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## No to War! No to foreign intervention!



## International Solidarity with Iranian workers!

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# EDITORIAL

## Crisis! Repression! Resistance!



Photo (front cover) Statue by Bernard Meadows, "The Spirit of Brotherhood". Outside TUC headquarters in London.

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On June 13 this year, without warning or declaration of war, the genocidal regime in Israel launched air strikes across Iran, following up with evacuation orders to Tehran's 10 million inhabitants. On June 22 the US Air Force joined the terror attack, dispatching seven B-2 stealth bombers directly from north America to drop the most powerful bunker-busting ordinance short of nuclear on Iran's nuclear facilities at Fordow and Natanz and the Isfahan Nuclear Technology Centre. A US submarine simultaneously joined in the attack, firing Tomahawk missiles at the Fordow and Natanz sites.

These coordinated US/ Israeli attacks claimed the lives of more than a thousand civilians, injured thousands more, destroyed homes, public buildings and infrastructure and left the population terrified. The theocratic dictatorship of Iran was taken by surprise and incapable of protecting the population, adding to the casualties.

The twelve-day war further exposed a deeply despised Iranian government desperate to cling onto power in the face of surging protests from every quarter - including workers and the poor, women, intellectuals and students. Widespread and ever-growing opposition, despite cruel and systematic repression, was erupting against decades of corruption and mismanagement on the part of the regime, which had led to socioeconomic collapse in all parts of the country leaving people destitute, unable to pay for food, healthcare and the rent.

Now, with a fragile ceasefire in place, the Iranian regime has chosen to intensify its attacks on all dissenting voices and organisations, with the opposition being blamed for the war and accused as traitors and agents of Israel. Arbitrary arrests and executions have soared and hundreds of thousands of Afghan migrants and refugees picked up in the streets and forced across the borders into Afghanistan without documents and possessions.

To make matters worse, Iran's damaged and mismanaged power and water supplies are frequently cut without notice causing mass layoffs and factory closures and chaos in hospitals, homes and communities. Families are unable to have a normal life. They cannot, for example, fulfil basic hygiene needs, store or prepare food, or regulate room temperatures in the fierce summer heat. For the poorest, the very old and very young, this is life-threatening.

Hence, while the recent damage and destruction of the US/Israeli military aggression has worsened the economic and social crisis, it is the regime itself that is forcing Iran down the road to ruin.

However, despite all attempts to silence them, organised workers are speaking out and heading up growing collective resistance. The Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers, for example, has warned the government that state repression will not deter them and are vociferously demanding rights and building organised struggle. CODIR has expressed its support and solidarity with the teachers and echoes their call for human rights organisations inside and outside the country to step up solidarity with the Iranian people for human rights, peace and justice.

The Iranian crisis is not only costing lives and livelihoods in Iran. The continuing threats of Israeli expansionism and further interventions by the US, the UK, the EU and their allies pose a threat to the whole Middle East and more widely to world peace.

To counter this the strengthening of both the struggle of peace-loving and progressive organisations, especially the trade unions, in Iran and international solidarity, are prerequisites.

Editor: Brian Topping

## Former General Secretary of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association calls for international solidarity



**Esmail Abdi, exiled trade union leader, explains why focussed, united and energised solidarity with Iranian workers is essential for guaranteeing peace and democratic rights in Iran, including trade union rights.**

The Iranian Justice Ministry, by issuing death sentences, arbitrary arrests, and persecution campaigns, is attempting to silence the voices of resistance. However, the historical experience of trade union movements, including Iranian teachers and workers, has shown that repression only strengthens resistance and the cohesion and determination of their organisations. It has also shown that international solidarity, which creates maximum strategic leverage as well as practical support for imprisoned activists, is vital.

Independent trade unions and organised collective action are not only tools for achieving economic and social rights, but a fundamental force in redefining democracy, reforming unequal structures, and redistributing social power. In the present environment, privatization of public services, commercialization of education and healthcare and resultant job insecurity threaten the professional identity of workers and weaken their capacity

for collective organisation. In these conditions, trade union organisations - through active solidarity, social and political leverage, and international networks - create opportunities to bring real and lasting change. The legal and ethical foundation of these associations are set out in ILO Conventions 87 and 98, which guarantee the right to freedom of association, collective bargaining, and prohibit discrimination against union activists. These principles are incorporated in the provisions of the Constitution of Iran but are ignored and denied by the regime.

