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SOLIDARITY WITH THE IRANIAN PEOPLE



FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS

FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

EDITORIAL

CONTEMPT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS PUTS REGIME ON WRONG SIDE OF HISTORY

The recent show trial of those arrested and jailed street protesters in Iran has been widely condemned around the world. This is underlined by the contempt shown to Amnesty International which has not even received a reply to its representation to send Amnesty observers to the trial.

This hostility to international progressive opinion mirrors the regimes contempt for the norms of democratic life and reflects its long record of human rights abuse against the Iranian people.

Since the so called re-election of Ahmadinejad, nearly 100 protesters have lost their lives following armed assaults by the military and security services, many more have been imprisoned and tortured. This has included verified reports of rape and sodomy. Meantime, the regime itself is beginning to find it increasingly difficult to maintain a unified stand. High ranking clerics and government officials are expressing doubts, joining prominent writers, artists, and women and student representatives and trade unionists in speaking out.

In any other country, such brutality, fraud and the widespread public dissent would be characterised as the death throws of a desperate regime, holding onto power with its blood stained fingertips. Iran should not be an exception.

The regimes anti-Zionist, anti-US, anti-British rhetoric, is hot air, a smokescreen, in an attempt to hide its fundamentally anti-



democratic nature.

History is often forged on the streets when the masses mobilise for change and to defend justice. In Iran history is being made and refuses to subside. Its continuing momentum is forcing open cracks in the regime, even to its inner core. In one of many examples the former speaker of parliament, Mr Karroubi, has expressed concern to Iran's ex President Rafsanjani about allegations of abuse and torture of detainees, saying "If only one of the many allegations are true it raises serious issues" for the future of the Islamic Republic itself. This statement from one of the leading pro-reform clerics illustrates clearly the deepening schisms in the regime, expressing doubts about "President" Ahmadinejad and also a lack of confidence in the regimes own future.

Meanwhile, the democratic protests continue, and while Ahmadinejad parades like a peacock the trappings of presidential office, he also continues his silence over the military/economic US campaign in Afghanistan.

Ahmadinejad and the forces which have reinstalled him have shown repeatedly they are on the wrong side of history. They are ultimately doomed, they know it and increasingly they can't hide it.

Around the world supporters of freedom, democracy and independence for the Iranian people are rejecting the phoney anti-imperialist credentials of Ahmadinejad and his supporters. The evidence of the regimes illegality can be seen on the streets of Tehran and in the suffering of the regimes opponents in jails and military centres of torture.

For democrats and progressives around the world, the only genuine course is support for the Iranian people and their organisations and effective isolation of the death loving regime. This is not only a challenge to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, to investigate the abuses of detainees; it is also a challenge to all democratic forces to bring the regimes savagery to an end.

BEFORE AND AFTER – WOMEN'S KEY ROLE IN THE IRANIAN ELECTIONS

Linda Sherwood

Iranian women have long played an important role in demands for reform. At the beginning of the twentieth century they helped bring about constitutional reform. In 1979 they worked with the men to ensure the overthrow of the Shah and bring Khomeini to power but their hopes of an improvement in their own position in society were soon dashed with the establishment of the Islamic republic. After the inability of the Khatami government to improve their condition and latterly the militaristic policies of Ahmadinejad, women have realised that there is little point in placing any faith in individuals.

Azar Nafisi of Johns Hopkins University has said that if you want to gauge a society and how free it is, you go to its women. He calls them 'canaries of the mind' (a reference to the use of canaries in mines to check whether there is enough oxygen for the miners to work safely) and in the run-up to, and the aftermath of, the recent elections women have provided the impetus that Iranian society needs to advance in the twenty-first century.

In 2006 the women began to organise the 'One Million Signatures' petition in support of changing the country's discriminatory laws. Activists in the campaign have been systematically imprisoned but this has not deterred the supporters from quietly, but effectively, continuing their work of asking people to sign the petition.

