



May 2013

## May Day message!

**As Iranian workers prepare for the most crucial May Day event in recent years, Dave Prentis, General Secretary of UNISON demands release of trade union leaders from prisons in Iran!**



On behalf of UNISON I would like to send a message of solidarity to the Committee for the Defence of Iranian Peoples' Rights (CODIR) and to the workers and trade unionists of Iran on the occasion of May Day 2013.

UNISON stands in solidarity with the struggle of the Iranian people for peace, human and democratic rights and social justice. To this end UNISON will continue to support CODIR's campaigns for the release of all political prisoners, for women's rights and in support of independent trade unions in Iran. UNISON commits to work

through the TUC to ensure that the issue of workers' rights stay high on the agenda of the ILO.

UNISON calls for the release of all imprisoned trade unionists in Iran and for Iran to ratify the main ILO conventions including conventions, 87 and 98 and for the Iranian government to implement ILO conventions governing the right of workers to join independent trade unions in pursuit of their rights.

Yours in solidarity,

**Dave Prentis**  
General Secretary, UNISON



## Urgent call for solidarity!

This May Day Iranian working people once again mark International Workers' Day in extremely difficult conditions. Inflation, mass unemployment, poverty wages, unpaid salaries and attacks on trade unions are the everyday experience of our comrades in Iran. The Iranian people face massive challenges. International sanctions have brought the economy to its knees; the threat of military attacks is still in the air.

Workers protests against these conditions are brutally suppressed. The regime does not tolerate trade unions. Many trade union activists are imprisoned. Some are tortured.

Unemployment is reaching catastrophic levels. The regime officially admits that over 15% have no work. Iranian currency has lost 70% of its value since November 2011, plunging many into abject poverty. The regime's own statistics show that nearly 20% of people live under the poverty line.

CODIR is committed to support campaigns to win the widest possible solidarity with the Iranian people engaged in this struggle. This can save the lives and liberty of workers.

CODIR calls on all trades unions to join its campaigns for democracy, human and trade union rights and helping to secure a better future for our Iranian brothers and sisters.

**Affiliate to CODIR!**

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**For the sake of world peace:**

## Oppose economic sanctions and military intervention in Iran

Further talks involving the 5+1 group of world powers (Britain, France, Russia, China, US + Germany) and Iran took place recently in Almaty in Kazakhstan.

EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, who represents the group of six powers, that the two sides of the negotiations “remain far apart on the substance” of the talks. She did add however that, “For the first time, I’ve seen a real back and forward between us, where we were able to discuss details to pose questions and to get answers directly on the sort of issues that we need to discuss in order to be able to move



forward. To that extent, that has been a very important element.”

However, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that the recognition of Iran’s rights under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the only

solution to the West’s dispute with the Islamic Republic over its nuclear energy programme.

The lack of resolution however means that sanctions imposed by the West remain in place doing untold damage to the Iranian economy and having a detrimental impact upon the people of Iran who have made no call for such sanctions.

Indeed opposition voices within Iran have actively opposed the sanctions as

playing into the hands of the regime by causing a diversion from the underlying economic mismanagement of the current government as well as providing a focus for opposition to a foreign threat.

As long as the sanctions regime remains in place, and the threat of military intervention is not taken off the table, the ordinary people of Iran are the ones who will suffer. **Intervention in Iran, whether economically through sanctions, or militarily must be opposed in order for negotiation over the nuclear programme to be given a chance.**

## Last Year’s Statistics of Executions in Iran!

The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran recently released its 5<sup>th</sup> annual report. The report highlighted the fact that due to civil suppression, lack of press freedom and lack of transparency in the judicial system, recording all the cases of execution in Iran is impossible.

The report states that considering the likelihood of numerous secret executions, the number of executions in 2012 is the highest in the past 15 years. At least 580 people were executed in 2012, 76% of whom were related to drugs trafficking. Official sources reported only 294 cases of executions. Other information has been obtained from unofficial sources.

