



Summer 2019

## One million people join the campaign demanding release of Nasrin Sotoudeh from prison!

More than a million people in more than 200 countries and territories across the globe have come together to express their outrage at the sentencing of prominent Iranian human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh to 38 years and six months in prison and 148 lashes after two grossly unfair trials, Amnesty International announced today, as signatures demanding her release were handed in to Iranian embassies around the world.

To mark one year since Nasrin Sotoudeh's arrest, Amnesty International is organizing a global handover of the signatures collected, calling on the Iranian authorities to release her immediately and unconditionally. Under Iran's sentencing guidelines, she is due to serve 17 years in prison.



"The cruel sentence handed down to Nasrin Sotoudeh for defending women's rights and standing up against Iran's discriminatory and degrading forced veiling laws has sent shock waves around the world. The injustice of her case has touched the hearts of hundreds of thousands of people who, in a moving display of solidarity, have raised their voices to demand her freedom," said Philip Luther, Research and Advocacy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International.

As of 10 June, 1,188,381 people had signed Amnesty International's petition.

For the full report, please go to <http://codir.net/?p=1189>



## Trade union rights are universal rights

### Defend the rights of teachers in Iran

#### Promoting ratification and respect for ILO Conventions 87 and 98 and the global campaign for trade union rights.

On 11 June, CODIR's Assistant General Secretary, Jamshid Ahmadi, spoke at an important event organised by ICTUR (International Centre for Trade Union Rights) at the ILO headquarters in Geneva during the 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Labour Conference. Mikyung Ryu, International Representative of the Korean trade union confederation, KCTU, and Richard Wagstaff, President of NZCTU (New Zealand) were also on the platform and spoke. The meeting was attended by representatives of trade unions from around the world as well as representatives from global unions including IndustriALL.

Speakers shared their views and experiences based on the developments in their respective countries and how best to campaign to secure the compliance of the governments in their respective countries with the requirements core ILO Conventions, particularly C.87 and C.98.

Mr. Ahmadi explained the total disregard of the Iranian authorities for the core Conventions. He underlined the vital importance of a movement of global solidarity by trade unions with their beleaguered trade unionists in Iran through demanding the same rights and conditions for industry co-workers across the borders through International Framework Agreements.

CODIR calls for a campaign to defend workers rights:

# Iranian Economy in Free Fall!

## Workers Protest against unemployment, non-payment of salaries and conditions of service

According to a study conducted recently there were 1700 strikes in Iran in 2018. This study showed that dozens of strikes and labour gatherings were held every week protesting the non-payment of wages, the reduction or stopping of production units, the laying off of workers and privatisation of plants and factories across Iran. Unofficial statistics show a 27% increase in labour protests in 2018 compared to 2017.

Detailed accounts by Iranian Teachers Trade Association (ITTA) report that over the past year, teachers gathered frequently in front of government offices protesting the manner in which they are treated, their conditions of service and poultry wages. Teachers launched a campaign in June which has seen them burn their payrolls in front of government education offices. In December 2018, they began their protest against the "Inefficient Supplemental Insurance", and have taken three separate rounds of nationwide industrial action since October last year.

The failure by the theocratic regime to provide funding for the implementation of the Law on the Administration of State Services; the failure to implement the teachers ranking plan; the lack of adequate wage increases; the plundering of the teachers' pension fund; and the commodification of education are among the continuing factors behind the Iranian teachers' protests. At the same

time, teachers call for the elimination of structural discrimination in the educational system, the right to public education in accordance with

Article 30 of the Constitution, the abolition of the "full-time teacher" plan (which increases working hours of teachers without wage increase), the release of imprisoned teacher activists, and the right to organise and strike. At present a number of activists and senior officers of the ITTA including Esmail Abdi, General Secretary, and Mohammad Habibi, a leading member of the Executive Committee, are serving long term prison sentences for engaging in legitimate trade union activities.

In 2018 Khuzestan province was the focus of many labour protests, notably by workers at the Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane Factory and National Industrial Steel Group in Ahvaz. The 38-day strike of the workers at Ahvaz Steel over October and November of was one of the longest strikes in Iranian labour history.

