

Editorial: Face Off

Since 1979 Iran has shown a number of faces to the world. Initially, its Islamic based leadership enjoyed popular and mass support in defeating the hated regime of the Shah, which had been imposed on the people by the multinational oil cartels and governments of Britain and the USA. It's anti-imperialist face of early 1980s quickly changed. The expectations of the Iranian people for a fairer and democratic Iran were in conflict with the vested religious and economic interests of Islamist leadership. Demagoguery and theocratic dictatorship became its new face.

The face of cruelty and anti-democracy became the norm, often masked by anti-US and anti-western rhetoric. With little of substance to offer the Iranian people, the government turned increasingly to repression, devoid of basic human rights at home and aggressive posturing in its foreign policy.

For decades, the Iranian leaders used the hostilities and frustrations of international oil interests as cover for their barbarism at home. Protecting their own position, they turned on the democratic forces inside Iran. Imprisonment without trial and torture of government opponents were, and are now, the main characteristics of its domestic policy. Trade unions, secular political parties, cultural, student, women and youth organisations became targets for their barbarism. Iran entered decades of impoverishment, oppression and economic decline. This is the real face of the Iranian regime and it hasn't changed. New Islamist leaders have come and gone, but its essential character has not changed.

Meantime, the Iranian people have been building resistance, calling for change and seeking international solidarity.

Last year as the regime tried to put on another new face and seeking new lifelines which might keep it in power. It spotted an opportunity on the international stage.

The US and West, also had their own economic difficulties and sought to bring Iran closer for their own interests. A co-existence of mutual interest seemed possible, around Iran's nuclear programme and international economic interests. After months of negotiations, the so called 5+1 agreement, headed by the US and Russia,

produced the Joint Compliance Plan of Action (JCPoA). By agreeing to limit its nuclear research and development to suit US military/strategic interests, the US would loosen

economic sanctions and not block international capital investment in Iran, which the Iranian dictatorship hoped would stabilize the economy and weaken the democratic opposition.

The regime committed itself to JCPoA and sought to project it as an economic saviour. New opportunities for economic development would occur, it claimed. So far little has been achieved, the economy is still in decline, poverty is increasing and the economic and social resistance of Iran's trade unions and peoples organisations has continued to grow.

International capital is hesitant about investment in Iran when the country remains in turmoil and there is widespread discontent. The US hawks have not dropped entirely their military options either concerning Iran and the Iranian leadership offers nothing other than the old rhetoric and oppression. The face has not changed. The mask of repression is still in place. However, Iran has a long tradition of trades union and popular organisation, women, student and cultural organisations continue to demonstrate and protest, despite arrests and the closure of universities.

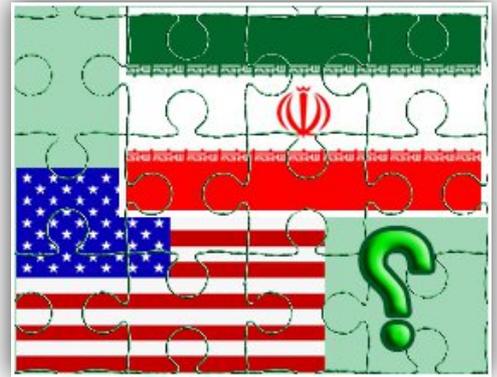
Recently (June 12th) one of Iran's militant trades unions, the Union of Metal Workers and Mechanics (UMMI) issued a statement calling for an end to repression and for economic progress and justice.

The response of the regime has been predictable. More oppression. Additionally the internationally recognised film maker Monica Akbari, whose ambitions to explore women's issues and rights in Iran has been met with bans and threats of imprisonment.

Faces change, leaders change but the facts don't. Iran remains a country where the struggle for democracy, human rights, peace and progress is acute. Under the current President, Rouhani, the position is the same, despite attempts by some to portray him as a moderate surrounded by the extremist faction. He is in fact immune to the suffering of the people and is thoroughly in tune with theocratic bullying. Where the regime's only answer is virulent demagoguery, attempting to hide the face of dictatorship, the people's impoverishment, crisis and repression.

Tearing away the mask and exposing the real face of Iranian regime remains a challenge for all those around the world concerned with justice, peace and human rights.

