

# CODIR Bulletin



Summer 2022

## CODIR calls for maximum solidarity with teachers in Iran

### IRANIAN TEACHERS FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS

Over the past decade, teachers have assumed a central place in the campaign of the country's education sector for a fair, quality, and free education in Iran.

It is now evidently clear that the organising and undertaking of successful strikes and other mass protests across a vast country such as Iran is no easy task. The organisation, tone, and galvanising character of their protests have turned teachers into one of the leading forces of the movement for justice and progress in Iran today. Every month, the protests called by the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations (CCITTA) draws tens of thousands of people - also including pensioners, members of other trade unions, and even pupils and their parents in cities, towns, and villages across Iran. Thus, teachers are now spearheading a truly national movement for justice and progress.

One of the main factors behind this is that, with Iran's current economic situation, the financial burden upon all education workers is severe - so bad in fact that even taking a second or third job will not tide them over. Teachers and education workers, both those currently employed and retired, have been at the vanguard of Iran's labour rights movements in recent years - waging increasingly large peaceful protests and sit-ins throughout the country while demanding better pay and conditions, as well as the release of their imprisoned colleagues.

The protests, which have been continuously sparking throughout Iran for months now, are strongly supported by the people - including civil and labour rights activists, and a few trade unions that are trying to work independently.

Global unions and teachers' organisations, including Education International and the ITUC, have also expressed solidarity with the teachers in Iran and have written to the authorities there demanding that they respect the rights of the teachers and release all imprisoned teacher and union activists.

Iran is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which mandates (in Articles 21 and 22) freedom of association and guarantees the right to form trade unions; the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which guarantees (in Article 8) the right of workers to form or join trade unions and protects their right to strike; and the International Labour Union's Declaration on Fundamental Principles, which also guarantees these rights. However, independent trade unions remain unrecognised in Iran.

In Iran, those attempting to form a truly independent trade union advocating for its members are simply not tolerated. Any such formation is banned, its members harassed, and their activists and leaders imprisoned and tortured. Esmail Abdi, General Secretary of the ITTA, is languishing in prison since 2016 on trumped-up charges. Mohammad Taghi Fallahi, Esmail Abdi's successor,



is now also imprisoned for daring to pick up the reins of the teachers' struggle for justice. Scores of teacher activists and leaders are also imprisoned in various towns and cities because of their involvement with the campaign. CODIR loudly and resoundingly repeats the slogan of Iranian campaigners for justice that:

**"A teacher's place is not in the prison cell, but in the classroom!"**



National Education Union  
Hamilton House  
Mableton Place  
London WC1H 9SD  
T 0205 911 8111  
neu.org.uk  
Joint General Secretaries  
Dr Mary Boustad BA (Hons) MA PhD  
Kevin Courtney

Cooperative Council of Iranian Teachers Trade Associations (CCITTA)  
2nd floor,  
No.4, 21 Azar Al. Miriam St.  
East of Emamzade Ghasem sq.  
Tajrish sq.  
P.O. Box 193953543  
Tehran  
Iran

By email: [info@hamahangi.org](mailto:info@hamahangi.org)

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Dear Comrades,

We write as Joint General Secretaries of the National Education Union (NEU) to express the solidarity of the NEU with teachers and education workers who have been protesting in defence of trade union rights in Iran.

The NEU condemns the acts of state violence against educators taking part in legitimate protests and calls for the release of teachers arrested in Tehran, Bushehr, Marivan, and other parts of the country in the past week. We condemn the arrest of four office-holders of CCITTA - Rasoul Bodaghi, Ja'far Ebrahimi, Mohammad Habibi, and Ali Akbar Baghani - who have been imprisoned and placed under pressure to denounce their colleagues and the teachers' movement in defence of its fundamental rights and demands. We further call for the immediate release of teacher Esmail Abdi, now in his seventh year of imprisonment.

We support the CCITTA's legitimate demands for trade union freedoms and workers' rights as enshrined in national law and the constitution.

The right to protest, to form and join a trade union and to take collective action as trade unionists are fundamental human rights.

We call on the authorities in Iran to guarantee the rights of teachers and education workers to organise, and to freedom of association and freedom of speech including the right to peaceful assembly, without fear of intervention.

In solidarity,

Mary Boustad  
Joint General Secretary

Kevin Courtney  
Joint General Secretary

Link to the NEU letter: [The NEU condemns the acts of state violence against educators | CODIR](#)

# A call for solidarity as the movement for change in Iran gathers momentum!

For almost five years now, the theocratic dictatorship ruling Iran has been experiencing arguably the most acute and multidimensional crisis in its forty-year-plus reign - and a crisis that shows no sign of abating anytime soon.

