Reza Shahabi:

"It would make me proud to die for the worker’s movement. We are the 99% of society... But wealth remains in the hands of 1%. We have to give from our lives at work, but cannot even afford to take our children on a holiday for a few days. We can’t take them to schools to learn anything. I have defended the rights of workers. And now, I stand for my innocence and unconditional freedom until I die. My demand is not just to get out of the uncertain situation I am currently facing in jail; I do not want to be released on bail. I have not committed any crime for the punishment to be cancelled, and no accusation has been made for me to be pardoned from. They have made me sick and taken half my life. I have to receive medical treatment and be released immediately and unconditionally".

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French trade unions, CFDT, CGT, FSU, UNSA and Solidaires
Protest Letter

Paris, December 20, 2011

His Excellency Sadegh Larijani,
Head of the Judiciary
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

Re: detention of Reza Shahabi and requests for transfer to a civilian hospital.

Your Excellency, the French trade unions, CFDT, CGT, FSU, UNSA and Solidaires, draw your attention to the situation of Reza Shahabi, a member of the leadership of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company, who has been imprisoned for 19 months.

He was arrested June 12, 2011 without any charges no criminal or criticized him. Reza Shahabi is a militant union activist that represents the interests of workers. He appeared on May 25 before the "Revolutionary Court". He and his lawyer brought before the Court evidence that he had not done any illegal action.

Reza Shahabi suffers from several health problems (kidney failure and severe osteoarthritis due to deterioration of four vertebrae). For several months, his health worsened and he runs the risk in the absence of care to remain paralyzed. He must, as soon as practicable, be transferred to a hospital outside the prison.

Despite his health problems, Reza Shahabi has gone, since November 22, on a hunger strike that puts his life in danger. We would like to remind you that as a representative of the judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran you are responsible for the health and life of Mr. Shahabi.

The detention of Mr. Shahabi is in a violation of human rights and trade union rights. For this reason we ask for his immediate release. Also due to the violation of the same rights, we demand the release of other trade unionists imprisoned in Iran, Ebrahim Madadi of the same Vahed union, Ali Nejati, the union of Haft Tapeh Sugarcane, Behnam Ebrahim-zadeh ....

Please, Your Excellency, receive our respectful greetings.
• Promote the implementation and enforcement of internationally recognized human and workers’ rights and freedoms for all people in Iran.

The IASWI has been working in collaboration with many labour and progressive activists and organizations in Iran and around the world to strengthen worker-to-worker solidarity in defence of workers’ rights and struggles in Iran and against the repressive Islamic Republic of Iran and its capitalist and neo-liberal policies and practices.

As an international solidarity campaign in support of workers in Iran, the IASWI has colleagues and branches in North America, Europe and other parts of the world that work collaboratively towards the realization of the above objectives.

Contact IASWI:
info@workers-iran.org
alliance@workers-iran.org
www.workers-iran.org
www.etehadbinomaliali.com

IASWI Position:
As an organization in defence of workers’ struggles in Iran, IASWI, encourages international solidarity and collaborative efforts by the independent labour organizations and trade unions. This approach in promotion of labour solidarity does not imply any formal or informal consent or agreements, or the sharing of similar ideas and beliefs, on any other issues.

Paris, le 20 décembre 2011

Son Excellence Sadegh Larijani,
Chef de la magistrature
Téhéran
République islamique d’Iran
Objet : détention de Réza Shahabi
et demande de transfert dans un hôpital civil.

Votre Excellence, Les organisations syndicales française CFDT, CGT, FSU, Solidaires et UNSA, attirent votre attention sur la situation de Réza Shahabi, membre de la direction du syndicat Vahed de la régie des transports de Téhéran et banlieue, emprisonné depuis 19 mois.

Il a été arrêté le 12 juin 2011 sans qu’aucun délit ne lui soit reproché. Réza Shahabi est un militant syndicaliste qui défend les intérêts des travailleurs. Il a comparu le 25 mai dernier devant le « Tribunal révolutionnaire ». Lui et son avocat ont apporté devant la Cour des preuves que son action n’avait rien d’illégal.