The Iranian people deserve our support!



Adherents to Monocracy in Iran Reject Democracy!

Two days after executing 30 Sunni political prisoners in the first week of August, leaders of the theocratic regime in Iran indicated its desire to hold talks with the European Union on human rights in the very near future. This move has met with outrage from human rights defenders, not least Shirin Ebadi, lawyer and Nobel Prize winner. Linda Sherwood reports for Iran Today.

In a letter to EU Vice-President and representative for foreign affairs Federica Mogherini, Shirin Ebadi has called on the EU to postpone any talks until Iran adheres to the inalienable principles of abolition of the death penalty and respect for freedom of expression. However by its recent actions the Iranian regime has shown that it is unwilling to compromise on these issues and continues to impose its repressive policies on those courageous enough to stand up for human rights and freedoms.

The regime, which has the worst record of executions per head of population in the world (977 in 2015), executed more than 30 men in a single week in August. The regime claims that they were guilty of serious "crimes" but it is evident that the men did not receive a fair trial. The government appears to take malicious pleasure in refusing to accede to worldwide demands to put an end to the death penalty. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have both condemned the barbaric practices.

With the arrest and imprisonment of several journalists the government is trying to undermine the freedom of the press. The International Federation of Journalists has called for a halt to the 'relentless attack by the Iranian authorities on journalism' following threats against the daily Ghanoon which published details of appalling conditions at a Tehran detention centre. Five journalists were imprisoned on trumped up security charges in November 2015, Afarin Chetsaz was jailed for 10 years, others for 7 and 5 years. As a result of ill-treatment one of the journalists, Isa Saharkhiz, is in hospital while Ehsan Mazanderani went on hunger strike in prison to protest against the charges.

Trades Unionists are also under attack; two of the most prominent are teachers, Ismail Abdi, General Secretary of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association (ITTA) and his colleague Mahmoud



Beheshti. Ismail was banned from travelling to Armenia to apply for a visa to attend the Education international World Congress in Canada. He was then arrested and faces 16 years in prison. Both men went on hunger strike to protest earlier this year. Another trade unionist, Azimzadeh, went on hunger strike for 62 days to force the regime to drop trumped up "security charges" against him. The international Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights both place an obligation on Iran to respect and protect the right of everyone to form and join trades unions for the protection of their interests. Despite this Iran continues to ban the formation of independent trades unions and to ignore the rights of those trades unionists who oppose the regime.

Another prominent human rights campaigner on hunger strike is Narges Mohammadi, a human rights lawyer and associate of Shirin Ebadi. Narges was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment for supposed national security offences. She is in poor health but nevertheless went on hunger strike for the right to speak to her children exiled abroad. After her case was taken up by Amnesty International she was able to speak to her children for 30 minutes and the Associate Prosecutor has given a written commitment that she will be allowed to call them once a week. According to Philip Luther, Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme, 'The authorities have made clear their ruthless determination to silence human rights defenders and instil fear in would-be critics of their policies.'

Journalists, trades unionists, human rights defenders, all matter little to an Iranian Government opposed to that concept of human rights enshrined in the 1948 UN Convention on Human Rights. Until Iran changes its practices and begins to follow the principles of the Convention, the International community must refuse to negotiate with its Government.

TUC calls for solidarity with Iranian workers

Iran Today interviews Owen Tudor



Photo by: Jess Hurd

The British labour and trade union movement has an honourable tradition of effective solidarity with the peoples of countries that suffer from dictatorship and poverty. It has played a significant role in extending solidarity to victims of the theocratic regime in Iran and before that the Shah's regime. In recent years the timely interventions of the TUC in standing up for human and democratic rights and in particular labour rights, have made a very real difference. CODIR has worked with the TUC and trade union movement in Britain to highlight the plight of workers in Iran. In this exclusive interview Owen Tudor, the Head of European and International Relations at the TUC, talks to Iran Today about how best to extend solidarity with Iranian trade union activists.

Iran Today: TUC has been vocal in raising concerns about the wide spread abuse of trade union rights in Iran. What is your assessment of the conditions in which labour activists and trade unionists are operating in Iran?