The 2009 elections provided Iranian feminists with the opportunity to plan a well-organised strategy and this has mobilised many progressive elements at all

levels of Iranian society. The women's movement coalition brought together 45 women's groups and hundreds of supporters, chief among these students and young people. Thousands of pamphlets outlining the movement's major demands were distributed. These demands are joining the UN Convention of the Elimination of All Form of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) a constitutional amendment to eliminate discriminatory articles that deprive women of equal rights with men.

The campaign forced all the presidential candidates to spell out their views on the position of women and what they would do to improve it. For the first time ever a candidate's wife appeared alongside him on an election platform and carried on his campaign when he was placed under house arrest. Zahra Rahnavard wife of Mousavi and a respected academic spoke openly of the rights of women and promoted herself as a future first lady.

Sadly the efforts of those opposed to Ahmadinejad did not prevent the fraud which led to his being



“elected” for a second term. Before the elections many people believed that the alliance of the women's movement, trades unions, students and other groups would be temporary, lasting only for the election period. However, the women's movement was not crushed by Ahmadinejad's “victory” but even more determined to play a leading role in the demonstrations which followed the elections.

One of the principal tasks of the movement, in co-operation with the students and independent trades unions, has been to inform the public of what was really happening and to remind the Iranian people of their rights. The regime, unused to such direct action, reacted with unprecedented violence. Mass arrests followed by imprisonment and often torture have been used in an attempt to discourage popular protest. The death of Neda Agha Soltan, shot with a bullet through the heart, shocked the world. One of the country's leading feminists, Jila Bani Yaghoub, editor of ‘Focus’ an Iranian women's website, was arrested and imprisoned along with her husband. They were held in the notorious Evin prison as is Mahsa Ahmraadi, a young journalist who is pregnant.

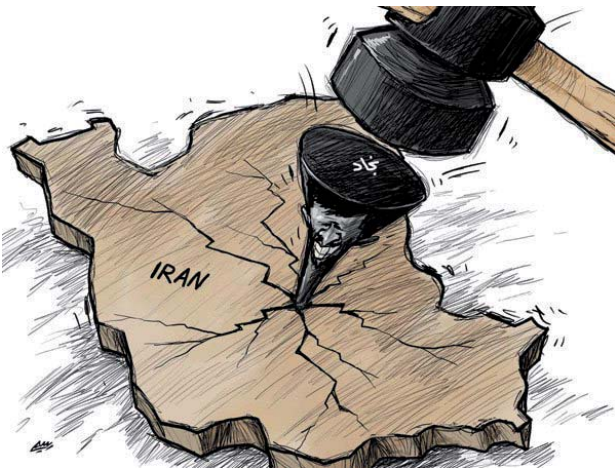
Journalists, students, lawyers, bloggers – women who are critical of the regime and are not afraid to speak out are targeted by a government which is determined to eradicate its critics. It has even gone as far as arresting a young French woman who dared to photograph the demonstrations.

Yet despite the efforts to silence them the women of Iran continue to act courageously. Within the space of a few weeks the Iranian people have shown that they are no longer willing to accept the repression that has been forced upon them over the past 30 years. There is growing optimism : the sacrifices made by so many women will open the way to a new freedom one in which women and men will enjoy the equality they have long fought for.

Since going to press Ahmadinejad has appointed three women to his cabinet. However, it remains to be seen whether the condition of Iranian women will improve following this move.

“EVERYONE KNOWS...”

*The desperation of the Iranian regime to crack down on any dissent or opposition is manifest in its recent actions to put on trial many of those active in opposing the 12th June election outcome. **Jane Green** reports on the growing splits in the regime and the continued popular opposition.*



The desperation of the Iranian regime to crack down on any dissent or opposition is manifest in its recent actions to put on trial many of those active in opposing the 12th June election outcome. Jane Green reports on the growing splits in the regime and the continued popular opposition.

The show trial which began on 1st August 2009 has become the focal point for renewed opposition to the regime and has provoked 'defeated' presidential candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi to denounce proceedings as 'fake'. Moreover, Mousavi has highlighted the prominence of some of the accused stating, "...now they dare to pick their victims from those who have made great contributions to the country and the regime."

