

# IRAN TODAY



*Bulletin of the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights*

Vol 20 No 2

Autumn 2008

\$2/£1 (1.5 Euros)

## SOLIDARITY WITH THE IRANIAN PEOPLE



In Defence  
of Peace



**Defend Democracy in Iran**



## FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

## *Editorial*

### **War or Peace?**

Today there is no more important question in world politics. Having more or less confined the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan within the borders of those two states, the United States and its allies, Israel and the UK, have now turned their attention to Iran.

However, as a target for aggression, or as an enemy, Iran is a different proposition to Iraq and Afghanistan. Not only geographically bigger, the majority of Iran's population is of fighting age, its regular armed forces and militia are also fighting fit and the country is ruled by a theocratic dictatorship with few principles other than ruthless self-preservation, and has ideological tentacles stretching around the world.

Having allegedly set itself against anti democratic tyranny and the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the US can hardly ignore Iran. Having set a course to develop Uranium enrichment (not WMD) as well as advanced missile technology, Iran has given the US a pretext for aggression.

However, it is hardly a state secret that US/UK policy is built on a foundation of double standards and operates on the principles of hypocrisy. Which is not to say the US military/industrial complex is not concerned with the global spread of WMD, especially amongst states expressing hostility to US foreign policy goals. But as far as upholding human rights and

support for genuine democracy is concerned, the US and its allies sing a different tune as can be seen in their current position on Pakistan and Israel. In recent history there is a starker example, when in the mid 1980's, the US secured Iran's assistance for the export of anti democratic measure against Nicaragua and when the US supported the Iraqi dictatorship during its war with Iran.

In other words democracy and human rights are a moveable feast for the US, a take it or leave it issue, dependent on US strategic interests.

The current Iranian leadership under Ahmadinejad, understand this duplicity and are prepared to use and manipulate US policy in its drive for self preservation and its own contempt for democracy and human rights.

Ahmadinejad knows all too well that his Uranium enrichment plans and his missile programme as well as his hysterical outbursts against Israel, will deflect attention from his regimes foul and ongoing record of human rights abuses and anti democratic practices.

With recent US moves to offer a "freeze for a freeze", deal with Iran i.e. no more trade sanctions if Iran discontinues its drive for WMD, the prospect for peace rather than

a war the US doesn't want anyway, looks more favourable. Meantime, the Iranian dictatorship continues its mass executions and imprisonment of human rights activists. A near perfect outcome for the Tehran regime. It maintains its phoney anti US credentials among fundamentalist forces and proceeds without challenge to deepen its despotic grip on the Iran working class and all those struggling for peace and democracy in Iran.

Iranian warmongering is unacceptable, the spread of WMD must be opposed by all those committed to world peace, but if the danger of war should recede, the fight for democracy and human rights in Iran should be stepped up.

The struggle for world peace has always been based on the struggle for social justice. The current dictatorship in Iran has one of the worst records of human rights abuse in the world, if not the worst!. This reality must not get lost in the war or peace debate, or behind the scenes deals.

For all those struggling against oppression in Iran, the fight for democracy is the only road to lasting peace. There should be no accommodation or tolerance of dictatorship. The US has deployed its double standard as a cornerstone of its foreign policy for too long. The peace movement should avoid the trap.

---

*The current Iranian leadership under Ahmadinejad, understand this duplicity and are prepared to use and manipulate US policy in its drive for self preservation and its own contempt for democracy and human rights.*

---

# Trade Unions under Attack

## CODIR Addresses International Trade Union Conference

**A**t the invitation of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in Britain, Jamshid Ahmadi, CODIR's Assistant General Secretary, addressed an important international conference in London. Other speakers at the conference included John Monks, Secretary General of the European TUC, Francis O'Grady, Deputy General Secretary of the TUC, Ken Livingstone, progressive former Mayor of London, Daniel Blackburn, Executive Secretary of the International Centre for Trade Union Rights (ICTUR), Shane Enright, Amnesty International (Trade Union Section), Nestor Lopez, the Venezuelan Ambassador to Britain and Ana Lucia Pinzon, General Secretary of the Public Sector Union from Colombia. The main theme of the address was 'Trade Unionism under Attack in Iran'. The session was chaired by the Head of the International Department of the TUC.

