

Workers in Iran

Updates as of October 24, 2010

In this Bulletin:

Reza Shahabi, a leading member of Bus Workers' Syndicate still incarcerated and in limbo

Workers in Iran: Challenges and Struggles

Sample protest letter

Reza Shahabi, a leading member of Bus Workers' Syndicate still incarcerated and in limbo

Reza Shahabi Treasurer and board member of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company who was arrested on June 12th of this year is still incarcerated, and his release still undetermined. Although a bond of 60 million Tomans has been posted for him by his family, he has not been freed yet.

Mrs. Robabeh Rezaie, the spouse of Mr. Shahabi, in conversation with “Mardomak” while emphasizing his undetermined status mentioned that the charge against him is “contacts with foreigners.” Mr. Shahabi's interrogator has told Mrs. Rezaie that he has not cooperated with his interrogator and the judicial system and until and unless he does so he won't be released. According to her, attorneys in the case after four months of incarceration, still have no access to any files on their client, and have no knowledge of any details in the charges.

Back on October 10 of 2010, “revolutionary court” had determined that by posting a 60 million Tomans bond this labour activist would be freed. Mrs. Rezaie says that the amount was prepared and given to authorities. They had promised he would be released on 12th of October. While the family waited for his release until 1:30 AM in front of the Evin Prison, they were told

that he will not be released. There were rumors of increased bond, but we haven't officially been notified.

Reza Shahabi a Law major and a graduate of “Payam Nor” university, was supporting the expelled workers from the Bus Company by providing them with legal counsel. This labour activist himself was suspended from Bus Company back in 2005 due to his labour activism. He continued his education, obtaining his high school diploma and then embarking on his legal studies.

According to Mrs. Rezaie during the five years that Mr. Shahabi was suspended from working at Bus Company family's income and his studies were supported by temporary jobs, mechanical and other wise, and financially the family had experienced very difficult times.

The 37 years old Treasurer of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran Bus Company has an 11 year old daughter, and a 12 years old son. Mrs. Rezaie says that during all these years she was very aware of his capacity as a social activist, and that he taking on “a very hard and dangerous task and responsibility.” Yet she emphasizes that since he was not engaged in any illegal or improper activity, and was only defending workers' rights, she never prevented him from his activities, and even now fully confident she declares that he has not committed any crime to be incarcerated for.

Mrs. Rezaie demands from law enforcement authorities to expedite this labour activist's case, because “enduring this indetermination is very arduous.”

Reza Shahabi was arrested at Bus Co. building on June 12 2010. Before taking him to Evin Prison security agents took him to his house and after searching his house, confiscated his computer.

Source:

http://www.mardomak.org/news/Uncertainty_Reza_S_hahaabi_Labor_activist

Translated by IASWI

Reza Shahabi still in jail despite posting bail

According to the latest news from Iran, Reza Shahabi, Treasurer and board member of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, who has been incarcerated since June 12, 2010, was scheduled to be released on bail on October 11, 2010; however, the authorities refused to release him despite the order for his conditional release by a judge.

On October 11, 2010, tens of family members and friends of Reza Shahabi gathered outside the Evin Prison to welcome Shahabi after his family had deposited 60 million Toman (about 57,000 US Dollar) as surety. After staying outside prison until after midnight, in spite of cold weather and rain, prison authorities refused to free Shahabi.

Reza Shahabi continues to be detained in Evin Prison. According to unconfirmed reports, the bail amount for Shahabi has been increased to 100,000,000 toman. There are reports that Reza Shahabi has been under pressures and interrogation to “collaborate” with prison authorities; this is despite the fact that he has already spent more than four months in prison without any justifiable reasons.

There is no justification whatsoever to keep Shahabi in prison. Reza Shahabi is a well-known and highly respected worker and labour leader in Iran and his imprisonment is a gross violation of human rights and international labour standards.

Free Reza Shahabi Now!
Free Mansour Osanloo and Ebrahim Madadi!
Free all jailed labour activists now!

