where **food inflation is around 72%**, raising VAT effectively intensifies the cost of food, transport, energy, and basic services.

The absence of taxes on wealth and rent

At the same time, the state increases the tax burden on wage earners:

- sweeping exemptions for large institutions, quasi-state entities, “foundations,” and rent-heavy sectors are preserved;
- No meaningful, effective taxation is introduced on wealth, windfall profits, currency rents, or unearned asset gains.

This imbalance makes the logic of the bill's tax policy unmistakable: it is not designed to advance tax justice, but to **systematically transfer the crisis downward**, onto the most vulnerable social layers.

Tax section summary

- A **62.6%** tax-revenue increase during stagnation signals intensified pressure on labor.
- The VAT hike amounts to direct taxation of poverty and necessary consumption.
- The government's tax policy operates as a companion to real-wage suppression—coordinated, not accidental.

3. Retirees and pension funds: exploitation extended to the end of life

The **FY 2026/27 budget bill** offers no structural, durable plan to improve retirees' living conditions. In effect, it sidelines the livelihood crisis facing millions of pensioners, even though a large share of retirees live below the poverty line, and their protests have continued steadily in recent years.

Cosmetic, unsustainable "harmonization."

Under the bill:

- limited and unstable resources—sourced from higher VAT—are earmarked for so-called "pension harmonization" (as reflected in the relevant line items on page 14 of the bill);
- These resources are neither indexed to inflation nor designed to be sustained.
- They do not close the deep gap between pension incomes and the real cost of living.

In practice, the proposed harmonization covers only a small fraction of the purchasing-power losses of recent years. Its function is more promotional than protective.

The state's debt to the Social Security Organization

The Iranian government is among the Social Security Organization's largest debtors. The FY 2026/27 budget bill:

- acknowledges only a limited portion of the state's accumulated liabilities;
- provides no reliable, concrete timetable for full repayment;
- and defers repayment through mechanisms such as asset transfers or debt securities—effectively shifting the burden into the future.

Even the state's own published figures point to a profound resource crisis within the pension funds; and given the lack of transparency and independent oversight, the real scale of these debts is likely far higher.

Repression of retirees' demands

Instead of responding to demands for genuine, inflation-reflective equalization:

- Retirees' gatherings are repeatedly met with security crackdowns.
- livelihood demands are treated as a security matter.

This approach makes the underlying posture clear: the state does not treat retirees as rights-holders, but as a cost to be managed—or postponed.

Summary

By ignoring retirees' livelihoods and failing to settle its obligations to Social Security, the **FY 2026/27 (1405) budget bill** extends the exploitation of labor into the post-retirement years. This policy is not incidental; it is an integral component of the prevailing anti-worker order.

4. Job insecurity and the entrenchment of subcontracting: institutionalizing structural precarity

One of the most central anti-worker features of the **FY 2026/27 budget bill** is the continued—and effectively codified—reliance on subcontracting and temporary contracts. The bill contains no concrete measures to abolish subcontracting, regularize workers' employment status, or expand permanent public-sector hiring.

No plan to dismantle subcontracting

In the text of the bill:

- There is **no dedicated budget line** for converting contract and subcontracted workers to secure employment.
- The appropriations of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare are confined to peripheral areas and do not address job security as a policy priority.

This is occurring even though eliminating labor contractors and establishing a direct relationship between workers and the principal employer has become a core demand of workers across the oil, gas, petrochemical, mining, railway, and municipal sectors.

The consequences of the subcontracting regime

- the spread of short-term and “blank-signed” contracts;
- deprivation of job security, full insurance coverage, and statutory benefits;
- intensified repression of workplace demands through dismissal threats;
- The weakening of workers' collective bargaining power.

By shrinking formal hiring, expanding “service purchase” arrangements, and outsourcing projects to contractors, the **FY 2026/27 budget bill** deepens a quiet privatization process and transfers risk directly onto labor.