In his speech, after beginning with the historical background of the trade union struggle in Iran, the speaker gave an outline of the policies of the theocratic regime in Tehran and their effect on the experience of trade union activists at present in the country. He reported that "trade union activity is illegal in any normally accepted sense"

and that the regime "does not recognise trade unions as workplace organisations defending workers conditions of service and salaries." He reminded the audience that trade union activists do not enjoy any "freedom of association", "right to collective bargaining" and the "right to strike". This has meant that the workers are condemned to "poverty wages and poor working conditions".

The speaker then listed the core issues underlying the workers' struggle as: payment of unpaid and delayed wages, recognition of the right to organise free and independent trade unions, increase of the minimum wage, removal of security forces from workplaces, and an end to the violent treatment of workers in labour disputes.

CODIR's speaker further highlighted the harassment and intimidation experienced by workers "for engaging in activities regarded as 'normal' in the UK". The example of the arrest and victimisation of "leaders and activists of the Bus Workers of Tehran, teachers and textile workers" since 2004 was offered as evidence. He added: "activities as simple as participation in May Day demonstrations are punished with imprisonment and sacking."

Attention was then drawn to the fact that the regime-controlled Islamic Labour Councils (ILC) and "Labour House" operating in Iran are there to ensure management control". The ILCs are tripartite bodies controlled by the Labour Ministry and employers and are only on the scene "to reinforce the situation of Iran's best known trade union leader.





## No war, no peace no good for the Middle East

*Key players in the Middle East continue to walk the fine line between a tentative 'peace' and all out conflagration. Israel's large scale military exercise in the Mediterranean in June sent shock waves across the region. **Jane Green** considers recent developments and assesses the prospects for preventing all out war in the Middle East.*

To suggest that there is peace in the Middle East is to fly in the face of the reality of life for many people in that part of the world. For over 40 years the people of Palestine have suffered an illegal occupation at the mercy of Israeli tanks. Six years on the war in Iraq continues without any immediate prospect of resolution. In Afghanistan, the West continues to struggle with the demons it created to oppose the Soviet presence in that country; far from defeat, the Taliban appear resurgent in many parts of the country, with 'president' Hamad Kharzi, largely confine to Kabul.

As bad as this situation is, and it is very bad, there is the very real danger that it could degenerate further. Sabre rattling by the Bush regime in relation to Iran is not a recent phenomenon. One of the original 'axis of evil' states, as defined by George Bush, Iran has long been regarded as a pariah state by the West, albeit one with massive natural resource and economic potential.

However, it has long been assumed that any strike upon Iran would not necessarily come from Washington directly but from its proxy in the region, Israel. In this context the recent military exercise involving more than 100 Israeli F-16s and F-15s flying more than 900 miles, roughly the distance to Iran's Natanz nuclear plant, looks particularly ominous.

Sources in Washington were quick to shrug off the exercise quipping that the Israeli's lived in a "tough neighbourhood." A more serious response came from Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) who suggested that any attack would turn the region into a "fireball." ElBaradei added that he would resign if there were a military strike.

The Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, entered the fray to comment that he hoped that any "actions would be based upon international law. And international law clearly protects Iran's and anyone else's territorial integrity."



Recent activity is part of a period of diplomatic cat and mouse between the West and Iran. Javier Solana, the EU foreign policy chief, offered a deal to Tehran recently to stop uranium enrichment. Two days later, before any considered response from Iran, Gordon Brown announced tougher financial sanctions against Iran. At best this sends mixed messages to Tehran and at worst confirms the Iranian view that the West does not set any real store by the process of negotiation. The claim by Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, last week that Iran remained the biggest threat in the region and his view that, "I don't think we deserve to live under the threat of a nuclear Iran", will have done little to dampen the volatility of the Ahmadinejad regime.

Commentators inside Iran are viewing the position of the country as one of "no-war, no peace". In a recent interview writer and peace activist, Taghi Rahmani, suggested that "during the last 30 years of no war, no peace the deterioration of the national potential has reached its climax. This worsening of conditions can unleash wide destruction around the country and if followed by a military strike, can cause even more destruction."