More importantly, Mousavi effectively gave notice that action against the regime would continue until there was a just outcome, stating that,

"Soon the nation will witness the trial of those who committed these crimes and identify the interrogators and torturers who play with their lives and dignities in this manner."

Mousavi is by no means a lone voice in the higher echelons of Iranian society. Former president, Sayyed Mohammad Khatami, has been prominent in his opposition to the show trial stating that "the confessions have absolutely no validity." Khatami

added that the trials were "against the principles of the Constitution, national laws and citizenship rights."

The regime's mishandling of the response to the 12th June election was summed up by the u-turn required to deal with the situation regarding the Kahrizak detention facility. The facility, located on south-eastern Tehran, housed a number of detainees who were subject to torture and brutality which resulted in a number of deaths. The facility, widely regarded as Iran's Guantanamo, was off the official radar of Tehran's judiciary, having been declared sub-standard two years ago.

The use of the facility to house those arrested after the elections, was admitted by police chief General Ismail Ahmadi Moghaddam but the official line was to jail "three policemen who beat detainees" rather than acknowledge anything worse. However, Iran's prosecutor-general, Qorbanali Dori-Najafabadi, had earlier conceded that 'mistakes' had been made including "the Kahrizak incident" and suggested that "those who were involved should be punished." The centre has been closed, much to the embarrassment of the regime.

While cracks such as these continue to appear in the regime's ruling edifice any claim which the clerics may have made to popular support is also fast disappearing. Given the numbers of those in detention the network of concerned families, friends and colleagues continues to widen. Most prominently, former Vice-President Mohammad Ali Abtahi's family were threatened after the show trial of 1st August, being told,

"If you do any interviews we will bring your husband to the television immediately to deny your statements."

The wife of prominent student activist, Abdollah Momeni, was asked by Momeni not to grant any interviews for fear of retribution against friends and family. The mood in the country was summed up by the wife of Isa Saharkhiz who said,

"Everyone knows how much pressure they are

under...Everyone knows that these confessions are made under pressure and torture.”

In spite of this pressure upon detainees and their families resistance continues. Several families recently held a news conference at the Centre for the Defence of Prisoners' Rights and denounced the conditions in which detainees are being held as well as their lack of visiting rights.

A recent report by the Amir Kabir news site, which reflects the views of Tehran students, released the names of students who have been detained for at least forty days. Several of these students are among the 100 involved in the August show trial in spite of recent claims by the Ministry of Science “that no student has been detained and everyone arrested in the past six weeks at universities has been released.” The report further identifies a number of students held at Evin prison and banned from continuing their education as well as students detained for merely supporting the campaign of Mir-Hossein Mousavi.

It has of course been impossible for even the Iranian regime not to acknowledge the reality of some deaths since the 12th June election. The most famous of these has been Neda Agha Soltan, shot by security forces at a demonstration. A memorial was held recently for Neda to coincide with the fortieth day of mourning following her death. However, Neda's mother and sister were not allowed to attend.

The body of Amir Javadifar, aged 25, was returned to his family recently following his arrest on 9th July. His family were advised that the cause of death was ‘unknown’. Ramin Ghahremani was released from jail, 15 days after his initial arrest, having been hanged from his feet and dealt several severe blows to the head. He died soon afterwards from a broken skull. His family have been banned from holding even a simple memorial and are under heavy pressure not to give interviews.

It is ironic that at the beginning of the 1st August show trial, Abdolreza Mohabbati, a deputy prosecutor, read a long indictment accusing the defendants of a ‘velvet coup’ without actually identifying any specific violations of Iranian law. As Human Rights watch have stated, “Since it's crystal clear that the authorities can't find a recognisable criminal offence to charge these people with, they should release them all immediately and unconditionally.”

The treatment of all of those detained since the 12th June election is a telling indictment of the leadership

of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Torture, brutality and death have been meted out to those engaged in legitimate protest against the election outcome. The 1st August show trial takes the regime's approach to a new level, by attempting to implicate those opposed to the election outcome in a foreign led plot to overthrow the regime.