Precarity as policy

Within this framework, job insecurity is not an unintended side effect of economic policy. It is a deliberate instrument: a means of controlling and fragmenting the workforce and preventing effective organization.

5. Occupational safety and health: workers' lives treated as a disposable cost

The **FY 2026/27 budget bill** contains no specific, targeted line items to improve occupational safety and workplace health. This is even though Iran has one of the region's highest rates of workplace accidents.

Occupational deaths and injuries

- Official figures indicate roughly **10,000 workplace deaths per year**.
- Given underreporting, fear of dismissal, and systematic repression, the real figure is likely far higher.
- A large share of incidents occur in **mines, construction, heavy industry, and subcontracted project sites**.

International commitments left unimplemented

In **2023**, the Iranian state approved **ILO Convention No. 155 (Occupational Safety and Health)**. Yet:

- The budget sets out no concrete implementation plan for the convention.
- Labor inspections, safety training, and protective equipment are, in practice, left without meaningful funding.

What this neglect means in budget terms

When a budget allocates nothing to workplace safety, it effectively normalizes injury and death as "acceptable" costs of maintaining production and profit. This stance amounts to an explicit breach of Iran's international obligations and of workers' fundamental rights.

6. Teachers, nurses, and healthcare staff: systematic exploitation of essential sectors

The **FY 2026/27 budget bill** contains no dedicated, targeted, independent budget lines to improve the livelihoods of teachers, nurses, and healthcare staff. The general allocations to the Ministries of Education and Health are largely absorbed by routine administrative and operating costs, with no effective human-resources focus.

Teachers

- The pay of a large share of teachers, even after the nominal increase, remains **below the poverty line**.
- The teacher “ranking” scheme continues to suffer from funding shortfalls, uneven implementation, and discriminatory outcomes.
- The budget bill offers no answer to teachers’ demands regarding job security, workload reduction, or genuine (inflation-reflective) wage restoration.

As a result, staff shortages, occupational exit and migration among teachers, and the deterioration of public education quality are all likely to intensify.

Nurses and healthcare staff

- Nurses face compulsory overtime, delayed payment of claims, and severe occupational burnout.
- The partial, inconsistent implementation of the law on nursing service tariffs continues.
- The budget bill provides no sustainable funding stream to implement this law in full.

This neglect unfolds while the health system faces acute staffing shortages and chronic workload pressure.

Summary

The refusal to address the livelihoods and working conditions of teachers and nurses shows that even the vital sectors of education and health are not treated as priorities in the government’s budget policy. This approach effectively guarantees the reproduction of social and human crises.

7. Unemployment and employment: abandoning labor to poverty and a foreclosed future

The **FY 2026/27 budget bill** contains no specific, measurable, and properly funded program for reducing unemployment or creating sustainable employment.

The reality of unemployment

- Official unemployment is reported at roughly **7–9%**.
- Actual unemployment—especially among **youth, women, and university graduates**—is far higher.
- Underemployment, temporary contracting, and informal work make up a large share of the labor market.

A contractionary budget and its impact on jobs

A real-term contraction of the public budget by around **30–35%**, alongside a drop in its dollar equivalent to roughly **\$37–40 billion**, translates into reduced public investment, deeper stagnation, and the erosion of job opportunities.

Inverted priorities

In a context of sharply constrained resources:

- The share allocated to **military, security, and cultural–religious institutions** has increased;
- employment-generating, infrastructure, and social expenditures have been sacrificed.

This prioritization makes the political logic plain: sustainable employment and the future of the labor force are effectively subordinated to security and regime considerations.

8. The absence of investment in workforce education and development

The **FY 2026/27 budget bill** contains no clear, effective line items for:

- technical and vocational education and training;
- upgrading workers' skills;
- job retraining in response to recession and structural shifts in the economy.

The consequences of this neglect

- locking large segments of the workforce into low-wage, insecure, and non-productive jobs;
- weakening the workforce's competitive capacity;
- widening skill gaps—and, with them, class divisions.

Denying workers access to education is part of a broader strategy of class discipline: a workforce without skills and organization has less bargaining power.