Réza Shahabi souffre de plusieurs problèmes de santé (insuffisance rénale et une arthrose sévère du fait de la détérioration de quatre vertèbres). Depuis plusieurs mois, sa santé s’est aggravée et il coure le risque en l’absence de soins de rester paralysé. Il doit donc, le plus rapidement possible, être transféré dans un hôpital hors du milieu carcéral.

Malgré ses problèmes de santé, Réza Shahabi a entamé depuis le 22 novembre une grève de faim qui met sa vie en danger. Nous tenons à vous rappeler qu’en tant que représentant du pouvoir judiciaire de la République islamique d’Iran vous êtes responsable de la santé et de la vie de M. Shahabi.

La détention de M. Shahabi est en violation des droits humains et syndicaux fondamentaux. A ce titre nous vous demandons sa libération immédiate.

De plus en raison de la violation des mêmes droits, nous exigeons, la libération des autres syndicalistes emprisonnés en Iran, dont Ebrahim Madadi du même syndicat Vahed, Ali Nejati, du syndicat de Sucreerie Haft-Tapeh, Behnam Ebrahim-zadeh…

Veuillez, Votre excellence, recevoir nos salutations respectueuses.

CFDT : Philippe Réau preau@cfdt.fr + 33 1 42 03 81 74
CGT : Jean-François Courbe jf.courbe@cgt.fr + 33 6 76 49 00 17
FSU : Corinne Vialle corinne.vialle@snuipp.fr + 33 6 09 80 46 04
Solidaires : Alain Baron contact@solidaires.org + 33 1 58 39 30 20
UNSA : Said Darwane darwane@unsa.org + 33 6 71 85 16 65

RMT’s Alex Gordon’s Message to Reza Shahabi

12 December 2011

Dear Comrade Shahabi,
I write to you at the request of your friends and comrades in the International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI). I am President of the National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers (RMT), which organises 80,000 public transport workers in Britain, including rail, metro, bus and taxi workers.

Workers around the world are today preparing for potentially the most significant confrontation with global capitalism in history. We are constantly informed about your struggles for political freedom and for the full trade union rights of Iranian workers and about the gross and scandalous oppression against you and other Iranian comrades by the anti-working class regime in Iran.

In August 2010 I was able to move a resolution at the four-yearly Congress of the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) in Mexico City in solidarity with the VAHED Syndicate and with all the imprisoned trade union officers, including yourself. You were named specifically in the resolution. This year we have worked with socialist and pro-working class members of parliament in Britain to highlight your case and to call for your freedom.

We respect the independence and the sovereignty of the Iranian people and its workers’ movement and we want to offer you every possible assistance to regain your freedom and to take forward the fight for workers’ rights in Iran.

It is for that reason that I am asking you at the request of your comrades in the Iranian workers’ movement to suspend your hunger strike, which has now been taking place for 21 days. We know your determination to resist the torture and the oppression of the Iranian regime. No-one, not even your enemies, can doubt your courage and mental strength to fight for your rights and your beliefs. I am asking you to suspend your hunger strike because the working class movement needs leaders such as yourself to live, rather than to die, and from this point on the pain that you have already experienced in refusing to take food will lead to further and perhaps fatal damage to your vital body functions (liver, kidney, heart, etc).

I earnestly ask you to break from this brave and desperate action of hunger striking, which if it continues will deprive the Iranian people of another leader, just as surely as the Iranian anti-working class regime seeks to kidnap, wrongly imprison and execute your movement’s leaders. Please announce to your family and comrades around the world that you will suspend the hunger strike in order to show faith in our movement’s ability to triumph.

Yours in solidarity,

Alex Gordon,
President,
National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers (RMT)

Sign the petition: Free all imprisoned labour activists in Iran

http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/free-all-imprisoned-labour-activists-in-iran.html

Background (Preamble):
Labour activists in Iran are being constantly harassed, sacked and arrested by the Iranian government authorities.

Petition:
Labour activists in Iran are being constantly harassed, sacked and arrested by the Iranian government authorities. The latest and most known examples are as follows
· Reza Shahabi, treasurer and a board member of the Syndicate of bus workers of Tehran and suburb, has been in custody in the notorious Evin prison for more than 18 months. He was arrested on 12 June 2010 without a charge. After almost a year on 25 May 2011 he was tried in a court in Tehran on charges of “propaganda against the Islamic State” and “conspiracy against National Security”. Shahabi is still being held in Evin prison in a state of uncertainty. According to the latest news, his health has deteriorated significantly. There is a growing fear that Reza might become paralyzed as a result of his worsening health conditions. Reza has been on hunger strike since November 22, 2011 in protest against his unjust detention.