Iranian teachers as the pillar of public education, centred on the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations (CCITTA), a member of Education International (EI), and local networks, have created a coherent and extensive organisation throughout the country. In cities and villages, they play a vital role in promoting free, equal, and just education and pursue educational justice by resisting the commercialization of education in line with UNESCO recommendations and the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Iranian educators, facing dismissal, inferior job benefits, forced retirement, and even imprisonment and exile, have bravely demonstrated their commitment to defending public education and social rights and have proved that solidarity is the pre-requisite for achieving their just demands.

As many readers of Iran Today will know, my trade union activities in CCITTA resulted in my arrest, nine years imprisonment and dismissal from education. However, my ordeal, and that of other CCITTA elected leaders, has strengthened our resolve to continue the struggle and build the teachers' and other workers' movements.

Other trade union bodies in Iran,

including the Syndicate of Bus Drivers, and Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Workers, are prominent examples of labour and social movement resistance and struggle. These movements, with the active participation of the young generation and support from retirees, courageously pursue economic and occupational demands while strengthening their capacity for achieving structural change and collective power in the longer term.

These struggles must be linked with the broader movement for change. The women's movement, for example, with the universal slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom," demonstrates that the struggle against discrimination and gender inequality is an inseparable from justice-oriented movements and our trade union campaigns.

International experiences, including teachers' strikes in France and Spain, the vital place of the union movement in the anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa, and labour campaigns in Chile, Mexico and Argentina, have shown that professional resistance, together with international support, is able to alter the balance of power in favour of workers. Trade unions in Britain and Europe, by extending their solidarity with Iranian activists, play a key role in protecting and extending workers' rights and strengthening social justice and it is vital that this solidarity continues.

I believe that national and international solidarity, together with organised resistance and support for unions and professional councils, including CCITTA, with the backing of international institutions such as EI, ILO, the ITUC, and Amnesty International, is essential to achieving social justice, free and equal education, and real freedom for workers and the people of Iran.

# Iran's Deepening Water Crisis: A Nation at the Crossroads

In addition to the many tribulations faced by the people of Iran, as a result of ongoing US sanctions and the attack by Israel, a critical issue is that of access to water. Steve Bishop reports on the current crisis of water supply facing the Iranian people.

Iran is currently grappling with a severe and multifaceted water crisis, threatening its economy, social stability, and national security. The crisis affects all sectors, from drinking water for its 88 million citizens to the needs of its agriculture and industry.

Even Iranian President, Masoud Pezeshkian, has been forced to comment on the crisis, describing it as an existential threat that is far more serious than what is being publicly acknowledged.

The roots of Iran's water crisis are explained by both environmental and political factors. Climate change is a significant driver, with Iran experiencing a "dry and hot climate" and a decrease in annual rainfall. Over the past 50 years, the country's average temperature has risen by 2 degrees Celsius, and rainfall decreased by 20%, leading to a dramatic reduction in groundwater and surface water supplies.

Sheena Ansari, Director of the Environmental Protection Organisation, attributed the crisis to five consecutive years of drought and a 40% drop in rainfall in recent months. She acknowledged that "neglecting sustainable development" has led to environmental problems like water stress.

The crisis is not merely a product of nature; it is a human-made disaster as well. Decades of inefficient resource management and misguided policies have exacerbated the problem. A major contributor is the nation's reliance on a water-intensive agricultural model. For years, the government heavily subsidised water and



energy for farmers, encouraging the cultivation of thirsty crops like wheat and rice in arid regions. This has led to the construction of numerous dams and a massive expansion of irrigation systems. This initially boosted agricultural output but has depleted rivers and groundwater reserves.

Iran's infrastructure is outdated and in desperate need of repair. Decaying pipes and irrigation channels result in immense water wastage—estimates suggest as much as 30% of treated water is lost before it reaches homes and farms. Sanctions have limited Iran's access to modern water technology, funding, and expertise, making it difficult to implement large-scale, efficient water management projects.

Mohammad-Sadegh Motamedian, Governor of Tehran, has stated that demand for water in the capital is five times greater than the available supply, noting that the four main dams supplying Tehran have seen an 87% decrease in capacity.