Report by: International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran

info@workers-iran.org

www.workers-iran.org

Workers in Iran: Challenges and Struggles

Updated October 2010

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) in nearly 32 years of its repressive reign has consistently suppressed Iranian labour movement and their rights, including the right to form their own autonomous workers' organizations.

IRI has no commitment to international norms and agreements regarding human or labour laws. Although it claims to have accepted some of such laws, but in practice it disregards all of them.

When it comes to creation of autonomous workers organizations the balance sheet of IRI is filled with example after example of crushing these organizations and the activists within them. This regime violently destroyed all the workers' councils that had emerged through the course of 1979 popular revolution against the Monarchy, and replaced autonomous workers' councils with “Islamic Labor Councils”, and the official state-sanctioned “Workers' House.”

Out right lying and duplicity is another method of this anti-worker regime's dealing with international organizations. One such example is Mr. Sheikhol-Islam, IRI's Minister of Labour, promise to free Mansour Osanloo [the president of the board of directors of Tehran bus workers' syndicate], during the 99th session of the International Labour Conference. After the 99th session of the ILC was concluded and the Labour Minister returned to Tehran, not only Osanloo wasn't freed, but he was brought upon more charges while incarcerated, and given an additional one year term, on top of the five years term he was already serving. In addition his two months pregnant daughter-in-law was kidnapped in broad day and severely tortured that she suffered miscarriage. While Mr. Sheikhol-Islam was telling all sorts of lies in Geneva two more members of the board of directors of Bus Workers' Syndicate Messrs Saeid Torabian

and Reza Shahabi were incarcerated. The former was freed with a huge bail, the latter after spending four months in jail still remains incarcerated. Reza Shahabi, who is also the Syndicate's treasurer, has been subject to increasing prosecution and despite the depositing of large bail by his family he has not been released as of October 23, 2010.

When it comes to relations between capital and labour, the capitalist Islamic government of Iran functions totally in favor of capitalists and employers. All shops employing 10 or fewer than 10 workers are exempt from any labor code; to this we could add all the shops producing hand weaved carpets. In addition, millions of workers, are employed as temporarily workers. Employers have the upper hand in imposing the lowest wages with no benefits whatsoever.

IRI does not even follow its own regressive labour laws. An instance is the article 41 of the Labor Code, concerning the minimum wages. In the first and second section of this code it is explicitly stated that minimum wages shall be determined corresponding to inflation and providing a minimum of livelihood for workers and their family members, through participation of workers elected delegates. In practice, not only workers have no representatives in the process, but the final official minimum wage fails to even secure a bare minimum. This year's official minimum wage is approximately around \$300.00/month, whereas according to all independent economists the poverty line in Iran is between \$900.00 to a \$1000.00/month. The official minimum wages is barely a third of poverty level wages! In addition, hundreds of thousands of workers, from both private and public sectors, do not usually receive their wages, on average between 6 to 24 months.

When it comes to translating and disseminating information to international organizations and bodies, IRI introduces its

own state-sanctioned "labour" organizations as independent workers' formations.

In the past few years two independent workers' organizations have been created in Iran, in accordance with international norms and based on their respective workers' general assemblies. They both have been tremendously suppressed and crushed by IRI. These two formations are: Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, and Syndicate of Workers of Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Company. Through expelling workers' representatives from their jobs, incarceration, arrests, intimidation, harassment, and torture of workers and their family members, the anti-worker regime of IRI is actively destroying these two independent workers' organizations.

Currently three members of Bus Workers' Syndicate's Board of Directors: Mansour Osanloo, Ebrahim Madadi, and Reza Shahabi are still incarcerated and a number of other members are either fired or in the process of going to court. All members of Sugar Cane Workers Syndicate's Board of Directors have been suspended from work, and a number of them are arrested, brought up on phony charges and incarcerated. The Board's former chair Mr. Ali Nejati has spent many months in jail on bogus charges.