In addition to the position of the West the response of the Iranian government is also vital. Having made the issue of backing down over uranium enrichment one of 'principle', the Iranian regime is in danger of finding itself backed into a corner by those elements in the West pressing





## Trades Union Congress

**The Ambassador  
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
16 Prince's Gate  
London SW7 1PT**

### **Re: Iranian Trade Unionist Mansour Osanloo**

At our international conference earlier this month, the Southern and Eastern Region of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), representing trade union members in London and its surrounding regions, delegates heard of the appalling treatment of bus workers' union leader Mansour Osanloo.

The delegates at our conference asked me to convey to you and your Government our demand that Mansour Osanloo be provided with the medical care he needs and be freed from prison.

Mansour Osanloo's imprisonment is unjust: his only crime is to represent his union's members, which is a fundamental human right under the core conventions which your government is obliged to uphold by its membership of the ILO. And the lack of adequate medical care is inhuman.

We note that the medical care Mansour Osanloo has received has been the bare minimum required and has only been provided under pressure from Iranian workers and world opinion. We reiterate our demand that he should receive proper medical treatment for his condition.

Delegates were also concerned at the continued restrictions on the union Mansour Osanloo represents, and the attempts by your government to undermine the Vahed bus workers' support for the union, which is also contrary to core ILO conventions, and we also urge your government to desist from this union-busting behaviour.

I would be grateful if you could convey our views to your Government and look forward to your response to our concerns.

Yours sincerely

*Megan*

**Megan Dobney**  
Regional Secretary  
Southern and Eastern Region TUC

### **Continued.../**

for conflict. The prospect of a 'nuclear Iran' clearly holds powerful sway in the imaginations of Western governments. Given the illusory 'weapons of mass destruction' pretext, which led to the invasion of Iraq, the reality of uranium enrichment in Iran could as easily provide another pretext for military action. As Rahmani suggests of the Iranian regime, "If we do not move towards reconciliation we have to understand that because of international prestige issues America and Europe would not back down from the position of suspending enrichment."

Although the situation remains finely balanced there are warning voices, often from the most unlikely sources. Writing in the journal *Global Research* last month, David DeBatto considered the Pentagon's scenario planning process in relation to a military strike against Iran. DeBatto concludes that, unlike the relatively low level of resistance met in Iraq, any strike on Iran would have dramatic consequences, not only in drawing the wider region into conflagration but in an unacceptable number of US casualties. As the Bush presidency draws to its conclusion pressure upon Western governments must be sustained to ensure that 'neo-con' hawks in the US administration do not press for Bush to go out with a 'bang' rather than a 'whimper'. The inheritance of such a position would not only be unacceptable for an incoming US president but a calamity for the Middle East and the prospects for world peace.

# No War on Iran

Exclusive Article by: Naser Zarafshan

*Nasser Zarafshan (born 1946) is the leader of the Iranian Writers' Association and a notable member of the Iranian Bar Association. He is most famous internationally for having been arrested while acting as legal envoy of two for the families of dissident Iranian writers, who were assassinated in November 1998, in what came to be known in Iran as the "Chain (serial) Murders" case. He was sentenced to five years imprisonment. In 2007 Zarafshan launched in Iran the No War on Iran Movement. Earlier this year, together with CODIR's Assistant General Secretary, Zarafshan attended the World Peace Council's 14th Assembly in Caracas representing of the movement against military attack on Iran.*



In this exclusive article Zarafshan argues the links between the struggle for peace and the movement for democracy in Iran.

These days when people talk about war against Iran, they look at it from one of two different perspectives. One group, following the line of some journalists and political analysts like Seymour Hersh, see it as an immediate threat. They even predict that it may happen during the last months of George Bush's presidency. They base this on US statements and actions (including economic sanctions against Iran) over the last 2-3 years made and carried out on the pretext of blocking Iran's access to nuclear weapon. The other group, however, views the general possibility of war and military invasion in the wider context of the insecurities and inherent difficulties of capitalism worldwide, the intensification of capitalism's warmongering and offensive stance in the past two decades and the current situation in the Middle East region and in Iran in particular.