According to the report, 85 cases out of 325 secret executions took place in



Vakil-Abaad prison in the North East of Iran. Based on the findings of the report, 60% of all executions last year were carried out in public, and one third of the victims were related to cases of drugs trafficking offences. Since the mass protests after the disputed presidential elections in 2009, the number of executions, particularly in public, has significantly increased and grew six times compared to the years before 2009.

The report lists at least 9 women, 27 Afghanistani citizens, and one Pakistani among those executed in 2012. The execution by hanging of a young man “in a Taliban style” in the football stadium, the hanging of two young men for bullying and extortion and cutting the fingers off one man in Shiraz are examples which the Human Rights organisation states are new ways of intimidation.

## Widespread Workers' Rights Abuses in Iran

### Government Subdues Labour Activists and Organisations!

As part of its ongoing attack on trade unions and labour activists the Iranian government has recently initiated a further wave of arrests. In a statement issued on 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2013 the Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane plant union condemned the arrest and detention of activists, particularly the members of the Coordinating Committee to Assist the Formation of Labour Organisations. The statement reads:

“As you know, it has been more than 20 days since a number of our members, namely Ghaleb Hussein, Khaled Hussein, Behzad Farajollahi, Vafa Ghaderi, Ali Azad and Hamed Mahmoudnejad have been arrested and, despite numer-

ous follow ups and inquiries by the family and friends of the detainees, are still in a state of uncertainty.”

The poorest in Iran are living under desperate conditions due to low incomes and high unemployment rates. Under such circumstances, workers and labour activists have no choice but to fight to form independent labour organisations in order to achieve their demands.

Pressure mounted on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> April when families, friends and activists gathered in front of the offices of the Justice Department in the city of Sanandaj to find out about the status of the detained labour activists. Late on the second day of



the protest, the prosecuting attorney of the province promised the families that the case of the detainees would be heard on 8<sup>th</sup> April.

On Monday the 8<sup>th</sup> at around 4:30 pm, the facebook of Reza Shahabi, labour activist and board

member of Tehran Transit Workers (VAHED) reported the release of Khaled Hussein, Vafa Ghaderi and Hamed Mahmoudnejad with a bail of about \$16,000. The situation of Ghaleb Hussein, Behzad Farajollahi and Ali Azad remains unknown.

## Workers: New Minimum Wage not Fair!

Iranian workers are gearing up to mount a legal challenge to the minimum wage approved for the new Iranian year which started on 21st March. With the Iranian economy dogged by high inflation and high prices, workers are not happy with the new minimum wage. Even the government supported High Association of Islamic Labour Councils has evaluated the minimum monthly cost of living for a family to be about 1.36 million Touman (about \$425), which is much higher than the new 487,000 Touman (\$152) minimum wage for the new year. The government has

been criticised for not taking into account inflation and ratifying a minimum wage which will drastically reduce the purchasing power of



working families and drive them into poverty. Opposition to the minimum wage includes both independent unions and those such as

Islamic Labour Councils which are government backed. A broad coalition of these groups is preparing to file an official legal case

against the High Council of Labour, responsible for the minimum wage proposals. Workers believe that they are not well represented in the council and their rights are not protected.

**CODIR calls on trade unions globally to protest against human and democratic rights abuses in Iran.**

## AFFILIATE TO CODIR



*CODIR supports the rights of the Iranian People. We supply news and analysis of event in Iran and related issues from around the world.*

*For information on CODIR please write to us at: CODIR- B.M.CODIR, London, WC1N 3XX*

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## ***Theocratic regime endorses regressive steps!***