International human rights law protects detainees from mistreatment including forced ‘confessions’. Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a signatory, states that every person charged with a criminal offence has the right to communicate with counsel of his own choosing”, a right presently denied to prisoners in Iran, and that a prisoner is “not to be compelled to testify against himself or to confess guilt.” It is a fundamental premise of international human rights law that all evidence, including confessions, obtained by torture or ill-treatment must be excluded.

It is now more vital than ever that those who have for many years supported the rights of the Iranian people raise their voices in opposition to the trials taking place in Iran and the mistreatment of all political prisoners. The Islamic Republic is in flagrant breach of international conventions to which it has freely agreed. All of those arrested since the 12th June in connection with activity opposed to the election outcome must be released and the Islamic Republic compelled to account for its human rights abuses to its own people and the international community.



Labour movement, the ever-present component of the public opposition in Iran



**By Mehdi
Kouhestaninejad
Staff
Representative
of the
Canadian
Labour Congress
Ontario Region**

One way or another, the people's aspirations will bear fruit. I hope this could be achieved with less blood

For over 30 years the Iranian people in general and the labour movement in particular have suffered under the autocratic rule of the clergy. An entire generation of people has not been allowed room to breathe the air of freedom and has been prevented from making itself heard in international communities and at international institutions.

The current social unrest on the streets of Iran is profound, deeper than simply a reaction to the results of last June's presidential elections. What needs to be understood is that Iranian people will use any situation and any peaceful means available to them to express their frustration and anger against the theocratic regime that has trampled their human rights and tried to stifle their spirit. What is going on in the streets of Iran today may not be like the revolution of '79, rather a more refined version of that.

Ever since the clergy took power in Iran in 1979, no section of society has remained untouched by injustice: women are deprived of their basic human rights of equality with men in education, social, legal and economic standing; the youth is denied any opportunity for economic or social growth; journalists and independent media have their freedom of expression brutally suppressed. Every section has had its taste of arrests, torture and, in many cases, wrongfully condemnation to death.

The working people are yet another section that has consistently been at loggerheads with the tyranny of the Iranian Islamic Regime. Organized workers are fighting hard for their basic rights, e.g. fair wages (minimum pay,

proportional to national inflation, etc...), job security, payment of wages on time (sometimes wages are not paid for months or even a year or two), permanent contracts (temporary contracts are more and more imposed on labour by the state-backed employers), and the right to assemble and have their own associations, i.e. independent unions. Yet, they are met with the most vicious response from the regime and its paramilitary forces: imprisonment, torture and indictment – like the attempts to revive or re-organize independent unions. The clamp downs on Tehran's Bus Company Syndicate and the Union of Haft Tappeh sugarcane workers are just a couple of examples.

During the last few years of popular unrest in Iran, the labour movement and independent labour organizations have been under total clampdown. This year on May 1st, the international day of Working People, many workers and their families assembled at Laleh Park in Tehran in response to the May Day Organizing Committee's invitation. Before the rally started, they were violently attacked by the security-intelligence forces and plain-clothed agents, as a result of which many were severely injured and more than 200 people were taken into custody.

The unprecedented scale and audacity of demonstrations in the streets of Tehran and other cities reflect loss of confidence in the regime by a youthful post-ideological generation, which comprises 70% of the Iranian population. The brutal repression of their protests may delay but will not prevent the inevitable emergence of democratic rule in Iran.

Workers in Iran are under enormous economic pressure to make a living and be able to put food on the table, while enduring the intense social pressure indicated above.

However, this not only does not stop





them from joining the protesting masses on the streets but is a strong driving force to continue to raise their voice for their very basic rights. Their participation may not appear as an organized force of labour in the public protests, due to heavy security surveillance by the regime. Any indication of organized participation would lead to further suppression of labour activists.