We do not take too seriously the particular threat that Hersh and others talk about with regards to the nuclear case and the timeframe for a military

attack within the last months of Bush's term. We do, however, consider very seriously the possibility of war in general. When we talk about the risk of war and the necessity of raising the awareness of people of the danger of current circumstances and preparing people to defy this risk, it is from this wider and deeper perspective. Obviously, any anti-war movement develops and formulates its position and practices based on its own analysis of the nature and causes of the war, the hidden forces and interests behind the war, and the purposes behind the war.

Prior to highlighting up the nuclear capability argument, Iran's human rights record was used as a means of putting pressure on it. However, that gradually faded and the nuclear case replaced it. We believe that both defending democracy and human rights and the nuclear issue are simply cover-ups that the US and its allies utilize to legitimize their aggressive and invasive actions and to deceive the general public. The real cause and nature of US military intervention in the Middle East and, and possibly in future in Iran, is in no way based on these excuses. The United States has shown that it is not concerned about human rights. It was silent and indifferent to the most atrocious massacre in Iran in 1988 (the mass execution of political prisoners). Perhaps it was content to ignore this, because it involved the mass



murder of popular and democratic forces, similar to other massacres that the Americans themselves and their puppet regimes around the world committed on several occasions in the second half of the 20th century. And today, how can anyone believe that current US intervention in the internal affairs of other nations across the globe is to defend democracy and human rights?

We do not, however, need to look far for the true motivation for US military intervention around the globe. In a piece for the *New York Times* magazine in 1999, Thomas Friedman, a right wing columnist and advocate of globalization, wrote: "The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist. Markets function and flourish only when property rights are secured and can be enforced, which in turn requires a political framework protected and backed by military power... McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps... Without America on duty, there will be no America Online."

The fact is that giant capitalist corporations have for many years extended their areas of operation beyond their original national boundaries in pursuit of massive profits from raw materials, labour, finance and markets. In this encroachment, they always enjoyed the political support of their governments, the hidden support of their security and intelligence services, and whenever necessary, the military backing of their armed services. With the globalization of operation of these corporations, the political systems and military forces that backed their expansion across the world are now also globalized and transnational, e.g. G8, NATO and WTO. The competitive nature of this globalization now constitutes the most fundamental cause of the wars in the world. However, this obvious fact about the current world, which can be clearly observed and explained by a right-wing pragmatist journalist, is not understood by many on the left, who remain under the influence of the neo-liberal slogans that imperialism promotes to justify its war-mongering and cover up its real motivation for war.

As another example, I would like to quote John Bellamy Foster on the views of Richard Haass (a member of the National Security Council and special assistant to the president under the elder George H.W. Bush, and director of policy planning in the state department of President George W. Bush). Haass, in an article entitled "Imperial America" (200) declared: "for the United States to succeed at its objective of global preeminence", "it would be necessary for Americans to re-conceive their role from a traditional nation-state to an imperial power." Haass further states: "To advocate an imperial foreign policy is to call for a foreign policy that attempts to organize the world along certain principles affecting relations between states and conditions within them. The U.S. role would resemble 19th century Great Britain....Coercion and the use of force would normally be a last resort; what was written by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson about Britain a century and a half ago, that 'The British policy followed the principle of extending control informally if possible, and formally if necessary' could be applied to the American role at the start of the new century. Based on the above, the roots, causes and intentions of most wars that are currently being waged in vulnerable regions of the world and particularly in the Middle East, go much deeper than the short-term pretexts and excuses put forward by their perpetrators. The US and its allies, take advantage of the behavior of the despotic and reactionary regimes of this region as an excuse to mask their true intentions, and to legitimize their aggressive policies.

Regimes in this region are predominantly oppressive, anti-democratic, reactionary and deeply corrupt. However, neither in the past nor today has imperialism come to the region to battle against these things. Never in any period of the human history has it been recorded that a nation invaded another country to protect or restore the trampled rights of that nation at the cost of its own financial and human resources.

Therefore, our people's struggle for peace and to avoid war is a struggle independent of the policies of the Islamic Republic and imperialism. This struggle for peace is inherently and naturally not separable from their struggle for independence, freedom and social justice.