Labour activists in Iran have created many committees to support creation of workers' organizations in Iran. These committees are routinely pressured and harassed by the authorities. Based on available information, more than hundred members of "Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations" have been interrogated and brought up on charges only in the past few months. Recent include: Messrs. Vafa Ghaderi, Sadigh Sobhani, Fatah Solaimani, Eisa Ebrahimzadeh, Abas Hashempor, Hossain Pirovati, Rahman Ebrahimzadeh, Samad Ahadpor, Khosro Bokani, Asad Molodzadeh, and Kaveh Golmahamadi. Also Mr. Behnam Ebrahimzadeh, a member of The Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Free

Workers' Organizations, is spending his fourth month in jail.

On May 1st of 2010 the demands of Iranian Workers was declared through a unified statement consisting of 15 articles. This statement was a significant step forward because it brought workers' and labour advocacy and action groups inside Iran together in addition to the fact that they were able to produce one of the most progressive statements on the occasion of the International Workers' Day. Please see below for the complete text of this statement.

To obtain more information contact the IASWI or check the web sites below.

International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI)

info@workers-iran.org

alliance@workers-iran.org

www.etehadbinalmelali.com

www.workers-iran.org

Joint resolution of workers' organization of Iran on the occasion of the International Workers' Day

May 1st is the day of international solidarity of the working class and a day for labourers to protest global poverty and inequality. On this day millions of workers around the world stop working, to conquer the streets and show their anger and disgust with the announcement of the numerous disasters that capitalism has inflicted on humanity, and scream for liberation from oppression and exploitation.

Resounding protest against the hardship of capitalism and inequality of workers will be heard all around the world on May 1st while prohibition of celebration of this day in Iran is in effect, and many organizing workers of the May 1388 (2009) event have been convicted and imprisoned and subjected to heavy sentences. Labour leaders and activists are languishing in prison for defending their basic human rights.

Imposing such appalling lack of social rights for workers in conditions that in three decades of a capitalist system in Iran after the 1357 (1979) revolution, has reduced the minimum wage to a quarter below the poverty line and lack of timely payment of these wages and the firing of masses of workers, temporary contracts, have imposed hellish conditions on millions of workers families. Today more than ever to ensure the profitability of capital, factories are closed and subsidies cut in determination to cut the last threads of survival for millions of working families and pour them into the pockets of investors.

But as we workers showed in the 1979 revolution as well as in recent years, we will not tolerate this misery and despite prison and repression will stand ahead with the people against violation of our most basic human rights and will not allow them to ruin our existence more. We are the main producers of all wealth and products in society and are entitled to human life in accordance with the highest standards of living today.

In this context we also protest against circumstances since last May Day , during which the masses in Iran have been exposed to suppression of their rights. We make the following immediate demands:

1 – We are free to organize – independent of the government and employers -,to strike, protest, march, assemble and speak freely. This is our right and must be unconditional in recognition of the social rights of workers and the people of Iran.

2 – We see the plan to target and cut subsidies and the minimum wage of 303,000 toman (about \$300) as a gradual imposition of death of millions of working class families and demand immediate suspension of plans to cut subsidies and increase the monthly minimum wage to one million Toman (About \$1000) .

3 – Workers wages in arrears are to be paid immediately and with no excuses. Non-payment of wages should be prosecuted as a crime and damages caused to the workers must be paid for.

4 – The Dismissal of Workers by any excuse must be stopped and those who are unemployed or have attained the age of employment and are prepared to work must be given suitable unemployment insurance until employed.

5 – We want to eliminate temporary contracts and the signing of blank contracts and demand employment security for all workers and wage recipients in accordance with the highest standards of health and safety. We demand the elimination of all controlling state-created agencies from workplaces.

6 – We demand the eradication of the death penalty. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of Ebrahim Madadi, Mansour Osanloo, Ali Nejati and all labour activists and other social movements and protestors from prison and a stop to the persecution against them.

7 – We condemn any aggression towards workers' and people's protests and view this type of freedom of expression as an inherent right of the public.