OT: Despite Iran's return to the fold of the international community, workers are no better off. Iran is portrayed as a theocratic regime, but for workers, the main problem is that employers in Iran get a free rein to attack unions so that they can continue to profit from low wages – often not paid for months at a time – and terrible working conditions.

So many people are in prison – people like Ismail Abdi and Ja'far Azimzadeh – and there are rarely any real charges against them. So-called revolutionary courts jail trade unionists for 'enmity against god' or being an unspecified threat to national security. These charges are, in reality, nothing more than proof that trade unionists are standing up for their rights against a repressive, totalitarian regime.

We must salute the incredible bravery of workers who keep fighting for their rights, often against horrific abuse in and out of prison, and the terrible impact this often has on their families.

Iran Today: In countries like Iran independent and effective trade union organisations are denied legal protection and ILO conventions are violated and ignored. However, Iran is a signatory of the ILO conventions and each year sends a full delegation to Geneva for the annual ILO conference. What are the best ways to compel the Iranian government to take its responsibilities more seriously?

OT: We believe that the ILO should be used by Iranian workers to raise the breaches of core conventions perpetrated by the Iranian regime, complaining to the Committee of Experts and the Committee on Freedom of Association. That would show the world that Iran is being held to the same standards as everywhere else, and failing badly. It would provide publicity and an opportunity to raise the issues, but it would also put pressure on other institutions to hold the Iranian regime to account.

We should continue to protest at the unrepresentative nature of the worker delegates from Iran, but we need to call them out on the abuses that they don't properly oppose. And we should also be insisting that governments and employers focus their attention on the way Iran is breaching its commitments as an ILO member. The best way to achieve change in Iran is to attack its manifest failure to respect workers' fundamental human rights.

Iran Today: The TUC has been supporting efforts to secure an acceptable environment in which trade unions can operate in Iran. What international channels do you employ to further your efforts? Do you coordinate your work with the ETUC and ITUC? How can the TUC support efforts to force Iranian authorities to respect all the terms of ILO conventions 87 and 98?

OT: The TUC works with the ITUC human and trade union rights section, but more importantly, we work with Global Union

TUC Calls ... Continued/

Federations like Education International, the International Transport Workers Federation and the International Union of Food Workers – among others – who have direct links with unions in Iran. We co-operate with bodies like Amnesty International, sharing information and running campaigns. We should work more, in the time we have left, with Members of the European Parliament who can push for action at multilateral level. And of course we regularly involve the ILO in our work.

Iran Today: What do you think is the most effective solidarity action that can be taken in support trade union activists and those campaigning for trade union rights in Iran?

OT: Honestly, I don't know – we've been calling out the Iranian regime for years, but we aren't making sufficient headway, so we need to discuss what would work better. It would certainly help if international institutions, governments with influence in Iran and employers who trade with Iran recognised that the regime is abusing workers' rights, and took action to oppose such abuses.

Normally, trade unionists take action through global supply chains, and protest to embassies, but we've not had much success in these fields, not least because of the isolation that the Iranian regime has faced in recent years. And of course we've been wary of our protests being seen as part of a western agenda to attack Iran's sovereignty.

We need to make sure we maintain campaigns in alliance with human rights organisations like Amnesty International, so that this is not just a trade union campaign, even if we continue to take the lead. We can also press for international observers – foreign embassies as well as trade unionists – to attend the trials of trade unionists. And we can demand that official visitors to Iran visit trade unionists in prison, to show the Iranian regime (and the prisoners and their families) that the world is watching.

Iran Today: How can the TUC practically support access by trade unions in Iran to trade union education, training its cadres and thus ensuring effective operations?

OT: Our experience is that the best trade union education is delivered close to where people live and work, so that they can apply the lessons learnt in their workplaces before progressing to further training. It is usually best done in small groups of workers with similar backgrounds, led by trade union tutors who know the sector and the conditions. That's why Global Union Federations are often the best at trade union training, and it emphasises why Iranian trade unions should be engaging with GUFs.

Iran Today: CODIR has worked since the 1980s with trade unions in Britain to develop effective solidarity with trade unionists in Iran. A number of trade unions including UNISON, NUT, NASUWT, UCU, FBU and RMT are affiliated to CODIR and support its activities. How can we raise the level of this solidarity?