The Islamic Republic is more or less completely isolated internationally, after years of pursuing a malign and reckless foreign policy and the more recent abrogation by the US of the 2015 JCPOA - leading to the re-imposition of crippling sanctions on Iran. On top of this, the regime faces a serious and growing crisis at home with a support base which is estimated to have shrunk to 20%, at the very most, out of an 85-million-strong population. Years of gross mismanagement, endemic corruption, and sanctions have combined to create the proverbial 'perfect storm' in Iran.

It is estimated that around 45% of Iran's population are under 35-years-old. This is a legacy of the late Ayatollah Khomeini's call for the creation of a new generation of 'Islamic Revolutionaries'. Ironically, it is this very generation that have turned their backs on anything remotely resembling the vision of the Islamic Republic's founders and who comprise the system's most ardent opponents. For it is this demographic group, having never known anything other than the Islamic Republic, that most demand the trappings of a functioning and viable economy - real jobs, decent wages, and prospects - let alone human and democratic rights and political freedoms, and that have been so abjectly failed and let down. Youth unemployment is currently estimated to be running at 30% to 60% in Iran depending on the particular age group and locale concerned.

From the turn of 2017-2018, Iran has been the scene of a growing popular protest movement owing to the serious disgruntlement of mainly young adults from the lower social classes at the regime's blatant disregard for their livelihoods, prospects, and means of survival, amidst an increasingly tough environment inside the country.

The sudden announcement of a triple-fold hike in the cost of petrol in November 2019 effectively lit the touchpaper for huge protests in cities and towns across Iran which the dictatorship's security forces ruthlessly put down with lethal force and an internet blackout that lasted for several days. At least 650 mainly young protesters were killed and disappeared by the regime.

The simmering widespread discontent has continuously manifested itself from summer 2020, with the country



reeling from a collapsing economy and the disastrous handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, in an ever-widening protest movement encompassing most sectors of Iranian society. The hugely popular and effective teachers' protests are the latest example of this and are regarded as particularly significant in that they pertain to a youth-facing sector... Essentially, the teacher's demands and objectives are as much for the good of Iran's students, future generations, and tomorrow, as they are for the teaching and educating sector itself.

And, despite the dictatorship's default recourse to intimidation; arbitrary arrests and detention; and brutal, even deadly, violence, most Iran observers and analysts are coming to the conclusion that the regime is losing its grip on the situation. Some are even going as far as to draw parallels between this situation and that immediately before the uprising that culminated in the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

**AFFILIATE TO  
CODIR**



**Solidarity with the  
struggle of the Ira-  
nian 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.*

**For information on CODIR  
please write to us at:  
CODIR- B.M.CODIR, London,  
WC1N 3XX, Britain.**

**Visit us on: [www.codir.net](http://www.codir.net)  
or e-mail us at:**



## Teachers at the heart of the struggle for progressive change in Iran!

Since May, hundreds of workers, teachers, and other activists have been arrested for peaceful protest; at least five protesters have been killed; and the state has imposed internet shutdowns, as growing protests have roiled Iran despite the ruling dictatorship's attempts to violently suppress them.

While workers in many sectors across Iran have participated in growing protests, teachers have been at the forefront of the current wave rocking the country. Since late May, more than 230 teachers have been arrested by security forces throughout the country, including 23 who were summoned before the judiciary to face charges. Protesters' grievances have included sub-poverty-line wages as well as the arrest and imprisonment of their leaders, among other basic labour rights issues.

Prominent teachers' rights advocates Rasoul Bodaghi and Jafar Ebrahimi have not been heard of for 17 and 22 days respectively, after their arrests by Intelligence Ministry agents. They are being held in solitary confinement in Tehran's Evin Prison where their families have been denied permission to visit them.

In addition, labour activists Anisha Asadollahi and her husband Keyvan Mohtadi were arrested on May 9 for acting as translators for two French members of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) who were invited to Iran by the Islamic Republic. Iran is a member of the ILO yet has consistently violated the ILO's Fundamental Principles.

In a video message on 27 June 2022, Asadollahi's mother said: "It's been 48 days since my daughter's arrest, 33 of which she spent in solitary confinement. Her

husband Keyvan has had a similar fate. Why? For being translators for two French nationals who were invited here by the Islamic Republic and engaging in labour affairs... I appeal to all who feel a sense of responsibility... to join me in demanding the immediate and unconditional release of my daughter Anisha Asadollahi and Keyvan Mohtadi."