One of the biggest hurdles to change is the lack of political will to make tough, unpopular decisions. Reforming the agricultural sector—which employs a significant portion of the population—would require ending water subsidies and shifting to less water-intensive crops. Such a move would be met with fierce resistance from farmers and could lead to widespread social unrest, something the

regime is keen to avoid.

Multiple government bodies, often with conflicting agendas, are responsible for water management, leading to a lack of coordination and accountability. This fragmentation, combined with the often corrupt nature of resource allocation, makes it difficult to implement coherent, long-term solutions.

The regime's mismanagement and corruption have eroded public confidence, making it difficult to rally the population behind any nationwide conservation efforts. The government's heavy-handed response to water-related protests, such as those in Isfahan and Khuzestan, has further alienated the public and deepened a sense of injustice.

Isa Bozorgzadeh, Spokesperson for the Water Industry, revealed that 24 of Iran's 31 provinces are under water stress, calling for a "national resolve" to solve the problem and pointing to "imbalanced management" and "incompetence" as key factors in the crisis.

The Islamic Republic is faced with a profound crisis of public trust and this, combined with systemic inefficiency, make it ill-equipped to solve Iran's deep-rooted water crisis. The way forward requires a fundamental political shift in Iran, where the needs of the people are prioritised over private sector profiteers and corrupt government officials.

# Iran: No to War, No to foreign intervention

By Steve Bishop

The unprovoked attack upon Iran by the State of Israel in June, clearly had the backing of the United States, as evidenced by the subsequent US attacks upon Iran's nuclear facilities. The US had already been covertly assisting the Israeli assault by providing back up for its Iron Dome missile defence system, designed to intercept any Iranian missiles fired towards Israel in response.

The pretext for the action against Iran was that the Iranian uranium enrichment programme, being developed for civilian energy generation, is close to the point where it could be weaponised and Iran would have nuclear capability. None of the evidence from the IAEA or from the US intelligence services suggests that this is the case.

In fact, it is Israel that is widely known to have a nuclear capability though, in line with its official policy of "nuclear ambiguity", it refuses to confirm or deny the existence of a nuclear arsenal.

While the IAEA has raised 'concerns' about the level of uranium enrichment in Iran's nuclear facilities it has not suggested that this is at a weapons grade level. This assessment is shared by US intelligence sources who came to the same conclusion as recently as March of this year. The fact that Iran only increased its enrichment programme because the US, in Trump's first term as President, pulled out of the nuclear programme deal agreed in 2015 is conveniently overlooked by the media and politicians in the West.

The attack upon Iran does however, have a clear political objective and that is one which has been asserted more prominently by Israel; regime change.

It is not progressive change driven by the Iranian people, which Trump in the White House or Netanyahu in Tel Aviv are seeking. On the contrary a progressive and democratic Iran is the furthest from their minds as support for Monarchist opposition in the form of Reza Pahlavi, son of the former Shah based in the United States, is given greater prominence by Western politicians and media.

Netanyahu's call for Iranians to rise up against the present regime in Iran have been echoed by Pahlavi, who met Netanyahu on a visit to Israel in



2023. The likelihood of Pahlavi being able to mobilise mass popular support inside Iran is slim however, given his distance from the country and the perception of many Iranians that he is collaborating with the aggressor Israel.

Any return to Iran for Pahlavi would need the significant backing of US or Israeli military forces to suppress the opposition which such a reactionary move would provoke. The danger of Iran becoming a state dismembered by Western imperialism, such as has been the case with Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and Syria, would be all too real in such a scenario.

An alternative for the West could be backing the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), an exiled group that enjoys support in the US from hawks such as veteran Republican John Bolton. During the 1980s, the MEK backed Iraq in its war with Iran, and the Islamic regime often accuses it of collaborating with Israel. Like Pahlavi, the MEK does not enjoy popular support inside Iran and would require significant external backing in order to maintain any grip on power.

The US and Israeli cover story for their actions against Iran, to halt the nuclear programme, simply does not hold water. Recent years have seen increasingly popular opposition movements inside Iran. Millions protested disputed elections in 2009 in what became known as the Green Movement. In 2022, the Women, Life, Freedom Movement mobilised millions across Iranian cities, calling for an end to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's rule following the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody after she was arrested for allegedly not properly wearing her hijab.

Change in Iran has been coming for a long time but it must be change for the people, by the people, not change shaped by foreign intervention and an imperialist agenda, imposed upon the people of Iran.