The common issue linking the prolonged and bitter strike in these two manufacturing complexes was summarised in the slogan "No to Privatisation" after the regime disposed of both these huge complexes to private owners at a fraction of their actual value. A number of worker activists of these two factories were arrested during the unrest.

From the National Steel Industrial Group in Ahvaz to HEPCO in Arak; from the Moghan Agro-Industry & Livestock Company in Ardabil to the Imam Khomeini Hospital



in Karaj; the hallmarks of privatisation are always the same... A ceasing in the economic activities of the production unit; non-payment of wages; and the large-scale firing of workers after the transfer of production units and enterprises to the private sector or a process of asset-stripping has been completed. Since May 2018, with the intensification of the economic crisis, following the resumption of the US economic sanctions, the impacts of these economically devastating effects on the lives of workers have become even more pronounced.

According to the Deputy Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade, in March 2019, only 15% of production units in Iran continue to operate in excess of 70% capacity. Many production units employing significant numbers of workers have been shut down completely.

The automotive industry has been critically impacted following the resumption of US sanctions. According to the secretary of the Iranian Specialised Manufactures of Automotives (ISMAPA), from January to December 2018 about 280,000 workers employed by sub-contractors have been suspended. Similarly, the ceasing of a number of oil, gas and petrochemical projects in the South Pars Energy Special Economic Zone last summer led to a massive wave of workers' sackings.

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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. We campaign for release of all political prisoners and for trade unions to have freedom to organise and campaign effectively. We supply news and analysis of events in Iran and related issues from the world.*

### **Affiliation fees:**

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

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# Iran: People demand peace not US backed regime change

The belligerent and threatening US foreign policy against the Islamic Republic of Iran has escalated in recent weeks to the point where Iran is being accused directly of an act of state terrorism against oil tankers in the Persian Gulf.

The incident, which occurred on 12 May off the UAE port of Fujairah, remains shrouded in mystery and suspicion. However, it has clearly been used to engineer an anti-Iran climate and the pretext for a possible attack on Iran.

King Salman of Saudi Arabia two weeks ago condemned the attacks, stating, "We emphasise that these subversive terrorist acts are aimed not only at the kingdom and the Gulf region, but also on the security of navigation and energy supplies to the world."

The Saudis clearly blame Iran for the attacks and are attempting to unite Muslim and Arab opinion against Iran.

The US has supported all attempts to destabilise and overthrow the post-1979 regime in Iran. George Bush famously characterised Iran as being one of the countries in his "axis of evil" and threatened regime change back in 2002.

Even after the 5+1 Nuclear Deal was agreed with Iran in 2015, which would supposedly lift sanctions on Iran and return relations with the country to a relative state of normality, the US continued to maintain paralysing banking sanctions on Iran preventing the country from trading easily with the rest of the world. Since May 2018 the sanctions regime has become untenable. In a tweet on 18th August 2018

Trump boasted that: "The Iran sanctions have officially been cast. These are the most biting sanctions ever imposed, and in

November they ratchet up to yet another level. Anyone doing business with Iran will NOT be doing business with the United States. I am asking for WORLD PEACE, nothing less!"

The irony of this statement aside, it is clear that the actions of the US do not tend towards peace, either in the Middle East or wider world.

More recently, the US has sent some of its most deadly weapons of war to the Persian Gulf, including several warships, an aircraft carrier and fighter jets as well as B52 bombers.

In response to the ongoing US pressure the Iranian government has stated that it will reduce its own compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal, which has quickly resulted in a negative reaction from the European Union with many European politicians expressing concern about the decision of the Iranian government.

There is little doubt that the increase in sanctions has exacerbated the profound economic and social crisis inside Iran, as the regime continues to suppress waves of protest against its political and economic policies, as well as its widespread human rights abuses. The theocratic



dictatorship in Iran is only interested in protecting its own position, whatever the cost to the Iranian people.