· Mr. Ebrahim Madadi, the Vice-President of Tehran bus workers’ Syndicate, has been imprisoned for the past three years. He was released on November 30th, 2011 but unjustifiably rearrested on December 7, 2011. Mr. Madadi suffers from severe eye debility and diabetes.

· Mr. Behnam Ebrahimzadeh, member of The Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Workers’ Organizations, and a Children’s Rights advocate, has received five years prison term, by a ”Court of Appeals.” Mr. Ebrahimzadeh has been incarcerated in Evin prison for about 18 months now, based on false accusations. He has been under immense psychological and physical pressures.

· On November 12, Mr. Ali Nejati was transferred to Dezful’s Fajr prison, based on trumped up charges. Mr. Nejati, a board member of the Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Workers’ Syndicate, had already spent six months in jail based on the same bogus charges. While imprisoned, new charges were brought up against him, and although he was cleared of all charges in the preliminary court proceedings, subsequently he was sentenced to spend another year in prison. Mr. Nejati has been sent to jail while he’s suffering from severe heart ailment, recently had a heart operation. Due to his condition he has to follow a certain daily diet, accompanied by medications, plus monthly check up by his physician.

There are hundreds of other workers who have been persecuted, sacked and imprisoned by the government authorities. I condemn the continuous gross attacks on workers’ rights in Iran. I demand the immediate and unconditional freedom of all jailed labour activists and call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to respect the right of workers to organize, assemble and freedom of association and expression.

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**Communiqué number 9 from the Reza Shahabi Defence Committee**

_Hunger strike, taking Reza to another section in the hospital and impeding his treatment!_

As of today While Reza is on his 28th day of hunger strike, he was taken to Imam Khomeini hospital to be examined by antistatic consultant. The consultant after examination informed Reza that: “I don’t recommend you to be given anaesthetic at all, because being in hunger strike for 28 days you are not in normal health condition, your blood pressure is not normal. Apart from this I have not received results of your tests; therefore I am unable to provide you with any judgments”.

Furthermore last night Reza was taken from the brain and nerve section of the hospital that has better facilities to another old section that is in poor condition. When the Reza’s family asked for explanation for his removal to the different section they were told that “the first section is private therefore is expensive and the prison authority cannot afford to pay for it. His doctor who visited him today expressed his surprise about Reza’s removal and told him: “I was not informed about your removal and was looking for you in previous section. Who has ordered your removal to this section? Given your condition this section is not suitable for your treatment and you must be admitted in previous section”.

The doctor has informed the family that for operation to Reza’s neck, a special device is required which costs 2 million Toman (£1200)
Mr. Ebrahim Madadi, the Vice-President of Tehran bus workers’ Syndicate, has been imprisoned for the past three years. He was released on November 30th, 2011 but unjustifiably rearrested on December 7, 2011. Mr. Madadi suffers from severe eye debility and diabetes.

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Reza Shahabi Defence Committee
19 December 2011

Communiqué number 8 from the Reza Shahabi Defence Committee

27th Day of Reza’s hunger strike
Hunger strike, uncertainty, life danger, visits in hospital and newest list of members of the committee

While Reza Shahabi is held at hospital and suffering physically, he still is on hunger strike and has refused to take any food.

Despite the fact that Reza has bandage in his neck, laying in a hospital bed and looking very weak; he keeps repeating that: “I want to be free, what are all these shackles and chains and security personal for? Am I a criminal? I must be in a comforting environment with members of my family while waiting for operation. Reza insists that he must be freed unconditionally.

All friends who have visited Reza say that his morale is high, although physically his life is in danger. He must be freed and break his hunger strike.

Reza thanked all individuals and organisations who have supported him and his family, and said: “I kiss your hands, my heart is beating because your heart is beating for me, thank you all”.

Shahabi Defence Committee demands immediate and unconditional freedom of Reza and would like to ask the members of the committee and all individuals and organisations to do whatever that can be done for Reza’s freedom.