**INTERVIEW:**

# No War on Iran!



**“The struggle for democratic change is closely linked to the securing of lasting peace in Iran”**

In the lead up to the publication of this issue, *Iran Today* investigated the impact of the 12-day war in June 2025 on the popular struggle for progressive change in Iran. The editor interviewed Gawain Little, General Secretary of CODIR, on the link between the struggle for peace, against banking and economic sanctions, and the threat of a further military attack by the US/Israel axis on Iran.

**Iran Today: What has been the overall impact of the 12-day Israeli military aggression on Iran and the US airstrikes on its nuclear facilities earlier this summer?**

**Gawain Little:** Negotiations between the US and the Islamic Republic of Iran were already well underway when Israel initiated a large-scale unilateral air assault on Iran in contra-

vention of all international laws and conventions. First and foremost, the civilian toll exacted over those days was significant - with over 1,000 killed and more than 5,000 injured. By contrast, the Iran's retaliatory attacks on Israel killed 28 people. Key targets, including Iran's military leadership, were taken out in the strikes and through the use of Mossad operatives inside the country. What remained of Iran's air defence capabilities [from Israel's previous airstrikes carried out on 26 October 2024] were comprehensively destroyed. The 12-day aggression was concluded with US president Trump's orders of a series of massive strikes on Iran's nuclear enrichment facilities at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan - actions expressly and strictly prohibited under international law. This flagrantly illegal and unwarranted attack on Iran was neither condemned by the UK nor the EU. In fact, the German chancellor Friedrich Merz praised the attacks, stating it was "dirty work Israel is doing on behalf of all of us". However, Iran and her people are reeling in the aftermath of this criminal aggression and the situation inside the country and throughout the region has been rendered even more unstable as a result.

**Iran Today: How did the Iranian people react to the US-Israeli aggression - did they rally around the ruling theocratic regime?**

**GL:** It is now manifest that the core aim of Israel's military assault on Iran was to engender 'regime change' there, based on the presumption that the Iranian public would rise in support of Netanyahu and Reza Pahlavi, the son of the deposed previous dictator (Shah). The outcome was the opposite. However, whilst the regime will try to claim that the people rallied around the theocratic dictatorship, the reality on the ground is that widespread discontent with the ruling theocracy continues. Iranians rallied around the themes of national unity and sovereignty, firmly rejecting foreign intervention while not expressing support for the ruling regime.

**Iran Today: What challenges did the Iranian people face before the US-Israeli military attack?**

**GL:** For years, most Iranians have opposed 'Political Islam' as a system of governance, vehemently rejecting its reactionary restrictions on social, political, and personal freedoms. From a socioeconomic standpoint, their life and living environment over the past three decades of neoliberal policies have been severely impacted with no prospect of improvement. Widespread water and electricity shortages in all major Iranian cities are worsening due to years of mismanagement and corruption. Rising living costs and unemployment have deepened hardship for millions, while the government remains unable to address these complex issues. President Masoud Pezeshkian recently confessed: "Poor decisions in the past have led to the current crisis. We are in a serious



**and can they influence the upcoming developments between the IRI and the US?**

**GL:** Not directly. All major decisions, especially on foreign policy, rest solely with the 'supreme leader' Ayatollah Khamenei and his inner circle. However, the regime is still acutely aware of rising public anger and the risks posed by renewed protests.

In closed-door negotiations between representatives of Trump and Ayatollah

Khamenei, the rights and

and unimaginable crisis".

**Iran Today: What is the role of the US sanctions regime in this situation?**

**GL:** US sanctions have undoubtedly played a massive role in deepening the plight of the Iranian people, as the country's economy has already been hollowed out by a parasitic financial and mercantile elite and three decades of unrestrained neoliberalism. This top echelon, whose interests are safeguarded by the regime in a relationship of mutual dependency, has made Iran's weak and corruption-riddled economy even more vulnerable - essentially rendering it easy prey to crippling US sanctions. The main impact of this has been felt by working class Iranians.

**Iran Today: What are the prospects for resumption of the negotiations between the IRAN and the US, and what are the potential outcomes?**

**GL:** Negotiations have stalled because of the arbitrary demand that Iran completely abandons its uranium enrichment - including for civilian purposes at 3.67%. However, indirect talks considering options like a regional consortium or a temporary suspension of enrichment by Iran continue. Therefore, the likelihood of resuming negotiations is reasonably high. The Iran's leadership is in a desperate situation, fearing a resurgence of mass protests; thus, it is pinning its hopes on the possibility of relief from US sanctions, or their complete abandonment, to alleviate the severe economic pressure on the population - acting as a temporary painkiller for the worsening crisis.