9. Unanswered labor protests: repression in place of accountability

The **FY 2026/27 budget bill** offers no response to the broad wave of labor protests across multiple sectors—from oil, gas, and petrochemicals to teachers, nurses, retirees, municipal workers, miners, and railway workers.

The governing pattern

- livelihood demands are ignored;
- economic remedies are displaced by security measures;
- The budget is used as a tool to “manage” a crisis through pressure and repression.

Subsidies and support mechanisms are largely channeled into ineffective schemes, imports, or privileged institutions—rather than into direct improvements in workers’ living standards.

Summary

The bill makes the state’s choice unmistakable: instead of addressing the economic roots of protest, it has opted for security control. In this sense, the **FY 2026/27 budget** functions as part of a broader apparatus for disciplining the labor force.

10. Women, working children, and migrant workers: intensified discrimination and structural exploitation

The **FY 2026/27 budget bill** includes no clear policy, budget line, or targeted program to confront structural discrimination against women workers, to eliminate child labor, or to protect migrant workers. This fiscal silence effectively amounts to an acceptance—and a conscious reproduction—of exploitation directed at the most vulnerable segments of the labor force.

Women workers

- Women's unemployment is structurally higher than men's.
- The gender wage gap persists.
- Women's job security—especially in the informal sector—is extremely low.

The FY 2026/27 budget bill contains no concrete measures to:

- eliminate discrimination in hiring and pay;
- increase women's economic participation;
- provide support for employed women who are heads of household.

This neglect constitutes a clear violation of **ILO Convention No. 111 (Discrimination in Employment and Occupation)**—a convention the Islamic Republic has ratified but fails to implement in practice.

Working children

The FY 2026/27 budget bill includes no plan to eliminate child labor, even though:

- official government figures artificially understate the number of working children;
- Independent estimates point to **millions** of child workers in Iran.
- Children are employed in sectors such as agriculture, small and underground workshops, waste picking, and hazardous street labor—often without social protection, education, or safety oversight.

This situation represents a direct breach of:

- **ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age)**
- **ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour)**

It also signals that, within the prevailing economic order, child labor is functionally treated as acceptable.

Migrant workers, especially Afghan workers

Migrant workers—particularly Afghan workers—constitute a large share of the low-wage workforce, marked by chronic insecurity and denied equal rights. The FY 2026/27 budget bill:

- makes no provision for comprehensive insurance coverage for migrant workers;
- offers no policy to guarantee equal pay and job security;
- keeps migrants' residence and employment status in a permanent condition of precarity.

This violates principles set out in:

- **ILO Convention No. 97 (Migration for Employment)**
- **ILO Convention No. 143 (Migrant Workers, Supplementary Provisions)**—addressing migration under abusive conditions and the protection of migrant workers' rights.

What the Budget Bill Consciously and Structurally Refuses to Do

The **FY 2026/27 budget bill** is not merely a set of omissions or instances of neglect. It is a coherent catalogue of **deliberate, structural refusals**. It shows that, amid a livelihood crisis and widespread labor protests, the Iranian state is intentionally refusing measures that could have eased even a minimal share of social pressure.

These violations unfold in a context where independent labor organizing, freedom of expression, and the ability to pursue legal remedies inside the country are systematically suppressed—a context that is itself a precondition for imposing such a budget.

A list of structural refusals

■ Refusal to guarantee wages compatible with survival

By setting a **20% nominal** pay increase against inflation in the **40–70%** range, the state effectively accepts—consciously—real wage decline and institutionalizes wage poverty.

■ Refusal to take any effective action to reduce unemployment

Under conditions of mass, often hidden unemployment, the bill offers no plan for sustainable job creation. Unemployment is allowed to function as an instrument of social discipline.

■ Refusal to dismantle structural discrimination against women workers

A breach of **ILO Convention No. 111** through fiscal silence and the absence of any supportive policy.

■ Refusal to abolish and combat child labor

A breach of **ILO Conventions No. 138 and No. 182** through deliberate inaction.