We would like also to ask the members of the Committee to share with us their opinions and suggestions.

Reza Shahabi Defence Committee
18 December 2011
k.d.shahabi@gmail.com
k-d-shahabi.blogspot.com

A number of solidarity messages and protest letters have been received; below are a protest letter from Jane Nellist of Coventry National Union of Teachers and a solidarity message to Reza Shahabi from Alex Callinicos.

Protest letter from Jane Nellist

Free Reza Shahabi!

I am writing this to condemn persecution and arrests of labour activists in Iran. Labour activists in Iran are being constantly harassed and arrested by the Iranian government authorities. In particular,
this letter is written to express my serious concern about the health and well being of Reza Shahabi who has been on hunger strike for the 2nd time since Nov 22, 2011.

Reza Shahabi, treasurer and a board member of the Syndicate of bus workers of Tehran and suburb, has been in custody in the notorious Evin prison for more than 18 months. He was arrested on 12 June 2010 without a charge. After almost a year on 25 May 2011 he was tried in a court in Tehran on charges of “propaganda against the Islamic State” and “conspiracy against National Security”. Shahabi is still being held in Evin prison in a state of uncertainty. According to the latest news, his health has deteriorated significantly. There is a growing fear that Reza might become paralyzed as a result of his worsening health conditions. Reza has been on hunger strike since November 22, 2011 in protest against his unjust detention.

I condemn the continuous gross attacks on workers’ rights in Iran. I demand the immediate and unconditional freedom of Reza Shahabi and all other jailed labour activists and call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to respect the right of workers to organize, assemble and freedom of association and expression.

Jane Nellist
Organization: Coventry National Union of Teachers
Position: Secretary

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Solidarity message from Alex Callinicos to Reza Shahabi

Dear Reza Shahabi,

I wish to express my admiration for your courage as well as my solidarity. Militants like you are vital for the development of the workers’ movement, not just in Iran but around the world. I wish every success to your struggle and to you personally. You can be assured of the support of socialists and trade unionists everywhere.

In comradeship,
Alex Callinicos

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Communiqué number 5 from the Reza Shahabi Defence Committee: twenty first day of his hunger strike

Reza’s difficult condition in the 21st say of his hunger strike- The fear of authorities over his medical operation- Strike begun by Behnam Ibrahimzadeh in defence of Reza- Newest list of members of the committee.

On Monday the 21st of Azar the members of Reza’s family went to Evin prison to visit him. They were informed that, owing to his physical condition, it was impossible for him to be moved to the visiting room and that they were to move to Evin’s prosecutor’s quarters because he could be moved there by car.

On the twenty first day of his hunger strike Reza Shaahbi is in such a state that he can not even shake his head. Before Reza was moved from block 209 to block 350, he was told that if he gave up his activities in the worker’s movement the authorities would free him, and that he must commit to that, but Reza refused. Another security operative came to block 350 to tell him yesterday that if he ceased his hunger strike he would be freed, and Reza replied that he had been told the same thing before and although they knew he is innocent they broke their promise. This time I will not cease my hunger strike to the point of death, and ask for immediate and unconditional release.
supporting workers' struggles against the repressive Islamic Republic of Iran, IASWI opposes economic sanctions and military interventions by Western forces/allies against Iran.

In a visit with his family Reza told them, "It would make me proud to die for the worker's movement. We are the 99% of society... But wealth remains in the hands of 1%. We have to give from our lives at work, but cannot even afford to take our children on a holiday for a few days. We can't take them to schools to learn anything. I have defended the rights of workers. And now, I stand for my innocence and unconditional freedom until I die. My demand is not just to get out of the uncertain situation I am currently facing in jail; I do not want to be released on bail. I have not committed any crime for the punishment to be cancelled, and no accusation has been made for me to be pardoned from. They have made me sick and taken half my life. I have to receive medical treatment and be released immediately and unconditionally".

At the same time, the Evin prison's doctor has told Reza that his emergency operation is very dangerous and that the vertebrae in his neck need to be reset. This operation has a high risk and none of the authorities will take responsibility for carrying it out. Which hospital or which security guard will stand up and take responsibility? Indeed the doctor has told Reza that everyone will shirk this responsibility.