The fact remains that the Iran is in a significantly weak position, both economically and militarily. And in negotiations with the Iran's desperate leadership, whose sole objective is to ensure the survival of the theocratic dictatorship at any cost, Trump has two major opportunities for leverage: a) further economic pressure via sanctions to exploit Iran's weakened economy; b) giving the green light to further criminal intervention by the Israeli war machine.

**Iran Today: What do the Iranian people want,**

demands of the Iranian people for freedom and social justice will not be honoured or safeguarded. Iranians face both a dictatorship and aggressive policies from Trump, who has a track record of erratic and unpredictable foreign policy. Peace and stability are regarded by the Iranian people as fundamental to their achieving freedom and social justice. There is a broad consensus within Iran advocating for "No War" and expressing opposition to any external intervention.

**Iran Today: What is the position of progressives in Iran?**

**GL:** The primary concern of most national progressive forces centres on the crucial need for a lasting peace and to avert war. They recognise that without peace, the nation will face war, destruction, instability, increased repression, and a massive setback for progress towards freedom and social justice. Nevertheless, there are some, both in Iran and abroad, who continue to project the IRAN as somehow anti-imperialist and capable of confronting the US based on grossly exaggerated notions of the IRAN's military capability and turning a blind eye to the regime's attitude towards the Iranian trade union movement, progressive forces and the Iranian working class. This is of course seized upon by the extreme fundamentalist forces trying to prop up this ailing and unpopular regime.

**Iran Today: What can progressives abroad do to assist the Iranian people against this fraught backdrop?**

**GL:** Following the military attacks, promoting international solidarity with the Iranian people is of utmost importance to help prevent future US-Israeli military action against Iran. It is essential to engage in coordinated efforts with peace campaigners and progressive organisations worldwide. Such collaboration should prioritise raising public awareness and mobilising opinion through media outreach, lobbying official channels, pressuring governments, and utilising the considerable capacities of trade unions, civil society organisations, and anti-war groups to this end.

# Power shortages add to a summer of discontent in Iran



While political power in the Islamic Republic of Iran is still in the grip of the clerical dictatorship, power supply for the people of Iran and its industry is becoming increasingly problematic. Steve Bishop reports.

A combination of factors are driving the power supply crisis in Iran. The most significant issues are decades of underinvestment and mismanagement which have left the country's power grid unfit to meet 21st century demands. A significant portion of the generated electricity, over 11% according to some reports, is lost during transmission. In addition, although Iran has vast natural gas reserves, sanctions and a lack of investment have hampered development. In winter, prioritising residential heating leads to fuel shortages for power plants, forcing them to use less efficient and more polluting fuels. In summer, the demand-supply imbalance becomes critical.

The failure to invest in energy infrastructure and plan for a growing population means that the country's energy production has not kept pace with rapidly increasing consumption, leading to a chronic imbalance between supply and demand.

The unprecedented heatwave which has gripped the country recently has pushed temperatures to new highs. This has led to a surge in electricity demand for air conditioning, while at the same time, severe drought has drastically reduced the capacity of hydroelectric power plants.

The ongoing impact of international sanctions against Iran only serves to exacerbate the failings which are endemic in the system, due to poor management and corruption. Sanctions have restricted Iran's access to the necessary technology, equipment, and foreign investment needed to modernise its power plants and expand its energy infrastructure.

Residents in major cities including the capital, Tehran, face daily power cuts lasting several hours, often without prior notice. These outages disrupt daily routines, damage electrical appliances, and pose a health risk during the heatwave. The crisis is compounded by concurrent water shortages.

The blackouts have a significant impact on the economy, forcing businesses, factories, and even government offices to shut down. This has led to production losses in key industries like steel, cement, and petrochemicals. Farmers have also reported a 25% decrease in water access due to power cuts affecting water pumps.

The government response has been to order government offices, banks, and other public institutions to close on certain days to conserve energy. The frequent and prolonged blackouts, combined with a water crisis and the general economic crisis, have sparked public anger with reports of protests in various cities across Iran. In many cases these protests have become larger expressions of discontent with the government's mismanagement and corruption.

