



March / April 2013

Women Need 'Permission' to Travel Abroad!



On 27th February women to obtain a passport. It was activists met with the Chair later revised to restrict of the Women's Commission women above the age of 18 in the Iranian parliament to to travel without the permis- present a 2000-signature sion of a guardian. In a petition opposing the Pass- port Bill. The Bill requires guardian permission for women above the age of 18 to travel abroad. Women are demanding the removal of both "parent permission" for single women and "husband permission" for married women, as a condition to leave the country legally.

The original amendment to the government's Bill was introduced several months ago by the Foreign Policy and National Security Commission of the Iranian parliament requiring the "permission of the guardian or Sharia authority" for women under the age of 40

The vote on the Bill is expected this month. Women's activists in Iran and around the world will be watching the outcome closely. Protests against the Bill are expected to be a feature of International Women's Day activity in Iran on 8th March.



CODIR Rejects Drive to War!

CODIR has been unequivocal in its condemnation of any external interference in the affairs of the Islamic Republic, stressing that it is for the people of Iran to determine their own future. Human rights, peace and trade union organisations must show solidarity in assisting the people of Iran to establish a truly democratic state.

CODIR says, "We don't have to take the path of war; we can take a different path, the path of peace. We need to mobilize once more to prevent another disastrous conflict."

With solidarity and respect the Iranian people will continue their struggle for democracy and end the theocratic dictatorship to forge a new secular society. With negotiation and genuine diplomacy, war is not inevitable.

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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.

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Alex Gordon, Honorary President of CODIR writes:

REZA 'S RELEASE SHOWS IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY



January 2013 brought welcome news of release from Tehrans' notorious Evin prison of **Reza Shahabi Zakaria**, treasurer and executive board member of the Tehran & Suburbs Bus workers' union (Syndikat Vehad).

As CODIR supporters will know Reza has been imprisoned on political charges since June 2010. On 14 April 2012 Reza was sentenced to 6 years imprisonment by the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Tehran—5 years for “gathering and colluding against state security”; one year for “spreading propaganda against the system”; fined 70m rial (£7,500) and banned from all trade union activities for 5 years. He may still face a fresh charge of “enmity against God”.

On 22 November 2011 Reza went on a hunger strike for the second time since his arrest in protest at lack of medical treatment - since February 2012 one

side of his body had gone numb, however it was not until 30 April that prison authorities took him to hospital before returning him to solitary confinement.

Amnesty International designated Shahabi a prisoner of conscience "convicted solely for his peaceful trade union work" and called for immediate and unconditional release.

International trade unions, including the National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers (RMT) in Britain have loudly called for Reza Shahabi's freedom. On my election as RMT president, I called for Reza's release from prison in my address to RMT's AGM in June 2010 – a speech that was filmed and posted widely on Iranian blogs. In August 2011 at the world Congress of the International Transport Workers' Federation in Mexico City I moved a resolution from RMT that committed ITF to campaign for the freedom and rights of Reza and all workers and imprisoned trade unionists in Iran. RMT members have joined members of Unite and other unions demonstrating for the freedom of our Iranian comrades outside the Iranian Embassy and the BBC Persian Service at Broadcasting House.

Reza's personal strength and determination, expressed in prison by his refusal to submit to harassment and bullying of prison authorities (including torture) was summed up in the letter he addressed to RMT general secretary, Bob Crow and myself on 14 January 2013 just two days after his release from prison.

Reza Shahabi wrote:



Dear comrades, my warmest greetings,

I, Reza Shahabi Zakaria, as an imprisoned worker, treasurer and executive board member of the syndicate of workers of Tehran bus company, thank you, and RMT and the British labour movement, for your support and solidarity; I owe my temporary release to your ongoing support as well as solidarity initiatives by other workers and labour organizations in Iran and the world. I hope the day

comes when no workers anywhere in the world will have to face prison for their struggles in support of the working class interests.

My dear comrades and fellow workers: on behalf of my colleagues at the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company as well as other labour activists and family members, I am grateful of your selfless efforts, and I hope the day

will come when I can repay your kindness.

In Solidarity,

Reza Shahabi Zakaria

January 14, 2013 (Day 25, 1391)

This happy result must inspire CODIR and all those who campaign on principle for peace, freedom and workers rights throughout the world to redouble our efforts to fight for our imprisoned sisters and brothers in Iran.

Poverty wages- Workers have no Role in Influencing the Minimum Wage in Iran

In a televised interview on Sunday, 24th February, President Ahmadinejad claimed that in fixing the minimum wage for the coming Iranian year (starting 22nd March) his Cabinet plays the role of mediator between the employer and workers groups. He said that the final decision makers are the workers and employers. However, as reported by ILNA, the Iranian labour news agency, Mr. Mohamad Ahmadi, the labour representative in the Supreme Council of Labour pointed out that despite the Council has 5 representatives of the government while there are only 3 representatives from each group of workers and employers in

the Council. This is in contradiction to the spirit of the tri-lateral cooperation stated in the Labour Law.

Referring to Article 167 of the Labour Law, Mr. Ahmadi stated,

“In this Article, the Minister of Labour is identified as the chair of the Supreme Council. He will nominate two more competent individuals who will be approved by the government. There would be three representatives from each of workers and employer groups as well.”

He then added that the parliament has approved the appointment of two more representatives of the government to the Council. Since the meetings of the



Council are official with a quorum of seven, the presence or absence of workers representatives effectively makes no difference. The process of fixing the minimum wage can go ahead at a meeting deemed to be quorate without any workers being represented.