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement: Iran: The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1988 “prison massacre”

19 August 2008

Twenty years after the then Iranian authorities began a wave of largely secret, summary and mass executions in September 1988, Amnesty International renews its call for those responsible for the “prison massacre” to be held accountable. There should be no impunity for such gross human rights violations, regardless of when they were committed.

The organisation is also calling on the present Iranian government not to prevent relatives of the dead from visiting Khavaran Cemetery in south Tehran, on or about 29 August to mark the anniversary and demand justice for their loved ones. Hundreds of those summarily executed are buried in the cemetery, many of them in unmarked mass graves.

Amnesty International fears that the Iranian authorities may seek to impede or disperse any protests and reminds the Iranian government of its obligations under international law to allow for those who gather peacefully to express their views without fear of arrest.

International human rights law requires that the Iranian authorities carry out thorough and impartial investigations into violations of the right to life



**Khavaran Cemetery - mass graves of 1988 victims**

such as those which were committed during the “prison massacre”, which began in 1988 and continued into the following year, and to identify and bring to justice those responsible. The failure to do so to date and the time that has elapsed since the killings do not in any way reduce this responsibility.

Those responsible for the killings – one of the worst abuses to be committed in Iran – should be prosecuted and tried before a regularly and legally constituted court and with all necessary procedural guarantees, in accordance with international fair trial standards. If found guilty, they should be punished with appropriate penalties which take into account the grave nature of the crimes but which do not include

the death penalty or corporal punishments.

### **Background**

Starting in August 1988 and continuing until shortly before the tenth anniversary of the Islamic revolution in February 1989, the Iranian authorities carried out massive wave of executions of political prisoners – the largest since those carried out in the first and second year after the Iranian revolution in 1979. In all between 4,500 and 5,000 prisoners are believed to have been killed, including women.

**For further information, see Amnesty International’s report, *Iran: Violations of human rights 1987-1990* (AI Index MDE 13/21/90).  
END/**



# Defend Shirin Ebadi!

***CODIR calls upon the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to guarantee the safety of Shirin Ebadi.***

Concern for the life of Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi has been expressed in the strongest terms recently by the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues and the Iran based Centre for the Defence of Human Rights.

The source of these concerns is the recent accusation aired by Iran's official news agency (IRNA) that Ms. Ebadi and her daughter have joined the Bahai religious sect. The significance of such an accusation is that the Bahai sect has been denounced by the Iranian state. To suggest that Ms. Ebadi has an association with the Bahai implies that she is consorting with 'enemies of the state' and therefore likely to be subject to the treatment characteristically meted out by the Iranian regime to those who oppose it.

The source of the accusation appears to be a tenuous connection relating to Ms. Ebadi's daughter who is a student at Canada's McGill University. IRNA's claim is that because Payam Akhavan is a faculty member of the law school at McGill, Ms. Ebadi's daughter must have converted to Bahaimism. The article also accuses the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights of being affiliated to Bahaimism. The centre and Ms. Ebadi will be taking legal action against IRNA for slander and defamation.

However, reliance upon the Iranian judiciary can be no



guarantee for the safety of Ms. Ebadi. According to Article 226 of the Islamic Penal Code:-

“Murder of any person is subject to ‘Ghesas’ (retaliated punishment) only if the victim did not deserve death based on the Sharia, and if the victim deserved death the murderer must prove that in court, according to set criteria.”

According to this standard a Muslim's conversion to Bahaimism is enough to make them deserve death. The danger to Ms. Ebadi is reinforced by Article 295 of the Islamic Penal Code which allows for murder on suspicion that a person is deserving of death.

This context underlines the danger to Ms Ebadi and the provocative nature of the IRNA story. By implying that Ms. Ebadi's death is not only necessary but would go unpunished, IRNA is clearly attempting to frighten the Nobel Prize winner into abandoning her human rights work or even leaving the country.

Since winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 Shirin Ebadi's profile has been high within Iran. As the key public figure in the recently established National Peace Council Ms. Ebadi has been a prominent voice in denouncing a prospective US/Israeli attack on Iran. Clearly such a position is one with which the regime cannot disagree and does not provide a basis from which the regime can openly criticise Ms. Ebadi.