Detained trade unionists on hunger strike to expose injustice!

Ten teachers have been on hunger strike since June 18 in Saqqez, western Iran, to protest their unlawful detention. They include Khaled Abdollahi, Soleiman Abdi, Ahmad Ghaderi, Amanj Amini, Zahed Moradi, Esmail Reihani, Hesam Khakpour, Taher Hamedi, Mohsen Shokuhi, and Hassan Rahimian.

Meanwhile there are growing concerns for the health and welfare of detained bus union board member Reza Shahabi, who has been on hunger strike in Evin Prison since June 15. Detained labour activist Valeh Zamani is also being denied urgent medical care for Hepatitis C and severe intestinal adhesions and liver disease while in solitary confinement and facing long and hard interrogations in Evin Prison.

UN body condemnstheocratic



regime's Crackdown

Recently, UN human rights experts weighed in with a statement condemning the "violent crackdown against civil society in Iran," urging "those responsible for using excessive force to be held to account through comprehensive and independent investigations."

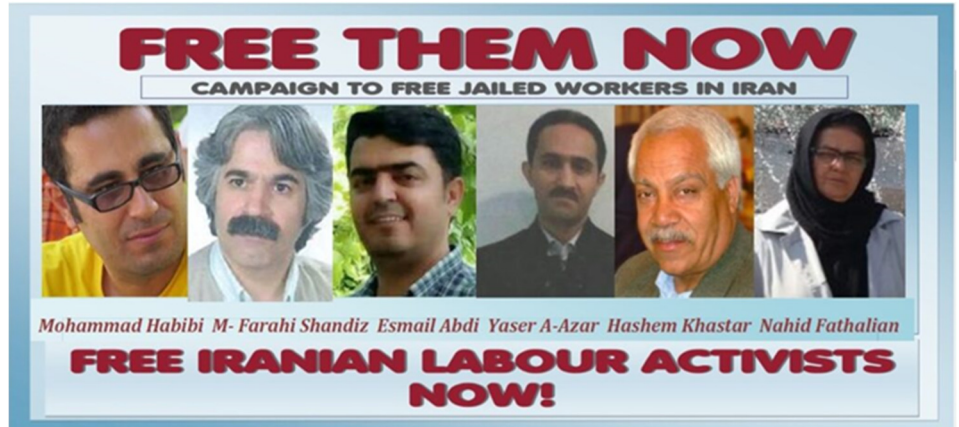
"The space for civil society and independent associations to carry out their legitimate work... is becoming impossibly narrow," the UN experts said, noting that "In the absence of meaningful channels of participation in Iran, peaceful protests are now the sole remaining means for individuals and groups to express themselves and share their grievances with the authorities." The UN experts condemned the "excessive use of force against protestors, with what appears to be an active policy to shield perpetrators and prevent accountability."

# International campaign for an end to repression of protesting teachers, and the release of all imprisoned trade unionists!

Campaigning for change; human and democratic rights, including trade union rights; and justice in Iran is a hazardous act! Iranian teacher trade unionists have lived this experience and reality as they are sacked, attacked, and imprisoned.

The regime treats trade unionism as treason punishable accordingly with the harshest of responses.

Strikers are often fired and risk arbitrary arrest and detention, while labour leaders are regularly prosecuted under serious catch-all national security charges and sentenced to long prison terms thereafter.



CODIR has called upon the trade union and labour movement internationally to rally around, and stand in solidarity with, the detained Iranian trade unionists and teachers. CODIR is calling upon all those standing for human and

democratic rights to write letters of protest to the Iranian authorities, via the diplomatic missions of the Islamic Republic of Iran, demanding the unconditional release of their innocent counterparts currently languishing in the theocratic

## IRANIAN TEACHERS' DEMANDS:

The Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations (CCITTA) strongly condemns the acts of violence perpetrated against the protesting teachers and educators and the recent spate of arrests, and declares the demands of the education workers as follows:

1. Unconditional release of all imprisoned teachers across the country.
2. Ending the violent treatment of educators, as well as the framing, summoning and intimidation of trade union activists.
3. Urgent address of the demands of Esmail Abdi, the teacher activist who is now in his seventh year of imprisonment.

4. Ending the privatisation of education - and the providing of a free and public quality public education open to all.

5. Implementation of the Management of Civil Services Act.

6. Proper implementation of the job ranking and pay equity of pensioners' salaries.

7. Deference of the authorities to the Constitution and the implementation of Articles 26, 27, 30, and Chapter III of the



Constitution, in which the rights of the nation are enshrined.