The United States is clearly seeking to use this situation to its advantage, in order to force regime change upon Iran, consistent with the maintaining of US interests and hegemony in the Middle East. The stepping up of both rhetoric and action by the United States could, at any point, provide the spark which sees the Middle East go up in flames.

With both Israel and Saudi Arabia, the heavily armed allies of the United States in the Middle East, increasingly strident in their denunciation of the Iranian regime, the prospect of conflict is further intensified.

The people of Iran have suffered at the hands of the theocracy for over forty years. It is their right to shape a democratic future in their own interests, not those of the existing dictatorship or any external power.

For that they need peace and continued international solidarity from labour, trade union and peace groups across the world. They do not need to be staring down the barrel of a US gun.

## The Islamic Republic's Abject Failure of Women and Girls The Scandal of Wife Beating and Child Marriage in Iran

A recent television programme on the official IRNA Channel included an interview with a "wife beater" as part of a popular chat show. The show became controversial as it trivialised this major social problem and turned it into a subject of entertainment. In relation to this, the reformist Aftab Yazd newspaper wrote, "Violence against women has dramatically increased in recent years. Furthermore, the director of the Centre for Social Emergencies at the country's Welfare Organisation recently reported that domestic violence against women stands at 20% and said that results from studies in 28 provinces showed that about 60% of Iranian women have experienced domestic violence during their marriage. The question is what percentage of the victims can be saved?" The real issues affecting women and domestic lives in Iran are given testament

to by the various facts, figures and reports available. The Arman newspaper, on 1 October 2018, quoted Reza Mahboobi, deputy director of the State Social Affairs Department, as saying that, "The number of women involved in drug and addiction has more than tripled over the past few years and more than 50% of the 70,000 HIV cases had contracted the disease through sexual transmission, with 47% identified as women patients." The report went on to state, "Iran ranks 140 in the table of gender gaps amongst 144 countries, showing the discriminatory conditions women experience which prevent them from participating in various affairs."

Regarding the issue of child marriage, the weekly edition of Jahan Sanat, on 26 Dec 2017, reported, "The minimum age of marriage in Iran is based on the

adolescence of a person, while, according to experts, sexual maturity is only part of the full maturity of a person. Physical growth, intellectual awareness, education, and freedom of choice are the most basic prerequisites to start a family.

A children's rights activist confirms that the government's annually published official statistics on child marriage and divorce are underestimating the problems and are neither accurate nor reliable. Marriage of underage girls in parts of Khorasan, Qeshm, Sistan-



Baluchestan and Hamadan provinces is a significant problem."

The Islamic Republic has always sought to frame and implement its concept of women's rights according to medieval Islamic jurisprudence. As a result, the women of Iran face serious challenges to their aspirations, desires and hopes, as well as to flourish in society there.

## Sky high inflation

According to the latest data from Iran's Statistics Centre, the rate of inflation for January 2019 was 42.3%, showing an increase of 2.7% over the previous month's figure for the same basic household items used by an average family, reported Arman Newspaper on 23 February 2019.

The government agencies these days openly admit that in the current economic situation the country is in, many people are in dire need of their daily food and usually look to the government for its welfare support and subsidies.

On the associated matter of malnutrition, the daily Jahan Sanat on 24 February 2019 commented, "The current government of Rouhani may well ignore the uncontrollable inflation of essential food prices and the associated protests. Then Iranians will continue to suffer from malnutrition and poverty during their lifetime. The worse

news is that, as a result of this malnutrition, the next generation will consist of unhealthier people placing more of a burden on future governments with regards to health and other welfare services". On 17 February, MP Ahmad Mazeni quoted that, "If workers' and teachers' wages can be left unpaid, government ministers' and MPs' salaries should also be stopped so they too can feel the hardship." That same month, in response to claims made by Asadollah Asgaroladi - Iran's wealthiest businessman - that he had not exported any goods over the previous three months owing to the "Central Bank's incompetence", the Central Bank responded that, "Asgaroladi



has never provided any information on how he uses the liquid export currency and why the earned currency from his declared sales are not returned into the economic cycle."