OT: It's very important that trade unions in Britain learn about the struggles that similar workers in Iran are facing. Teacher unions have become far more active through contact with Iranian teacher unions. Unions linking up with sister organisations in Iran can mobilise members more, because people understand the challenges workers doing the same sorts of jobs face, and it encourages practical solidarity. And learning about struggles in the same sort of job, British trade unionists will be able to understand that the fight for trade union rights in Iran isn't just about the Islamic nature of the regime, which is all too often the picture of Iran we are given.

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**Solidarity with the struggle of
the Iranian people for peace,
equality, human rights**

STARTS HERE!

CODIR supports the campaign for peace, human and democratic rights in Iran. It campaigns for the release of all political prisoners and for trade unions to have freedom to organise and campaign effectively. CODIR supplies news and analysis of events in Iran and related issues from the world.

Affiliation fees:

Local organisations: £20 - £50,
Regional organisations £50,
National organisations: £100 to £250.

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Corruption, crisis and economic uncertainty

With just over a year having passed since the nuclear deal was signed between Iran and the West, ordinary Iranians had been expecting to feel some benefit. However, as Jane Green reports for Iran Today, no positive impact has been evident on the streets of the Islamic Republic.

The fanfare which surrounded the nuclear deal, between Iran and the 5+1 nations in July 2015, suggested that the Iranian economy was on the brink of a new dawn, with untold opportunities just around the corner.

The terms of the deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, meant Iran would accept restrictions on its nuclear programme, accept international monitoring and reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium. The West always claimed that the programme was the first step towards a weapons capability, Iran has always held that it was purely for civilian power generation.

While the Iranian government does appear to have complied with the terms, the deal does not cover the lifting of US financial sanctions, or any sanctions relating to human rights violations, ballistic missile activity and support for terrorism. As a result, Iran cannot use US dollars, making many international banks wary of doing business with Tehran, in case they fall foul of the remaining sanctions and lose access to the American market.

The recent conclusion of a deal with Boeing, who announced a \$17.6 billion agreement in June to sell 80 passenger jets to Iran Air, is the first major US contract with Iran. Even that deal has been fraught with difficulties as the US Congress moved to block the deal, on the basis that Iran could use the aircraft for military purposes. The US has even threatened to block the French sale of Airbus planes to Iran on the basis that they contain American parts. Only the threat of a



presidential veto appears to be holding Congress back.

The promise of a boost to the economy through the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, has been a key promise of the Iranian administration under Hassan Rouhani. The fact that this has not been delivered means that the pressure upon Rouhani will mount over the coming year, with Iranian presidential elections scheduled for May 2017, and a growing sense in Iran that in spite of the deal, nothing has changed.

While a number of foreign delegations have visited Iran, this has not translated into significant foreign investment. There are some indications that Iran has attracted foreign investment in certain areas, such as automotive, oil and liquid gas, transport and tourism. However, a recent UN report suggests that foreign direct investment in Iran has declined from \$4.662 billion in 2012 to \$2 billion in 2015.

It is also significant that, whatever potential for foreign direct investment the nuclear deal creates, the political culture in the Islamic Republic is not conducive to attracting overseas investors. The corruption, which is endemic to Iran's ruling elite, encourages tax avoidance and bribe taking by officials. The patronage that has allowed significant business operations to be owned by the security and intelligence services

Corruption crisis ... Continued/

does not augur well for foreign investors, who desire greater stability in their business environment.

That stability is further undermined by the prospect of a change of government in Tehran next May but more immediately by the US presidential election in November this year. Republican candidate, Donald Trump, has already made it clear that he would seek to re-negotiate the deal with Iran. Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton, is not likely to go down this path but any change of president is likely to cause some degree of disruption. If investors are prepared to hold off until November, they are just as likely to sit on their hands for a further six months until May, when the Iranian presidential contest is settled. While the government, in the form of economy minister, Ali Tayebnia, do their best to put a positive spin on Iran's abject economic performance, they are undermined by the very system they are trying to prop up. A series of corruption scandals have recently rocked the regime with government employees guilty of awarding themselves exorbitant salaries resulting in a number of sackings. Further news has broken recently about the uncovering of a banking scandal, involving the illicit movement of significant amounts of money, believed to be in the region of \$250 million, at Bank Mellat. The intelligence services have suggested that this may only be the tip of the iceberg and that the operation may be linked to an "organised group of banking corruption."