■ Refusal to protect migrant workers

The continued exploitation of migrant labor in violation of **ILO Conventions No. 97 and No. 143**.

■ Refusal to abolish the subcontracting regime

The preservation of job insecurity as a tool to control labor and prevent effective organization.

■ Refusal to guarantee workplace safety and health

A breach of **ILO Convention No. 155** and the normalization of thousands of worker deaths as a “cost of production.”

■ Refusal to secure retirees' livelihoods and repay Social Security debts

The extension of exploitation beyond the working years—into retirement.

■ Fundamental refusal to recognize the right to organize, to unionize, and to bargain collectively

The systematic violation of **ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98**—conventions that, even if not ratified by the Islamic Republic, are classified as **fundamental**, meaning all ILO member states are expected to respect their core principles.

Depriving workers of an independent organization is the enabling condition for imposing this kind of budget. In the absence of free organizing:

- The real scale of unemployment, inflation, and poverty remains obscured;
- Labor's bargaining power is dismantled.
- and the budget becomes an instrument for enforcing class domination.

Conclusion:

The budget bill is a document of anti-worker policy

The **FY 2026/27 budget bill** is the explicit expression of a political choice—a choice to:

- transfer the state's structural crisis onto the labor force;
- contain protest through poverty, precarity, and repression;
- and systematically violate fundamental labor standards.

This bill is not the product of incapacity or policy error. It is a deliberate instrument for entrenching the existing class order.

Analytical Appendix

Subsequent developments in the passage of the FY 2026/27 Budget Bill

A performative retreat under social pressure

On December 29–30, 2025, the review process for Iran's FY 2026/27 budget bill encountered an unusually visible disruption within the regime's own formal institutions. On December 29, Parliament's Budget Consolidation Commission rejected the bill's general framework. The following day, the Islamic Consultative Assembly formally announced that the bill required revisions; at the same time, the government was compelled to accept revisions to the section on pay increases for public-sector employees and retirees.

Contrary to the official narrative, these developments do not signal a reconsideration of the government's anti-worker agenda. They reflect the state's deep anxiety about escalating social discontent and the widening spread of labor protests. The FY 2026/27 budget—especially its wage provisions—was so contractionary and so detached from the realities of everyday survival that, even from the regime's own standpoint, it could not be pushed through without cost.

Even so, the economic and structural evidence suggests that the announced "revisions" will, at best, amount to minor and cosmetic adjustments to the percentage of wage increases. The Iranian state—confronted with a chronic operating-balance deficit, collapsing real revenues, and an inability to reliably cover even its routine expenditures—does not possess the fiscal capacity for any meaningful restoration of wages. Under these conditions, a few additional percentage points—if implemented at all—will not alter the profound gap between wage levels and the cost of a basic living basket. That gap cannot be closed by "adding a percentage"; it can only be addressed through a real, multi-fold increase in wages.

From this perspective, the revision of the wage-increase section should be understood as part of a political performance and a time-buying tactic: an attempt to temporarily contain social anger, drain protest energy, and pass through a sensitive moment in the budget's approval process. This method has been used repeatedly in past confrontations with livelihood-based protests—its purpose is not to resolve the crisis, but to postpone a social eruption.

More importantly, even if small numerical adjustments are introduced in the wage figures, the other anti-worker pillars of the FY 2026/27 budget bill remain intact: a regressive tax structure, the erosion of social supports, the continued entrenchment of job insecurity and subcontracting, the absence of investment in employment and training, and the systematic repression of independent labor organizing. For that reason, the recent developments do not weaken the criticisms raised in this report; they function as practical confirmation of them.

Overall, the reaction of Parliament and the government to the wave of social discontent shows that the FY 2026/27 budget bill has drifted so far from the lived reality of the labor force that it has been assessed—within the power structure itself—as a potentially explosive document. The announced retreats are not a change of direction. They are an attempt to preserve the status quo through crisis management and the temporary containment of labor protests.

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