The member of the Supreme Council concluded that,

“A Council whose decisions impact upon the livelihood of millions of people, has turned into an body in which the power of the workers group had diminished. With the 5-3-3 combination of the Council, defending the rights of workers cannot be done appropriately.

This structure breaches conventions of the ILO.”

Briefing Note: The suffering of Iranian teachers

The Iranian state has increased the intensity of violence against teachers. They are attempting to cover up their trade and economic problems by suggesting that teachers union activities are a threat to society. The economic problems of teachers in Iran have been exacerbated by the lack of a promised wage rise. This has been compounded by the fact that the wages of many teachers have actually been reduced in different cities.

CODIR is aware of hundreds of verdicts of dis-



missal, exile, and persecution being issued by the Disciplinary Violations Board of the Ministry of Education after teachers demonstrations in 2006 and 2007. Across Iran this process continues to this very day. The trade union activities of teachers have been illegally interrupted throughout the country.

The international human rights conventions, to which the Iranian government is a signatory, are routinely ignored as government officials in Iran fail to take responsibility for international commitments or domestic laws. Demands for basic rights, even seeking appointments with Parliamentary deputies, have led to violent confrontations between teacher activists and security officials.

Contact CODIR for a copy of a up to date briefing on the teacher trade unionists in Iran.

Free Women Political Prisoners!

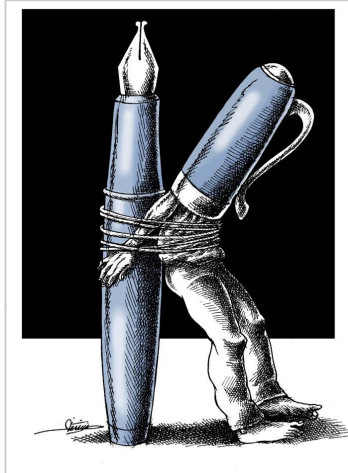


CODIR has called for the release of female political prisoners in Iran and their protection from degrading and abusive treatment. In November, 9 women political prisoners started a hunger strike demanding humane treatment and access to medical treatment.

Journalists on the firing line!

As the presidential elections scheduled for June 2013 get closer, the regime's repressive measures take a more open nature. Fearing a repeat of the mass protests and demonstrations against the manipulation of the election in 2009, the regime has already started gagging media outlets. In January the security forces arrested fourteen journalists on the trumped up charges of being in contact with foreign media organisations. CODIR sees these arrests as a significant stepping up of pressure on the limited freedom of the press in Iran, and has launched an international campaign demanding the release of these journalists.

The journalists are accused of working with so called



'anti-revolutionary' Persian language media organisations based outside of Iran. The regime's security forces raided the offices of a number of Tehran based publications last weekend, searched and videotaped premises, then went on to search the homes of some

of the journalists. Some had phones and press permits confiscated.

CODIR condemned the lack of freedom for journalists working in Iran, stating, "Journalists in Iran face major restrictions on legitimate activity, including criticising the authorities and reporting truthfully on human rights issues. These arrests are not only part of the regime's attempt to silence particular journalists but to sustain a climate of fear throughout the press and media. In these circumstances the Iranian government hopes to continue with its crackdown on all forms of opposition and hide its true colours from the outside world." Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance has

claimed that the arrests are unrelated to the work of the journalists but this is not borne out by the reality of the Iranian government's actions over the past 30 years, says CODIR.

"The government have consistently claimed that sections of the media in Iran are orchestrating a 'soft revolution' supported by Western governments", CODIR stated. "This leads the authorities to act with outrageous ruthlessness at the merest hint of criticism and the latest arrests are an example of that. The Iranian government must be urged at once to release the imprisoned journalists and all political prisoners in Iran."

Theocracy resort to use of videos of "Forced Confession!"

A month after security forces made raids on news media offices and summarily arrested independent reporters, reports from Iran again reveal widespread pressure on media journalists to provide forced "confessions" on fabricated charges. The recent round of detentions began with the night-time arrest of reporters Soliman Mohammadi and Milad Fadaei-Asl on January 27th 2013. They continued with after-dark attacks on the offices of daily newspapers *Etemad*, *Bahar*, *Sharg* and *Arman* and the weekly newspaper *Aseman*. Those detained are held in solitary confinement and subject to unlawful deprivation.

After issuing a series of misleading statements regarding the journalists' arrest, the Ministry of Intelligence has now revealed that it lacked any grounds for their detention. It

has claimed in a new statement that those arrested want to publicly reveal information on their alleged anti-government "network" and its activities. The suggestion that such a "network" existed is a clear fabrication in the absence of any other evidence with which to charge the innocent reporters.

Ali Motahhari, a Member of Parliament and influential person in ruling circles has stated that, "the Intelligence Ministry's statements lack any reasonable justification for arresting these reporters." He said that it is illegal to announce the names of people and accuse them before evidence has been produced that they have committed any crime. Witnessed by MPs, the Cultural Deputy of the Ministry of Intelligence stated: "These arrests were preventative measure and in fact were against the law."



In a separate development, Mir-Taher Mosavi has been sentenced to five years imprisonment and ten years internal exile in Baluchistan. Judge Pir-Abbasi of the Revolutionary Court pronounced the verdict after Mr Mosavi had spent 229 days in solitary confinement

during which time he underwent constant interrogations leading to forced confessions. Mir-Taher Mosavi is a university professor. During the 2009 presidential election, he served as a member of Mir-Hussein Mosavi's election campaign team. He is suffering from ill health and has heart disease.