There have even been allegations, so far unsubstantiated, that President Rouhani's brother and special adviser, Hossein Fereydoun, is involved in the Bank Mellat corruption case.

As far as any potential foreign direct investors are concerned this drama,



playing out in the higher echelons of Iranian society, does not inspire confidence in Iran as an economic partner. While the dynamics of the economic crisis are unfolding within Iran's ruling circles, the situation for the ordinary people of Iran is seeing no improvement. Inflation, unemployment and job insecurity remain high and the struggle to make ends meet is a daily one for many families.

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Steeled for the struggle

In an exclusive interview, Jane Green for Iran Today speaks to Maziyar Gilaninejhad, the leader of the Union of Metalworkers and Mechanics of Iran (UMMI), about the current state of the trade union movement in Iran

JG: How would you assess the state of the trade union movement in Iran? In particular, how would you describe the attitude of employers, do they have any belief in the essential role of trade unions?

MG: In the current situation in Iran, the attitude of the employers is not good. They still do not recognise independent trade unions and their activity. With the flogging of the Aghdarreh miners in June, as a punishment for protesting against their conditions, we are entering a new phase where employers can easily complain about such activity and thereby condemn them. Employers see the activities and operation of trade unions as obstacles to their exploitation and profiteering. Government economic policies are aimed at the deregulation of labour relations in the country. In the last week of July the government excluded more than 28 areas of the country from the application of Iranian labour law declaring them Free Economic and Trade Zones.

JG: Is the labour law properly implemented in Iran?

MG: The issue of the enforcement of such laws anywhere in the world depends on the balance of power between the labour movement and government. In Iran, on some basic and trivial issues, we can challenge the employers and prevent the violation of workers' rights. Regarding the key macro issues the provisions of the labour law are pushed aside and nobody except the workers see themselves as obligated to implement them.

JG: What is your opinion about the formal institutions such as the House of Labour and Islamic Labour Councils? Have these institutions ever played a positive role in changing the situation of workers in Iran?

MG: The House of Labour or the Islamic Labour Councils are controlled by the Ministry of Labour and do not have any independent function whatsoever. As well as them being government-controlled, they are ideologically exclusive.

Belief in Islam is a fundamental pre-condition of membership. These bodies are religious organisations that operate to promote government policies and instructions in the work place. These institutions coordinate their activities with the Ministry of Labour and the employers against the trade union movement. Recent examples of this include their connivance in the recent flogging of the mineworkers for protesting against their conditions, or their part in



ratifying a minimum wage that was at least 75% less than the government-defined poverty line.

JG: At the beginning of his presidency, Mr Rouhani promised that he would attend to labour issues and the question of trade union freedoms. Has his government delivered on this promise?

MG: Unfortunately, despite his promise to implement the law, he did not fulfil that. His Ministry of Labour have not only has avoided their responsibilities in dealing with the disputes between workers and employers, but have also failed to prevent the intervention of security forces in attacking strikes.

The government is dragging its feet in relation to the payment of an extra £4 housing allowance, while senior government officers have enjoyed a 50% increase in their salaries. Imports continue unabated while domestic industries are still in recession.

Unemployment and poverty are creating havoc but the ruinous prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund are being implemented nonetheless. The government seems merely concerned with providing cheap labour for foreign investors.

JG: Are the conditions for organising white collar workers in Iran any easier? How is job security in Iran?

MG: There is no such thing as job security in Iran and the trade union rights of civil servants as well as those of non-governmental workers - white and blue collar alike - are both violated every day in the same way. This year all activists and trade unionists in the oil industry have been sacked. Everywhere in the oil industry you meet workers that have not received their wages for more than 4 months.

JG: Has the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and the 5+1 had any impact on the status and situation of wage-earners and salaried employees?