The reality for ordinary citizens is significant, including spoiled food due to non-functioning refrigerators, damaged electrical appliances from power fluctuations, and an inability to use fans or air conditioning, making homes unbearable. In many urban areas, low water pressure or complete water outages make it impossible to perform basic tasks like bathing or washing, forcing residents to rely on water tanks or trucks.

The combined energy and water crises pose a serious threat to public health. Hospitals are struggling with power and water shortages, which can compromise hygiene and the operation of critical life-support equipment. In some cases, hospitals have been forced to close entire wards due to staff and resource shortages, risking a collapse of the healthcare system.

In time honoured fashion the government of Iran has failed to take responsibility for the crisis. The government has largely responded to the protests with repression and blame-shifting, often attributing the crisis to "excessive consumption" by citizens rather than acknowledging systemic failures and underinvestment.

The failure to address such basic issues for its people is further eroding the already narrow base of support for the regime and fuelling demands for change. The regime is rapidly heading towards an existential crisis and the combination of factors fuelling the protest movement will combine to accelerate its replacement with a truly democratic government for Iran.

# Evin Prison: after the attack

## Linda Sherwood

On 23 June, Israeli air strikes hit multiple locations inside Evin prison, killing or injuring prisoners, staff and visitors and destroying or damaging numerous buildings and other structures within the prison complex as well as nearby residential buildings. The attack occurred during prison visiting hours when the prison was packed with visitors. Under international law a prison is defined as a civilian object, Evin prison could not therefore constitute a military target but according to Israeli government statements, the raid was 'a symbolic blow aimed not at harming prisoners but at undermining the regime's capacity to detain, torture and silence dissidents.'

However, the Iranian authorities confirmed that at least 80 civilians including a social worker and her 5-year-old son had been killed. The prison was strewn with bodies, debris and burnt-out cars as was the nearby residential area and motorway. Two residents of the neighbourhood are known to have died.

At the time of writing the authorities had not released the names of all the injured prisoners.

Political detainee Mohammad Nourizad, called his family as the air strikes were happening. A recording of his call was published online on 24 June:

"They are dropping bombs on us. Some people are injured, the windows have broken, and everyone has scattered... They closed the doors on us and we have no news."

Volunteer prison doctor Saeedeh Makarem who was injured described on Instagram how prisoners helped her:

"They dragged me to the corner of the wall. I was half-conscious. They brought me water and a blanket, put a splint in my leg, wiped the blood from my face... They could have left, but they didn't... They saved me."

In the London Review of Books\* Amir Ahmadi Arian described the horror of the aftermath of the attack for the prisoners, many of them political dissidents or foreigners accused of espionage. Gas, electricity, water and telephones were cut. Women prisoners were locked into a smoke-filled room; to help breathe they put pieces of cloth soaked in water over their faces. When a second round of missiles came the women hid under planks of wood taken from the carpentry shop.

Some of the prisoners who had been sentenced to death were afraid that the authorities would execute them on the spot, hoping no-one would notice. At night around 180 male prisoners were moved from Evin to the notoriously brutal Fashayeh prison where they were placed in four



rooms with a capacity of 80 people while at dawn the following day the women including a mother and her young child were transferred to the overcrowded and insanitary Qarchak prison. They were placed in two small rooms and a corridor with only two toilets and two showers. Many were forbidden to take their belongings with them.

Amnesty International has collected eye-witness accounts and verified video and photo images. Erika Guevara Rosas, Amnesty's Senior Director for Research, Advocacy, Policy and Campaigns, said:

"The evidence establishes reasonable grounds to believe that the Israeli military brazenly and deliberately attacked civilian buildings. Directing attacks at civilian objects is strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law. Carrying out such attacks knowingly and deliberately constitutes a war crime.

"The Israeli forces should have known that any air strikes against Evin prison could result in significant civilian harm. Prosecution authorities around the world must ensure that all those responsible for this deadly attack are brought to justice, including through use of the principle of universal jurisdiction. The Iranian authorities must also grant the International Criminal Court jurisdiction over all Rome Statute crimes committed on or perpetrated from its territory."

Following the attack the Iranian government is tightening the law against those accused of 'cooperation with hostile governments' including Israel and the USA. The fear remains that the government will speed up trials and prisoners found guilty of collaboration will automatically be executed.