As recently as two weeks ago, in the “forced confession shows” of detainees of the recent uprising, the prosecutor pointed to the protests of the Tehran Bus Company Syndicate of two years ago. He used this to make a case about the involvement of organized labour in “conspiracies” against the Islamic Republic. The Syndicate responded to these allegations and strongly denied involvement in any “conspiracy”. Despite all this, women and men that pour on to streets these days in protest demonstrations are largely from the families of working people.

As far as the role of the international community is concerned, it must strike a delicate balance between supporting this mass movement of the youth, labour and women’s movements, which stem from the genuine and legitimate struggle for freedom and basic rights and being forceful, vigilant and vocal against any external interference – that may play in to the hands of hard-line elements of the Iranian regime, providing justification for further brutal clampdowns.

On June 17th 2009 the ITUC expressed its deep concern about the situation in Iran, in which “several people have been killed and many more

injured by government forces which have been brutally repressing huge demonstrations demanding the election results to be re-tallied or annulled.” The ITUC and its Global Union partners “are continuing to focus their actions on campaigning for the release of trade unionists who have been imprisoned due to their activities in support of workers’ rights in recent years.”

Despite the armed might and intimidation, no one can turn the clock back. It may be very hard to predict the outcome of the current revolt as Iran is a complex society, but we need to recognize the possible outcomes of this uprising. The regime knows that the Iranian people will not go home without victory, especially now that all the information has surfaced about corruption, brutal suppression of protestors, torture in detention centres, and murder in prison, revealed even by the “inner circle” of the regime. It appears that the end of the era of the Velayate Faqih (Supreme Leadership regime) has begun. Working people are in the streets striving and preparing themselves for that desperate but massive change in the social-political landscape of Iran.

The ruling circle has now overtly separated itself from the majority of people and even from closest allies of the past 30 years.

One way or another, the people’s aspirations will bear fruit. One hopes that this can be achieved with less bloodshed. People just want a decent, peaceful life. But their basic rights have been savagely trampled upon in the past 30 years and they are back on the streets as they were in 1979 to claim them back.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE



15 August 2009

Iran : Supreme Leader must act on torture, says Amnesty International

Torture allegations now emerging in Iran must be urgently and independently investigated, Irene Khan, Amnesty International's Secretary General said today, as she urged Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to institute an immediate, independent inquiry and to invite international experts to help carry it out.

"Reports emerging from Iran allege that both men and women detainees have been raped and tortured in other ways, in some cases causing their deaths," said Irene Khan. "The forms of abuse described appear to have been intended to degrade and humiliate the victims in the most extreme way, and if the allegations are well-founded those responsible must be brought to justice without delay."

On 12 August, Ali Larijani, Speaker of the Iranian Parliament (Majles-e Shouraye Islami), said that an investigations conducted by

the parliament had found no evidence of rape or other torture of detainees, although the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had earlier ordered the closure of Kahrizak detention centre and announced that the prison's chief and several guards there had been dismissed for abuse of prisoners.

"We note Speaker Larijani's denial but if it is to have credibility, we need to know the details of the investigation to which he refers, including who carried it out and whether it could be considered independent," said Irene Khan. "We are urging the Speaker to make the details known and publish the full findings of the investigation so that the world can assess whether it can be considered credible, or is merely an attempt to deflect criticism and to cover up the truth."

Yesterday, Mehdi Karroubi, one of the four candidates permitted to stand in the 12 June presidential election, alleged that a number of detainees held for protesting against the disputed official result of the election, had been beaten to death in detention. Previously, on 9 August, he alleged that detainees, men and women, had been tortured, including by being raped, in detention and

called for an urgent inquiry. It was shortly after this, and in the face of mounting expressions of international concern, that the Speaker announced that the allegations had been dismissed by a parliamentary inquiry.

Mohsen Rouhalamini, son of a top aide to presidential candidate Mohsen Rezaei, is reported to have died of cardiac arrest and bleeding in his lungs two weeks after he was detained on 9 July. He is believed to have been held at Kahrizak and to have had serious facial injuries as well as other injuries. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reportedly ordered an investigation into his death and it was soon after this that he ordered the closure of Kahrizak detention centre.