MG: Unfortunately, I have to say no. Despite the promises of our country's officials that the economy would be reenergised with the signing of the JCPOA, lifting of sanctions and the return of billions of dollars in oil and gas revenue, these promises not been fulfilled. The US and European signatories to the agreement have not kept to their side of the deal in lifting the sanctions, particularly those pertaining to banking and monetary systems. In order to attract foreign investment to the country, the government has intensified its privatisation programme and the lowering of labour costs. The JCPOA has not only failed to have any positive impact but has led to the further deterioration in the lives of ordinary workers in Iran.

JG: How do you see the prospects for trade union activities in Iran?

MG: Over the past ten years with the role of trade unions in educating the workers, as well as the availability of new technology for easy access to information, we have been able to raise the demands of workers more with every day. We have established a good relationship with the workers through the monthly publication of Trade Union Messenger that is printed and distributed widely. With the latest issue dated July 2016, we have now published 50 issues continuously over the past seven years.

JG: The Metalworkers in Iran have been able to engage successfully with trade union federations internationally and in particular with



Photo : Ebrahim Noroozi

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the IndustriALL global union. What assistance could active trade union organisations in other countries, including international workers institutions, provide you in the campaign for achieving trade union rights in Iran for the workers? What would you ask of them?

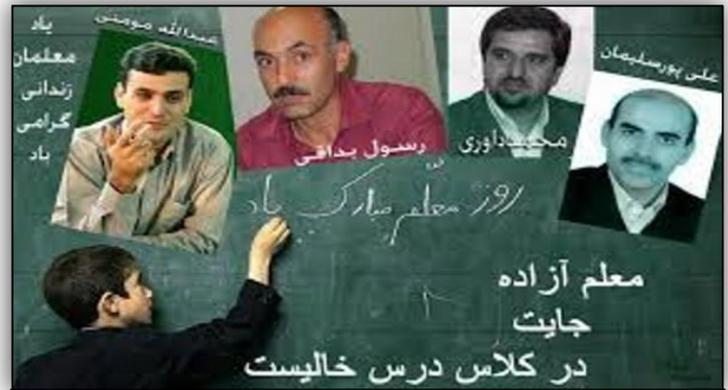
MG: In recent years IndustriALL global union has been able to help us in various campaigns and reduce the pressure on the trade unions in Iran. Our representatives have had important consultative meetings with those from the leadership of IndustriALL and we hope that this solidarity is expanded and strengthened. One of our requests, from international trade union organisations, has been that they use their influence in bodies such as the ILO to press the Iranian authorities to implement the terms of the ILO conventions 87 and 98. Three years ago UMMI prepared a complaint about the lack of any attention to the standard health and safety at work regulations and submitted it to the ILO. This referred to the death of two female workers.

Last month, we again witnessed another terrible incident in which a tank in a petrochemical plant burst owing to the poor quality of parts used. This followed on from an explosion at another petrochemical plant a year ago which took the life of Shahram Mohammadi, a dedicated and selfless worker.

Exchange of information and training of workers between our unions could be another field of cooperation. The re-production of reports and information from our publications in the bulletins and magazines of trade unions and global trade union confederations would also be very positive.

The strength, influence and success of any trade union in any corner of the world is also the strength of Iranian trade unions, including the Union of Metalworkers of Iran, and we will celebrate it.

Teachers imprisoned for tackling poor pay



Freedom loving teachers your place in our classrooms
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Since 2009 the well supported Iranian Teachers Trade Association (ITTA), the teachers union, has increasingly challenged government policies that have condemned teachers to poor pay and conditions. The extent and organisation of the protest actions in 2014 and 2015 surprised the government, which had previously considered ITTA to be a tame and conformist body.

Jamshid Ahmadi for Iran Today reports on the progress of the teachers' struggle in Iran.

Speaking earlier this year, Haldis Holst, deputy general secretary of Education International, the global teachers' union to which most teaching unions belong, noted that teachers are often the target of regimes which want to impose their values on the public. According to Holst - "As a profession that discusses and helps form ideas, teachers can become a target for control." (BBC Report – 24 May 2016). Iran is a case in point, where, says Education International, most of the teacher union leadership is now in prison or exile and the ITTA is warning of an intensifying campaign of harassment and incarceration by the Iranian theocratic authorities.

Hashem Khastar, a teachers' union leader in Khorasan Razavi province, Eastern Iran, told the BBC that despite the clamp down teachers are still campaigning to be allowed to carry out their union activities and to promote civil liberties "free of security interference".

