

CODIR Bulletin



May 2014

Solidarity on International Workers Day!

As the political crisis in Iran deepens, the urgency of international solidarity with the struggle of Iranian workers for job security, a living wage and trade union rights is paramount. Trade unions globally respond by demanding respect for workers' rights:



MAY DAY SOLIDARITY MESSAGE WITH IRANIAN WORKERS

"I am proud to support the work of the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) in the fight for the democratic and trade union rights of workers in Iran.

"My union RMT affiliated to CODIR in 2012 because we support the demand for freedom of prominent Iranian trade unionists including Reza Shehabi, Treasurer of the Vehad Syndicat (Teheran Busworkers' Union), imprisoned by the Iranian regime and tortured in Evin prison purely for his

activities in organising workers in trade unions.

"On this May Day 2014 we must renew the call for the freedom of Reza Shehabi and all Iranian trade unionists and workers' representatives and the end to persecution of women workers, children and Arab minorities by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"May Day is the day of worldwide labour solidarity. Freedom for Reza Shehabi! Freedom for all trade union and political prisoners in Iran and worldwide!

Alex Gordon,
President CODIR

Former National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers (RMT) President (2010-12)"

Solidarity Message from Fire brigade Union



The FBU sends May Day solidarity greetings to Iranian workers in their struggle for trade union rights and calls on the Iranian government to recognise all ILO conventions

Matt Wrack
GENERAL SECRETARY

Alan McLean
PRESIDENT



UNISON is proud to express its solidarity with Iranian trade unions and working people.

We call on the Iranian government to recognise and respect ILO core conventions, especially conventions 87 and 98 on the freedom of association, the right to organise and collective bargaining.

We further call on the Iranian government to free all political prisoners, including trade unionists."

International Campaigns continues:

Trade union leaders call for the release of detained workers



called upon the labour and trade movement internationally to demand the immediate release of Shahrokh Zamani.

Zamani was arrested in June 2011 and sentenced to 11 years

Pressure on the Iranian government from CODIR, together with international trade union bodies and human rights organisations, has yielded results. After 39 days of hunger strike beginning on 8 March, Shahrokh Zamani ended his protest following his re-transfer to the political section of Gohardasht prison, a demand of his action. CODIR has now

imprisonment for his trade union activities, including “acting against national security by establishing or membership of groups opposed to the system” and “spreading propaganda against the establishment”, charges widely used by the regime against those engaged in trade union activity. Zamani is a member of the Syndicate of Paint Workers of Tehran, an

independent trade union not recognised by the regime.

Sharon Burrow, the President of ITUC, has written to the Iranian president demanding Zamani’s freedom . Her letter expresses concern about his treatment, including his transfer to Ghezal Hesar prison, where thousands of prisoners criminal charges are held and where the safety of political prisoners is threatened.

Alex Gordon, leading British trade unionist and president of CODIR, has signed an international joint statement “holding the Islamic Republic of Iran responsible for Mr. Zamani’s health and well-being” and demanding the immediate and

unconditional release for all workers and political prisoners in Iran.

Almost a year after the election of Hassan Rouhani as president, who promised a new era of respect for human and democratic rights, the people of Iran are still waiting for change. The regime’s economic policy has brought more factory closures, unemployment, unpaid wages and poverty pay. CODIR is calling for urgent action to pressurise the Iranian government to respond to trade union demands for recognition and freedom to conduct their work, including enactment of ILO conventions 87 and 98, and for jobs and decent conditions for their members.

Protest against Prison Guards’ Attack on Political Detainees Mounts!

12 Political Prisoners Start Hunger Strike!

CODIR has stressed the urgent need to protect the safety and security of political prisoners in Iran following reports that prison guards have raided section 350 of Evin Prison in Tehran on 17 April, beating and injuring inmates. At least 32 prisoners from section 350 are now reported to have been transferred to solitary confinement. All those moved, including a human rights lawyer, trade unionist, politician and journalist, were attacked with batons during the transfer.

A witness statement, signed by 74 inmates, lists the casualties, the manner in which the raid took place and the fact that plain-clothed security forces were accompanying the prison guards. Iranian law forbids plain-clothed security personnel to enter prisons.

The statement indicates that prisoners were insulted and those resisting the confiscation of their personal belongings were savagely beaten. A number were taken to hospital. A larger number were treated at the prison by other inmates and medical staff.

CODIR notes that the regime’s brutal action is the latest episode in the history of mistreatment of political prisoners in Iran dating back to the Shah’s time. “The world cannot



just sit idly by until another similar tragedy takes place,” a spokesperson for the organisation said.

CODIR has consistently worked for the release of all political prisoners incarcerated for simply expressing their views or engaging in trade union activity. It insists that the release of political prisoners and the abolition of the death sentence are clear ways in which President Rouhani can signal a change inside Iran. “Until then” CODIR says, “we will keep campaigning”.

Unemployment Rises for Women in Iran

Regime's Policies Drive Women out of the Labour Market!

Ayatollah Khamenei "We should not get involved in secondary issues regarding women. Employment of women is a secondary issue," he said. "We should see what issues disrupt women's tranquility in homes. This is the main issue."

While the struggle to find employment in Iran affects working people across age and gender groups the impact upon women is significant. The Iran Statistical Centre has reported that the unemployment rate for women is now twice that of men.