"The Supreme Leader must act, and act now, to address the spiral of abuse," said Irene Khan. "Official denials are not enough. What is needed is a root and branch investigation into the allegations of torture, including rape, and other abuses, and the Supreme Leader should invite international experts – such as the UN special rapporteurs on torture and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions – to visit Iran and participate in the investigation, if it is to have credibility at home and abroad."

Ahmadinejad on the Wrong Side of History

By: Navid Shomali

Any analysis of recent developments in Iran following the self-styled re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad must take the bigger picture into consideration.

To reach a correct judgement concerning recent developments in Iran and the self-styled re-election of President Ahmadinejad, it is vital to view the whole picture: national and international.

For some, otherwise objective/ anti-imperialist forces outside Iran, the national and historical context of the election campaign have become blurred by the internal and external response to it. The principal source of the distortion has been the response of the US government to the Ahmadinejad's "victory".

However, using the US response, as a starting point for an objective assessment of recent events is dubious practise, worse it risks falling into the intelligence communities 'wilderness of mirrors'. For neither the US nor the Tehran dictatorship speak with one voice or one intention.

One example illustrates this duplicity. Only a few months ago while the US government and mass media dissembled the possibility opening a third military front in Iran, the Iranian regime itself huffed and puffed anti-Zionist anti- USA rhetoric whilst simultaneously seeking economic and military co-operation with the US. For its part the US government was discretely offering non-interference in return for Iranian co-operation and non-intervention in the US campaign in Afghanistan.

In this context few suggested all out solidarity with the fundamentalist fascists in Afghanistan, who in turn are opposed by the fundamentalist nationalists in Iran on a religious not political basis.

This green light from Tehran for the US Afghan military and economic campaign also enabled the US to silence its sabre rattling, while maintaining its anti-Iranian rhetoric.

Thus the re-instatement of Ahmadinejad greeted by the US with muted expressions of concern for the democratic process and crocodile tears for the deaths of post election demonstrators, gunned down by Ahmadinejad's thugs for expressing their own democratic concerns in major cities throughout Iran.

Virtually from the outset the Iranian election was likely to be rigged. Such an outcome is always possible when a dictatorship faces widespread opposition. However, mass participation in the election also places the dictatorial regime on the

back foot.

Since his last "election" Ahmadinejad has postured around the world as a great leader, boasted of his conversations with God, denied the Nazi holocaust, trampled on human rights in Iran, jailed his opponents. However above all, Ahmadinejad is a willing and enthusiastic representative of the Iranian theocratic and mercantile class. The same class which has squandered for almost thirty years the anti-imperialist ambition of the '79 revolution, repressed working class and student organisations, indulged in brutal and primitive torture and executions, imposed sever restrictions on the rights of women as well as those with other religious convictions, and now dresses in pseudo anti- imperialist clothes. The reality is the President has no clothes.

This must be the basis for any progressive assessment of political reality in Iran. Wide sections of the Iranian population have taken this as their starting point and have expressed their opposition on the streets. It is their experience, which informs and motivates the protest and like all dictatorships faced with democratic peoples opposition it has responded with violence and tragedy.

Now it is the Iranian masses and their autonomous organisations, which need support. The clerical regime is continuing with its posturing, hiding behind its trade links with other nations, claiming conspiracies, seeking scapegoats and responding with its customary iron fist.

There are many comparisons in the history of world politics, but whatever subtleties of difference there are, the theocratic regime in Iran has clearly demonstrated it is on the wrong side of history. Supporters of the movement for peace, independence, freedom and liberty in Iran should not be dragged alongside.