The IRNA accusations are little more than an attempt by the government of the Islamic Republic to discredit Ms. Ebadi, and by implication the National Peace Council, by alternative means.

**CODIR calls upon all forces campaigning for peace and democracy in Iran to denounce the false accusations of IRNA and to demand that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran guarantee the safety of Shirin Ebadi.**

## IRANIAN WOMEN CONTEST THE “FAMILY PROTECTION BILL”

by: Linda Sherwood

The Iranian regime is intent on passing what it calls a “family protection law” The bill was ratified by the civil and judicial parliamentary commission in July and is likely to pass into law in the near future. However, far from providing protection, the law – known to its opponents as the “anti-family law” - will weaken the position of women in Iranian society. The bill serves to widen the gap between men and women by giving additional rights to men and leaving women unprotected. This is particularly serious in the case of divorce where women have no rights. Proceedings will be lengthened causing fear and insecurity among women. In addition, there is no equality of custody. There is no unconditional right for women to work and as alimony will be taxed, more difficulties will be created for women who are having to survive independently. In desperation some Iranian women commit suicide while others are driven to kill their husbands and, sadly, it is inevitable that these trends will continue if women who have often been forced into marriages as children, have no rights in the matter of divorce. Incidents of domestic violence against women are on the increase but the proposed law has no provision for helping the victims. Nor is anything being done to abolish polygamy (which though less prevalent in Iran than in some Arab countries has been on the increase ever since the revolution) and the mediaeval idea of “temporary marriage” for married men continues. Such marriages do not even have to be registered! The bill has been roundly condemned by Nobel laureate, lawyer Shirin Ebadi. “This law will bring decadence and moral corruption to society,” Ebadi said in the opening speech of a protest meeting organised by her Defenders of Human Rights Centre. The bill requires men to provide a judicial permit for a new marriage confirming they can provide financially for the new wife and that both wives will be treated equally. But Ebadi said that these conditions were not enough, describing the bill as a “tyranny” not only against women but also against men. The law implies that “if you have become rich overnight, no matter how, you can legalise your desires,” she said. “Isn’t it an insult to men, and won’t it shake the foundation of family?”. Ebadi’s group of rights lawyers called



on Parliamentary Speaker Ali Larijani to return the bill to the government for modification. The statement also cited declarations from leading Iranian clerics such as Grand Ayatollah Yusuf Sanei who have “emphatically said second marriage is only legal when the first wife agrees to it.” Other voices inside the government and Islamic press have condemned the bill. The “One Million Signatures” campaign is one of the many feminist organisations working towards withdrawal of the bill. The aim of the organisation founded in 2006 is to gather a million signatures to demand changes in discriminatory laws against women. Earlier this year one of its founders, journalist Parvin Ardalan, won the prestigious Olof Palme award for her work in defence of women’s rights in Iran. Other members of the organisation have suffered at the hands of the regime for defending women’s rights and demanding changes. In July Hana Abdi received a five-year sentence and has been imprisoned hundreds of miles from her family. Mahboubeh Karami is currently in Evin prison, at the time of writing she had not been told the charges against her. In an emotional statement from the prison she talks of the “crushing of women’s identity” by the new law. Talking with other women prisoners Mahboubeh is “a witness to the legal discriminations that women face” and she urges women to be aware of the “treacherous plots to break our feelings”. She believes that in unity the women of Iran will eventually find freedom. The “family protection bill” has found its way on to the statute book but one thing is certain, the women of Iran will fight for its repeal and continue to demand the rights which are justly theirs.

## 20 years on from the National Catastrophe and Justice is yet to be done

Twenty years ago in the summer of 1988, more than 4,400 political prisoners were murdered without trial by the regime of the "Supreme Religious Leader" in Iran. This mass murder known as the National Catastrophe, was committed by Ayatollah Khomeini after acceptance by Iran of UN Security Council Resolution 598 and the ceasefire, following the eight-year war with Iraq. The murdered detainees were affiliated to various political organizations, groups and parties. Some had spent many years in prison without trial - others had already served their sentences and were due for release. Among the murdered were prisoners who had spent more than 25 years in the prison under the Shah prior to the Islamic Republic. The murders took place at prisons across the country, including the infamous Evin prison in Tehran and Gohardasht prison in Karaj.