Legislation is actively working against the employment of women with laws being presented or passed in parliament, such as those relating to "respect for the family" or increasing the leave days for working pregnant women, which has exacerbated the situation.

The roots of the growing rate of unemployment among women relate to the policy to increase population growth in the country and reduce the number of women active in the workforce.

Iran's leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, has stated that there are two conditions for women to work: that outside work should not take the focus away from a woman's first job of being at home, with the family and the important role of being a wife and a mother, and the second that the religious issue of respect and boundaries be respected.

Recently elected president, Hassan Rouhani, made addressing the gender gap in employment a campaign promise in 2013. This is a major issue. Recent statistics show that 63% of men and only 12.4% of women from the total population form the labour force in Iran. According to these statistics, from the Iran Statistical Centre, 10.4 % of the active population was unemployed and the number of unemployed women compared to unemployed men was much higher in cities and towns compared to the provinces.

Significantly the latest statistics show an increase in unemployment among educated women. The rapidly growing number of women receiving higher education has increased demand from this sector but has not been met by a rise in access to jobs.

The question of access to employment is intrinsically linked to the social position of women in Iran, both by those pressing for change and those determined to turn the clock back.

Only this month Ayatollah Khamenei stated that "We should not get involved in



secondary issues regarding women. Employment of



women is a secondary issue," he said. "We should see what issues disrupt women's tranquility in homes. This is the main issue."

However, looking at younger women who are looking for employment, Iran is facing an unemployment rate of 42.7% in the 18 to 24 yrs age group. According to Mohsen Ranani, professor at the University of Isfahan, some 75% of female university graduates remain without an appropriate job.

For a country that is aiming to grow its economy this mismatch between the education of its potential workforce and the access to actual jobs cannot be sustained.

While there are some positive trends in the sphere of education relating to women's position, pathways into employment need to be created and the economic

role of women recognised. The economic needs of young urban families for two incomes is compelling the younger generation to look more favourably at women working outside the household. Such pressure needs to increase if women's role is not to be seen as a purely domestic one.

**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

Visit: www.codir.net or e-mail us at: codir_info@btinternet.com

As the economic crisis deepens Iran floats ILO convention!

Forgotten Generation: Child Labour in Iran

In the past three decades, the number of working children has dramatically increased in Iran. The disastrous Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88 was one of the reasons for this. The implementation of socio-economic programmes to meet the demands of the IMF and World Bank was another. Child labour, which is directly related to poverty and unemployment, has become a major social predicament and one of the most agonising consequences of the economic and social policies of the Iranian government.

At present, there is no specific legislation in place to protect these children. The lack of regulation has been noted by the Head of

Welfare in Iran while a report by the Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA) stated



that: "...at the moment 34,000 orphaned and ill-treated kids live in Welfare custody in boarding facilities... there are no laws to deal with street kids and to protect them... If civil networks and NGO's and voluntary groups are supported, much more could be done to protect

the street and working children."

The authorities in Tehran have also admitted that they "are not able to protect working children." Social workers and children

rights advocates, often the only hope for thousands of innocent and homeless children, strongly criticise the policies of the Iranian government.

The phenomenon of child labour stems from the policies that have caused poverty in the wider society.

A significant number of children work, under inhuman conditions, particularly in the slums of large cities, including among Afghan and Iraqi refugees and immigrants.

New laws are required, including banning the employment of children under 15 years of age and establishing a welfare department, with trained and experienced staff and a proper budget. National employment must be boosted with wages at decent levels and job security improved. Women's rights need protection, so that children do not have to work instead of going to school. Without these steps child labour in Iran will persist.

Iranian Arabs demand rights

ARRESTS AND EXECUTIONS CONTINUE

In the last 3 months the Arab people living in the South of Iran have faced a wave of arrests and executions. Increased environmental pollution, and the implementation of neoliberal economic policies, have resulted in higher rates of unemployment, mass migration and a growing social malaise in the area.

On the eve of the anniversary of the popular uprising in protest at demographic changes, on 15th April 2005, dubbed the "Intifada" of the Ahwazi people, arrests increased. Recently, 80 social activists

were arrested in Ahwaz, Susanguerd, Ramshir, Shoushtar, Jarrahi and Shadgan. Five of the family members of prisoners on death row have also been sentenced to 6 months in jail. Five individuals have been sentenced to death and one person has been executed.

Ahwazi Arab refugees and cultural and human rights activists, together with political activists and political organizations in Europe, Australia and North America commemorate the anniversary of the "Intifada" movement every year. Demonstrations and protest gatherings in front of the

European parliament in Brussels and in front of the Iranian embassy in Australia, to protest Iran's policies with respect to the Arab people of Iran, are organised.

This year, on 16th April, a large number of Ahwazi people gathered in front of the European parliament to denounce the ethnic discrimination and denial of the cultural and political rights of Arabs. Protests highlighted rising unemployment and environmental pollution. Prominent was the call for the release of political



prisoners, ending executions and trial in camera. Simultaneously, scattered protests were also staged in the city of Ahwaz in the evening in working class neighborhoods and in Australia.

Iran continues to respond to such popular protests with accusations such as them being "foreign driven". Domestically there are complete news blackouts and suppressive policies continue.