CODIR IN ACTION

During the last few months supporters of CODIR in Europe and North America have organised many activities to inform public opinion about the reality of life in Iran and mobilise solidarity with the Iranian people. Trade unions, progressive political organisations and peace groups from the South West, UK to Ontario, Canada have responded positively to CODIR's call for solidarity. Below we publish the news of two such actions:

Iranian Embassy
LONDON
9th June 2009

Dear Ambassador

Arrest and detention of attendees at rally on 1st May 2009 in Tehran

UNISON is the largest Public Sector Trade Union in the UK and at a recent meeting of our South West Regional Council of UNISON it was drawn to our attention that a significant number of arrests were made at the above rally in your capital city, Tehran. It is our understanding that the rally was a peaceful one, drawing attention to the rights of workers and trades union members, supporting peace and promoting the rights of women.

It is our view that permitting demonstrations of this kind is vital to the democratic process. While some of the views expressed would undoubtedly be in opposition to the existing policies of your government, we feel that it is an integral part of democratic civil life to hear opposition views.

On behalf of the South West Region of UNISON, where we represent 100,000 members and their families, I would ask you to communicate our views to the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and request the immediate release of all of those arrested on 1st May 2009. In addition, we regard the continued incarceration of Mansour Osanlou, leader of the Tehran Bus Workers trades union, as an ongoing injustice. Mr. Osanlou's only 'crime' appears to have been to carry out his trades union duties in attempting to improve pay and conditions for his colleagues. Such action should not be regarded as a crime in any democratic society.

We feel that these actions would be the minimum required to ensure that the Islamic Republic complies with its obligations under ILO conventions 87 and 98. Full compliance with these obligations would require the Islamic Republic to respect the rights of workers to establish independent trades unions, free from harassment and intimidation.

I hope that you will communicate these views to your government, expressing our deep concern at

the violations of the rights of trades unionist in the Islamic Republic and urging the incoming President to address your international obligations in this area.

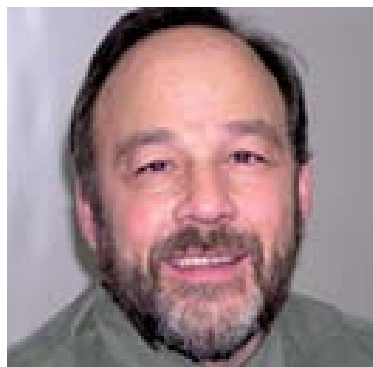
Your sincerely,
Ian Ducat
Regional Secretary

Canada

On July 19th 2009, the Canadian progressive bi-weekly paper "People's Voice" held a public forum entitled "Iran's Elections & Aftermath: What's REALLY going on?"

The panelists included CODIR's representative in Canada, Mr. Domenic Bellissimo, along with representative of Tudeh Party of Iran and Dave McKee the president of Canadian Peace Congress (affiliated with the World Peace Council).

After the presentations by the panelists, questions of the audience were answered by the panelists.



Mr. Bellissimo first gave a background of CODIR and its Canadian chapter as a democratic organization devoted to campaign for peace, human rights and democracy in Iran. With regards to the recent events in Iran after the

fraudulent presidential elections, he mentioned the support and solidarity of Canadian and international trade unions and progressive organization with the protests in Iran and globally against the "lack of respect for human rights" within Iran. He ended his speech by saying that "for our part, we will continue to work in solidarity as allies with those resisting violence and tyranny in Iran." Full speech of CODIR's representative can be watched here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkXYKU11Y-o>

Tehran's "gilded youth" are not alone!

By Jamshid Ahmadi, Assistant General Secretary, CODIR

While reporting of the events following the 12th June election in Iran has helped to highlight the anti-democratic nature of the Islamic Republic, some usually progressive voices seem to be misreading the signs.

Seamus Milne's assessment of the current situation in Iran ('These are the birth pangs of Obama's new regional order' Guardian 18th June 2009) is alarmingly wide of the mark given Milne's usual clarity and incisiveness in assessing the political climate.

Indeed, it sad to see Milne fall into the trap of believing the Islamic Republic's propaganda by asserting that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has a "solid base among the working class, the religious, small town and rural poor." The outrage being expressed on the streets of Iran's major cities is not simply a reflection of the grievances of "Tehran's gilded youth". Nor is it merely an expression of the outrage felt at the 'stolen' election of 2009. Life under the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been well documented by CODIR over the past four years. Nevertheless it is worth reiterating some of the major issues and their impact upon the lives of the Iranian people over that period.