Detailed evidence and quotes surfaced after the mass murder as eyewitnesses came forward and others close to the regime spoke out including Ayatollah Montazeri (once a candidate for Khomeini's substitute as the "Supreme Religious Leader"). The murders took place at Khomeini's personal order. A written statement to prison officials stated that they were to "have no pity" for any of the "heretics" and "apostates" detained. A committee of three was set up to determine the destiny of each prisoner. The number of political prisoners at the time was over ten thousand.

This "gang of three" set up committees across the country to determine the fate of prisoners through putting simple questions to them such as: "Are you still loyal to your political organization/party?", "Do you come from a Muslim family?", or "Do you consider yourself to be a Muslim?" Any 'wrong' answer could put the prisoner on the execution list. After killing the victims, either by hanging or in front of firing squads, their bodies were dumped in mass graves, one of the most well known of which is "Khavaran Garden" near Tehran. In the two



decades since this crime was committed, the reaction of the regime to all questions raised, including those of family members and also the human rights organizations and political parties, has been nothing but silence. There is still great uncertainty about the number and the identity of the prisoners who lost their lives. Also, there is little information about high ranking individuals of the regime who were implicated in this mass murder or the actual perpetrators.

A crime of such magnitude cannot and will not be forgotten. The silence of the regime only adds to the determination of those campaigning for human rights across the globe to get those in high places who were responsible to admit what they did and also bring those who carried out the massacre to justice. Even though a great deal has been accomplished, including collecting the names of some of the martyrs and publicizing this crime and the scale of it to the international community, there is a long way to go. Making the regime break its silence still requires more harmonized and organized action. The main task is to let people know about this crime and demand that the regime takes responsibility for it and takes action to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Even though Iran has been condemned for its human rights records in general by almost all the international human rights organizations and bodies including the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations, the regime has neither acknowledged nor identified and brought to justice those responsible for the savage crime that was committed two decades ago. Although human rights violations continue to be of grave concern to the Iranian people, the crime of summer 1988 is of such magnitude that needs specific attention and recognition as a crime against humanity.





## Free Imprisoned Trade Unionists Now!

Please campaign for the release of imprisoned trade union leaders and activists in Iran. Scores of trade union leaders and activists are undergoing torture in prisons of the Islamic Republic of Iran simply because they have dared to demand the rights guaranteed by international conventions including the ILO Conventions 87 and 98.

Write letters of protest to the Embassies of the Islamic Republic of Iran in your country of residence.

For further information please see:

<http://www.codir.net/labour/index.html#22>

## AFFILIATE TO CODIR

*CODIR has been active for many years – supporting the rights of the Iranian People. We supply news and analysis of event in Iran and related issues from around the world. We urgently need your support, so why not affiliate CODIR? All affiliates receive a copy of Iran Today, plus other information on our other activities.*

*Affiliation rates are 7 Euros (\$10) per individual (unemployed 3 Euros or \$5), and 40 Euros (\$50) for organizations. Please make cheques payable to **CODIR**.*



## Campaign For Freedom of Women Prisoners In Iran

## CODIR addresses World Peace Council Assembly

The Assembly of the World Peace Council (WPC) was held in Caracas, Venezuela on 8th -13th April 2008. CODIR was invited address the World Peace Conference.

265 delegates representing forces campaigning for peace and democratic change in 76 countries from across the world were in attendance. Dr Naser Zarafshan, representing No War on Iran, was also a guest of the WPC and participated at the Caracas Assembly and the subsequent World Peace Conference.

For a complete report of the Assembly and CODIR's intervention please visit the link below:  
<http://www.codir.net/editorial.html#15>

## We Are Looking For Sponsors

PLEASE GIVE YOUR SUPPORT

Visit us at: [www.codir.net](http://www.codir.net)

Or write to:

The General Secretary, B.M.CODIR,  
London, UK, WC1N 3XX

Emails: [codir\\_info@btinternet.com](mailto:codir_info@btinternet.com)  
[codir.canada@gmail.com](mailto:codir.canada@gmail.com)