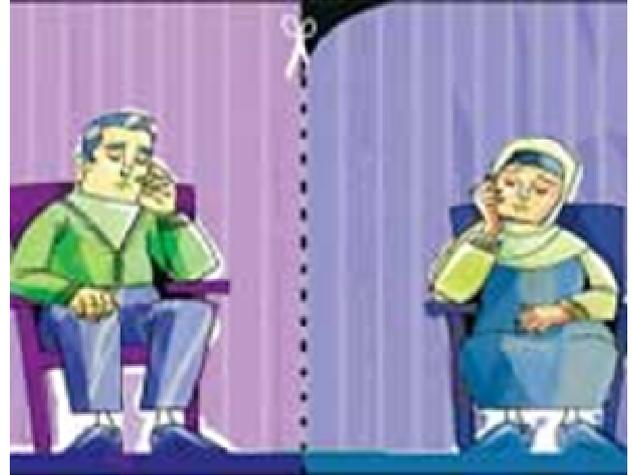
# **Gender Separation for TV Hosts!**

Just before the New Year holidays in Iran (21<sup>st</sup> March) news broke relating to the gender separation of TV hosts. This was to be based on the gender of the guests, so male hosts would only talk to male guests and women hosts to female guests. Although this arrangement was never officially announced it was implemented in a few TV specials aired during the New Year holidays.

Taghi Sohrabi, the General Manager of Public Relations at National TV and Radio, believes that such an arrangement is desirable and preferred, but maintains that there is no ban in place for male hosts to talk to female guests and vice versa.

Taghi Sohrabi told ILNA (Iranian Labour News Agency) that "in recent years the National TV and Radio organisation has been able, through careful planning, to invite and train good hosts and experts in two groups of men and women, and today these hosts are trained in various speciality areas."

He added that "the preference is that when the guest of a programme or the expert participating in a TV programme or show is a woman, the host or the individual who talks to her should be a woman too. The same goes for men. This is both more attractive for the audiences and makes them happy, and has been welcomed by many of our guests and experts... A



number of our female guests and experts have requested to talk to a female host and the same has been requested by men. When both the host and guest are men or women, they connect better and discussions are conducted better."

Sohrabi further stated that "saying that a memo was issued for this matter or that there is a ban for talks between male hosts with female experts, or female hosts with male guest or experts, is not true."  
**CODIR campaigns for gender equality in Iran!**

## **URGENT ACTION**

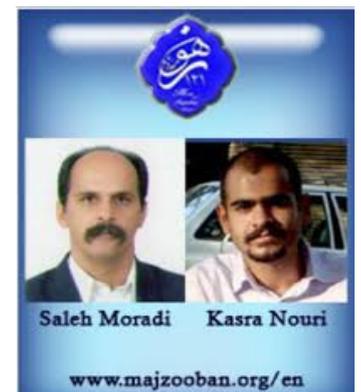
### **IRANIAN HUNGER STRIKERS IN CRITICAL CONDITION**

**Two men imprisoned in Adel Abad Prison in Shiraz, south-west Iran, are in critical condition after a prolonged hunger strike protesting the harsh treatment of dervishes, including lawyers, in Tehran's Evin Prison. They have been beaten, have lost consciousness several times, and are being kept alive by intravenous drips in prison.**

**Saleh Moradi and Kasra Nouri**, are Gonabadi dervishes from the Nemattolah Gonabadi order, one of Iran's largest Sufi orders. They started a "wet" hunger

strike (taking water but not food) on 15 January. On 21 March, both men intensified their protest by entering into a "dry" hunger strike (refusing water as well as food). They have reportedly each lost 35 kilos. A source close to the men said that on 25 March, prison security officials bound their hands and feet and force-fed them bread in an attempt to break their hunger strike. This was reportedly filmed by the authorities. On 1 April, Kasra Nouri was transferred to a Ministry of Intelligence facility and reportedly severely beaten before being taken back to Adel Abad Prison.

Both men have been moved to the prison infirmary where they are receiving fluids through intravenous drips. Saleh Moradi, journalist and a manager of Majzooban-e Nour website (a Sufi news agency that reports on human rights violations against dervishes) and Kasra Nouri, a network member of the website, were detained in September 2011 and January 2012 respectively in connection with their activism and accused of "spreading propaganda against the system" and "acting against national security. They have been denied access to lawyers since their arrest.



**AI has called for urgent action on the two detainees. See: <http://www.codir.net/humanrights/index.html#158>**