Firstly there is the issue of privatisation of state assets. By order of the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, Article 44 of the Iranian constitution was revoked in 2007, opening the way for wholesale privatisation of state industries. The move was welcomed by the IMF in a statement which said, The impact of privatisation in both developing and developed nations is well documented. Sold as a panacea for 'failing' industry, it is often a precursor to asset stripping and lining the pockets of the super rich. Ahmadinejad has already shown his capacity to act in this way. Ahmadinejad, following the examples of the Arab Kingdoms, uses oil revenues to cultivate tribal loyalties and enrich those around him. His Interior Minister, Sadegh Mahsooli, a long time friend from the years in the revolutionary guards, is a multi-billionaire.

Ahmadinejad has also presided over the massive increase in imported consumer goods into the Iranian market to the detriment of domestic production. This process has been accompanied by significant increases in Iran's foreign debt. Business Monitor International expects Iran's foreign debt to increase from \$23.5bn in 2006 to \$31.6bn by 2012, an increase of \$8.1bn, in spite

of increasing oil revenues over the same period.

Such figures clearly add up to growing hardship and poverty with an estimated 15m people, or 20% of the population living in poverty, according to Ali Asgari, Economic Deputy of the President's Office of Planning and Strategic Control. This situation is further exacerbated by the numbers of workers who are on temporary contracts. According to Ministry of Labour statistics 80% of workers in factories and manufacturing are working under temporary contracts for periods of between 2 months and 6 months. The struggle against temporary contracts is one of the key areas in which trades unions in Iran are fighting. Inevitably the less stable the workforce, the more difficult it is to organise and the more fearful the workforce is likely to be.

The current demonstrations for change are by no means sudden or isolated. The period of the Ahmadinejad presidency has been characterised by regular expressions of dissent from trades unionists, women and student activists all protesting for greater democratic freedom in the country. The continued imprisonment of Mansour Osanloo, ongoing attempts to discredit Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, opposition to the women's One Million Signatures campaign have all contributed to a growing sense of frustration in Iranian society to which the recent elections have given vent.

The press in Britain would do well to focus upon the realities of the lives of women, students and trades unionists in Iran when assessing the situation there. The fact that protest is embracing broad sections of Iranian society, including youths, "gilded" or otherwise, is not a cause for scepticism but a reflection of the realities of Iran today. Support for the Iranian people their struggle to change that reality is needed now more than ever.



Global Trade unions voice support for Iranian opposition

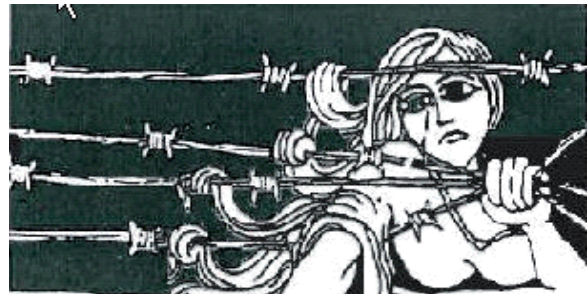
On 25th June Trade unionists led rallies around the world to express solidarity with “the many Iranian workers” who have joined demonstrations against alleged vote-rigging in Iran.

Protesters held demonstrations at Iranian embassies in Ankara, Bangkok, Brussels, Canberra, Geneva, Jakarta, London, Madrid, New Delhi, Oslo, The Hague, Tokyo, Toronto and Wellington.

Global unions The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Education International (EI), The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) called the worldwide day of action to protest against the “lack of respect for human rights” within Iran.

ITUC general secretary Guy Ryder said: “We have exhausted all avenues of reasonable dialogue to persuade the Iranian government to allow basic human and trade union rights.

“Their answer has been repression and arrests. Given this failure we must protest publicly against what is happening in Iran.”



Campaign For Freedom of Women Prisoners In Iran



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