From Monday morning, Behnam Ibrahimzadeh, a worker activist gaol in block 350 of Evin, began a hunger strike in protest over Reza’s physical condition and in support of his demand for immediate and unconditional release. (The text of Behnam Ibrahimzadeh’s letter will be published separately).

The Reza Shahabi Defence Committee has received many messages of support in the past few days from working class activists and organizations, both inside and outside of the country joining the fight for Reza’s freedom. We would like to thank them all and share the most up to date list of the worker and worker activists in the country who have declared their support.

This committee wish for all members and supporters to use any possible path to achieve Reza’s immediate and unconditional freedom.

Members and supporters can send their suggestions, programs and opinions to the committee via email. Similarly, friends and supporters who would like to get involved as the group’s spokes people or to give us their opinions and views can send their telephone numbers to the email address.

k.d.shahabi@gmail.com

The Reza Shahabi Defence Committee 21 Azar 1390

Names of members- in alphabetical order.

It is worth noting that people has joined this committee from a lot of different places. As well as 25 members drawn from Reza’s family, there are 105 other members drawn from a variety of different organizations. These include activists of the Vahed Bus Company Workers’ Syndicate, Members of the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers’ Organizations, Independent working class activists from many towns and cities, women’s movement activists and activists from the campaigns to end child labour. Some have declared membership through sending letters of support and, unfortunately we do not have the resources to circulate these texts.

Fourth Communiqué from the Reza Shahabi Defence Committee

Reza Shahabi was transferred to section 350 Evin Prison instead of the hospital for treatment!

On Sunday 11th of December Evin prison guards transferred Reza Shahabi to 350 Evin prison and not to hospital. This news was announced in a telephone conversation that Reza had with family. He said that the officers in charge told him: “your blood temperature is too low and for this reason we returned you section 350 and not hospital.”

Previously Reza’s family was told by The Tehran prosecutor’s office in a written statement that he will be urgently transferred to the hospital. This letter was sent to the section 209 Evin prison office. Based on what Reza’s family heard from the section 209 officer, Reza’s dying body should be sent to the hospital that has been allocated for prison’s patients on either Saturday 10th or Sunday 11th of December for treatment and not section 350 which is allocated to incarceration. Reza’s life is in danger. There is high risk of Reza being completely disabled and we are extremely concerned about his health.

As of today 20 days have passed from the commencement of Reza Shahabi’s hunger strike and his health condition has almost completely deteriorated. We condemn the continuation of his arrest and also urge the Tehran prosecutor’s office to transfer him as a matter of urgency to the hospital for treatment before it is too late. We also warn the Tehran prosecutor’s office that they are accountable for the negligence of their duty and consequently Reza’s health.

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Le comité de défense de Réza Shahabi - Communiqué n°4

Le dimanche 11 décembre, Au lieu de transférer Réza Shahabi à l’hôpital, il a été amené à la section n°350 de la prison d’Evin sous l’ordre du directeur de la prison. Cette nouvelle a été donnée par Réza au cours d’une conversation téléphonique avec sa famille. Il a ajouté que le personnel pénitentiaire a tenté de justifier leur action en expliquant que, puisque la pression artérielle de Réza est faible, il n’a pas besoin de l’hôpital et peut retourner en prison ; ce qui est contraire à l’ordonnance du juge qui a été publié le dimanche dernier aux responsables de la section n°209 ; suite aux efforts persisants de la famille de Mr.Shahabi.

Selon certaines responsables de la prison, Reza devait être transporté à l’hôpital pour un traitement immédiat le samedi dernier, mais au contraire, il a été amené à la section n°350 de la prison pour être avec les autres prisonniers. Sans le traitement médical approprié, Reza risquerait de devenir paralysé et même de perdre sa vie. Trois semaines après sa grève da la faim, son état de santé est inquiétante.

Nous condamnons le maintien en détention de Réza Shahabi, et nous insistons sur notre demande du transfert immédiat de Réza à l’hôpital pour des traitements médicaux essentiels et urgents.

Nous tenons le personnel pénitentiaire directement responsable pour tout dommage médical et physiques causés sur Réza, en refusant de le transférer à l’ hôpital et le privant d’un traitement médical approprié, qui est parmi les droits humains fondamentaux.

Le comité de défense De Réza Shahabi - Le 11 décembre 2011