A question remains, what will happen to Evin prison? Some saw the Israeli attack as an opportunity to re-develop the site however reconstruction of the prison appears to have started already.

\*London Review of Books vol 47 n° 14, 14 August 2025

## INTERVIEW:

# Iran's Labour Movement: Navigating a Complex Landscape

This interview with trade union activist, Naser Malek, not his real name, sheds light on the challenges faced by Iran's labour movement. *Iran Today* explores with Naser the complex sociopolitical and economic landscape and examines how workers navigate a difficult environment to advocate for their fundamental rights.

***Iran Today:*** What are the key restrictions imposed on the activities of independent trade unions in Iran?

**Naser Malek:** I would first point to the categorical legal and structural restrictions on trade union activities in Iran. For example, contrary to the provisions of Article 26 of the Constitution, Clause 4 of Article 131 of Iran's Labour Code states that workers in any given workplace/unit have one of three options [of recourse in the workplace]: an "Islamic Labour Council", a "Guild Association", or a "Workers' Representative". Trade unions per se are deliberately not recognised under the country's Labour Code and prohibited from operating officially or openly.

Furthermore, due to the absence of freedom of speech and a free press in Iran, workers are sometimes even unaware of those rights and entitlements they do have under the law and therefore cannot benefit accordingly.

The authorities go to extreme lengths to prevent workers or retirees from attempting to organise themselves outside of the prescribed structures, and such activities inevitably result in fierce security crackdowns.

Prominent and respected labour activists and advocates are often subjected to psychological and physical pressure by the authorities - and when they are "removed from the scene", their replacements often lack the experience and nous to manoeuvre effectively and are themselves quickly neutralised by the regime.

***IT:*** Looking back over the past 40 years of harsh restrictions on trade union activities, what have been the key trade union campaigns in Iran and their successes?

**NM:** Despite an extremely hostile environment, trade union activists were able to exploit a relatively rare



period of breathing space back in the early 2000s [during the latter term of reformist president Mohammad Khatami, 1997-2005] to revive a number of the previously repressed trade unions. These organisations have managed to survive and operate, albeit under continuing pressure and intimidation from the authorities.

The monthly "Payam-e Sandika" ("Union Message") magazine has also continued from 2011 to the present.

The project workers' campaign for fair wages and better working conditions was launched in 2020. This campaign was able to exploit a technical loophole in the Labour Code to bring about an annual round of demands/protests for fairer living wages and increased paid rest days amid the harsh climate and conditions of oil and gas fields in Khuzestan province, southern Iran, for four consecutive years now.

Recent years have also seen the launch and continuation of the nationwide movement of independent pensioners/retirees, which goes from strength to strength.

All these campaigns have had relative success and achieved important gains. Most importantly, they still continue.

***IT:*** How best can workers in Britain show solidarity with workers in Iran, so that the latter are more able to pursue their legitimate demands and interests?

**NM:** The fraternal solidarity of workers in other countries is very important and impactful for the struggles of Iranian workers and the realisation of their demands.

A key act of solidarity would be to support the stances

of independent workers' initiatives in Iran by issuing statements and following them up with international organisations such as the ILO.

They should also take care not to be duped into dealing with representatives of "Khaneh Kargar" (the "House of Workers"), which is a regime front and completely divorced from the ordinary structures, functions, or practices one would ascribe to a trade union. It is a government-backed sectarian structure that purposely omits to represent non-Muslim Iranian workers, including atheists, and actively discriminates against them. While projecting itself as a bona fide representative of Iranian workers, "Khaneh Kargar" is in fact a yellow union established by the regime to carry its official line in the Iranian workplace.

British trade unionists should actively compel the Iranian regime, through official representations, to respect the freedoms stipulated in the Iranian Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all ILO Conventions.

Representatives of bona fide Iranian trade unions and independent workers' organisations should be invited to participate in international trade union conferences, seminars, training workshops, as well as other appropriate fora. This would provide them a significant boost, not least morale-wise.

**IT: Iran is a founding and active member of the ILO and signatory to its Conventions. Can you confirm that, despite this, Iran does not fulfil its obligations and whether this has been brought to the attention of the ILO?**

**NM:** Yes, Iran was one of the founding member countries of the ILO in 1919 and, as an active member since then, has ratified 15 ILO Conventions and six core Conventions.