8 – We want to eradicate all laws that are discriminatory to women and to ensure full equality and the unconditional rights of women and men in all areas of social, economic, political, cultural and family life.

9 – We want all pensioners to enjoy a prosperous life without economic concern and to eliminate any discrimination in the payment of retirement pensions and benefits from their social security and health care.

10 – Child labour must be eradicated and all children must be entitled to educational facilities, health and welfare, independent of

gender and race, religion, or social and economic status of their parents.

11 – We hereby announce our support for all emancipatory social movements, and strongly condemn arrest, trial and imprisonment of activists of these movements.

12 – We announce strong support for the demands of teachers, nurses and other working classes of society and consider ourselves their allies, and call for the immediate realization of their demands.

13 – We are part of the world's working class and strongly condemn the dismissal and imposition of any discrimination of Afghan migrant workers and other nationalities.

14 – We appreciate the international support towards workers' struggles in Iran and express our adamant support for all protests and struggles of workers throughout the world; we consider ourselves their allies. We more than ever before emphasize on international solidarity of working class as the path to liberation from the hardships of the capitalist system.

15 – May 1st must be declared an official holiday in the country and included in the official calendar and any restrictions regarding recognition of the anniversary of this day shall be abolished.

Long Live May Day

Long live the international solidarity of workers

May 1, 2010 - Ordibehesht 11, 1389

-Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company

-Syndicate of Workers of Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Company

-The Free Union of Workers in Iran

-The Founding Board of Metal and Mechanic Workers' Syndicate

-The Founding Board of the Syndicate of Painters

- Association of Kermanshah Electrical and Metal Workers
- The Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Free Workers' Organizations
- The Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations
- Association for the Defense of Dismissed and Unemployed Workers of Saghez
- The Women's Council

Translated by Street Journalist (modified by the IASWI)

Sample Protest Letter (Updated October 23, 2010):

Free Tehran bus workers' leaders now Free all jailed workers now

I (we) am (are) writing this to demand an immediate and unconditional freedom of all imprisoned representatives and members of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company and the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations and other independent labour activists in Iran.

As of this time, three leaders and elected representatives of Vahed Syndicate are in prison: Mansour Osanloo, Syndicate's president of the board of director (serving five year jail sentence since 2007, Ebrahim Madadi, Vice-President (serving 3.5 year jail sentence since late 2007); and Reza Shahabi, Treasurer (arrested on June 12, 2010). Reza Shahabi, board member and treasurer of the bus workers' syndicate has been charged with "contacts with foreigners" and despite the posting of 60 million toman bail has not been released. His wife has been told by his interrogator that because he is not cooperating with them they would not release him.

Moreover, many members of the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations in different cities have been targeted and persecuted by authorities and are facing charges and jail sentences. Also Mr. Behnam Ebrahimzadeh, a member of The Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Free

Workers' Organizations, is spending his fourth month in jail.

I (we) demand immediate and unconditional freedom of Osanloo, Madadi and Shahabi, Ebrahimzadeh and other labour activists. I (we) condemn the continuous gross attacks on human and workers' rights in Iran. I (we) demand the immediate and unconditional freedom of all labour activists and political prisoners and call on the government to respect the right to organize, assemble and freedom of association and expression.

Name:

Organization:

Position:

Send Copy of your Protest Letters to:

info@leader.ir, info@judiciary.ir, dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir; iran@un.int; ijpr@iranjudiciary.org, info@dadiran.ir, office@justice.ir, support@irimlsa.ir; ilo@ilo.org; cabinet@ilo.org; eastgulf@amnesty.org
CC: info@workers-iran.org



Madadai - Osanloo - Shahabi - Ebrahimzadeh

Free all jailed labour activists now

In this Bulletin:

Reza Shahabi, still incarcerated and in limbo

Workers in Iran: Challenges and Struggles

Sample protest letter

International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI)

info@workers-iran.org
www.etehadbinalmelali.com
www.workers-iran.org