By early 2015 the ITTA had organised a number of successful walk outs of teachers across Iran, organised well supported rallies in front of the parliament and presidential office and protested outside local and regional education offices in most provinces. The authorities began to realise that they faced a powerful challenge. The Iranian regime's usual tactics in such situations has been to arrest leaders and well known activists, to spread fear amongst trade unions about any degree of activism.

Teachers in Iran are demanding non-discriminatory payment of wages to all government employees, equal pay for women and men, a secure working environment with decent conditions of service and

investment in the curriculum and learning environment of schools and colleges. As Hashem Khastar put it, the teachers' union wants the regime to allow teachers to carry out their activities as is their right.

Following protests in January 2015, government spokesperson Mohammad-Bagher Nobakht announced an increase in the Ministry of Education's allocated budget, claiming that teachers' salaries would increase by 14%.

However, as Shirzad Abdollahi, an education analyst living in Tehran, points out, "This year, the rate of inflation has been at least 25%, and if we compare salary increases with inflation, then, compared to the previous year, teachers' purchasing power will decrease by 11%." Many education workers are already on poverty wages and this represents a further cut.

Protests against the poor pay and working conditions have resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of many teachers active in the trade union struggle.

Ismail Abdi, General Secretary of the ITTA, has been the subject of international pressure on the Iranian government, as has Mahmoud Beheshti, a leading member of the ITTA. Abdi has been accorded the status of prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International. CODIR has been calling for the release of Abdi since his arrest on 27th June last year, after he went to the Prosecutor's Office at Evin Prison to inquire about the travel ban placed on him.

As was reported in the September 2015 edition of Iran Today, he had been prevented from travelling to Armenia to apply for a visa to attend the 7th Education International World Congress in Ottawa, Canada in July 2015. Abdi has subsequently been given a lengthy prison sentence but following a hunger-strike earlier this year and widespread protest he has

Teachers imprisoned ... Continued/

been released on bail pending further proceedings.

A statement from the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association (ITTA) says: "We do not accept security charges for civil activists. We believe that no teacher should suffer imprisonment for pursuing civil and educational matters. Prison must not be the answer to teachers' demands."

CODIR co-ordinated support for a letter on May Day 2016, supported by the TUC, calling on the Iranian government to release the two Iranian teacher union leaders and scores of other jailed trade unionists, as part of a general call "to adopt a stance compatible with its international obligations in respect of trade unions and human rights. Until this is the case, international public opinion cannot trust that the Iranian government truly wishes to come in from the cold." Other signatories included the ETUC, IndustriALL, the International Federation

of Journalists, the NASUWT and NUT and several other unions.

Along with other international human rights

organisations CODIR is

calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally, release trade union prisoners of conscience, held solely for their peaceful trade union activities, and to ensure that all convictions and sentences are quashed.

CODIR is also urging that the Iranian government is reminded that Iran has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Both covenants place an obligation on Iran to respect and protect the right of everyone to form and join trade unions for the protection of their interests.



Freedom for our Teachers!

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The Teachers' Union

Education and Social Justice

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The NASUWT (UK) sends a message of solidarity to the Iranian Teachers' Association and to all teachers in Iran.

Education for All

Equality

Human Rights

Freedom for Iran's trade unions

Freedom for imprisoned trade unionists and those committed to education, human rights, democracy, justice and peace.

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A World of Difference



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The National Union of Teachers (NUT) exists to stand up for teachers. We believe that the teaching profession must have: remuneration that is commensurate with the importance of the profession; good conditions of work; and professional autonomy. Attracting and retaining teachers, who in turn are accountable to their pupils, can only be achieved in a world that values the profession.

Today in Iran teachers are faced with threats against their pay and pay progression. They are faced with difficult working conditions, job insecurity and privatisation in education. Furthermore, there is little room for dissent and trade unions voices are silenced.

Nonetheless we stand in solidarity with the teachers of Iran.

As part of our current campaign 'Stand up for education,' the NUT believes that the role of teachers should be valued – both nationally and internationally.

In solidarity

KEVIN COURTNEY
NUT General Secretary