However, its continual refusal to allow the free operation of bona fide trade unions and consequent brutal crackdowns flies in the face of these same commitments. Some trade union leaders have been subjected to seriously harsh prison sentences on



bogus charges of "endangering national security" (a capital offence under Islamic Republic law) merely on account of their legitimate trade union activities. Others have been forced into hiding or exile.

In 2007, a leader of the Syndicate of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Company attended an ILO meeting and raised several issues pertaining to the fraught situation of trade unions and worker activists in Iran.

Additionally, around a decade ago, the International Centre for Trade Union Rights (ICTUR) submitted a comprehensive plaintive report over the situation of workers' rights in Iran, including a catalogue of fatal and serious incidents and health and safety failures in the Iranian workplace. Unfortunately, due to the lack of a dedicated capacity or route via Iran's representative channel to the ILO, this complaint could not be progressed and nothing material came of it.

**IT: What has been the impact of the recent 12-day war against Iran on the situation faced by Iranian workers, and their living and working conditions?**

**NM:** In the aftermath of the 12-day war in June, Iranian workers are under immense and unbearable pressure owing to the multifaceted crises the country is now facing.

Many plants and workshops in Iran's industrial zones are facing closure because of regular rolling power, water, and internet outages. Consequently, many of them have begun mass layoffs and have ceased paying the wages of their remaining

workforces.

The domestic market has contracted sharply due to the spiralling economic crisis and rampant inflation, with many companies' products simply not selling.

Furthermore, vital raw materials are nowhere near as readily available for some parts-manufacturing workshops as they were before June, and the picture was far from great then.

Owing to devastating levels of inflation, current monthly wages and pensions for many workers and retirees are barely sufficient to cover basic living costs for ten days.

The regime has also ramped up its internal repression. Noted women's and workers' rights activist, Ms. Sharifeh Mohammadi, has recently had her death sentence confirmed for a second time amid grave fears that her execution is imminent.

Harsh prison sentences have also been issued to teacher activists and prominent members of the Iranian Teachers Trade Association (ITTA), the latest being for Mr. Masoud Farhikhteh.

Project workers campaigning for their rights have also faced increasing intimidation, including constant summons to appear before the regime's security and intelligence apparatus just for exercising what would be regarded as basic trade union rights elsewhere.

Suffice to state, the situation vis-à-vis workers' rights inside Iran is decidedly bleak at present.

# Join the worldwide calls for the immediate stay of execution of Sharifeh Mohammadi!



Sharifeh Mohammadi, a noted women's and workers' activist in Iran, has just had her second death sentence upheld by the country's Supreme Court. There are now grave fears that she is at imminent risk of execution.

On 5 December 2023, Ms. Mohammadi was arbitrarily arrested by intelligence agents and transferred to a detention centre in Rasht, Gilan province. Three weeks later, she was secretly moved to another intelligence detention centre over 500 kilometres away in Sanandaj, Kordestan province, where she was subjected to

brutal and prolonged torture.

In January 2024, Ms. Mohammadi filed a formal complaint regarding the vicious maltreatment she had endured. However, no investigation was carried out and authorities instead moved her into isolation for over a month until her visible wounds had cleared.

Ms. Mohammadi was then warned that unless she withdrew her complaint, she would not be returned to Lakan Prison in Gilan and her family would continue to have no access to her. Under extreme duress, she complied and was returned to Gilan.

On 4 July 2024, following a brief behind-closed-doors session of Branch 1 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court (IRC) in Rasht, at which Ms. Mohammadi appeared via video link and was refused permission to even speak, she was sentenced to death on the bogus charge of having supported "armed struggle against the state".

The verdict cited as "evidence" her completely peaceful human rights activities, including her support for female prisoners, opposition to the death penalty, and connection with the 'Coordinating Committee for the Establishment of Workers' Organisations in Iran'.

During her first appeal, Branch 39 of the Supreme Court annulled the death sentence, stating that it lacked the requisite legal and religious basis. However, in February 2025, Branch 2 of the IRC in Rasht simply issued another death sentence. This time it was upheld by the same branch of the Supreme Court despite none of their original objections having been addressed by the IRC.

CODIR demands the immediate annulment of Sharifeh Mohammadi's conviction and death sentence, and her unconditional release. We also demand an independent investigation into her detention and torture, and the holding to account of the perpetrators..

## AFFILIATE TO CODIR



**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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