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Latest update on detained labour activists following the Karaj Raid

According to the latest update from the "Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations" the authorities have transferred some of the Karaj detainees from Karaj to the Intelligence Office in City of Rasht, the Centre of the Northern Province, Gilan. Five of the detainees are residents of Rasht. All 60 arrestees were delegates from different provinces, especially from Kurdistan, Tehran and Gilan, who had gone to Karaj for the annual general membership meeting of the "Coordinating Committee". The Coordinating Committee is a well-known independent labour organization in Iran, formed in 2005 with the open support and signature of thousands of workers; it is not a clandestine group, many of its members are nationally and internationally well-known, like veteran labour activist Mahmoud Salehi (Who was beaten viciously during the raid), as well as Mohammad Abdipour, Jalal Hosseini, etc. There was absolutely no justification for the brutal police raid and for the continued detention of nine of the Coordinating Committee members. The raid by the agents of the Islamic Republic of Iran can only be seen as a part of their overall strategy of repression of workers' struggles in Iran against ever-increasing poverty, mass unemployment, discrimination, repression and the government's austerity and neo-liberal policies. We are calling on all labour and progressive organizations and activists around the world to take any necessary steps they can in solidarity with fellow workers in Iran. Please contact IASWI if you require more information. Following is a translation of one of the statements issued by the Coordinating Committee in recent days as well as an eyewitness report of the raid:

IASWI: www.workers-iran.org / info@workers-iran.org

Free members of the Coordinating Committee arrested in City of Karaj!

Workers, honorable and free people,

As we have mentioned in earlier announcements, on Friday 15th of June 2012, a group of members of the 'Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' organizations' in the city of Karaj were attacked by security forces. These workers and labour activists were beaten by armed security guards while holding our annual general meeting. According to the latest news most of those who have been arrested were released on bail, but Cyrus Fathi, Alireza Asgari, Jalil Mohammadi, Saeed Marzban, Masoud salimpour, Maziar Mehrpour, Reyhaneh Ansari, Faramarz

Fetradnejad and Mitra Homayooni are still in detention in Karaj City Prison.

Although this is not the first time that members of the Coordinating Committee were being arrested, as in recent years many of our members in different cities have been detained and convicted for defending workers' rights- our members have been incarcerated, fined and flogged numerous times in the past. However, what happened last Friday, while residents of the neighborhood were witnessing, was an assault by armed security and intelligence forces on workers, which included beating and opening fire in the air, all of which without providing an official order. This happened while workers were discussing problems facing them and the working class as a whole. The beatings were so severe that some of them as: Mohammad Molanai, Hasan Ezati, Rahman Ebrahim-Zadeh, Ghaleb Hosseini, Khaled Hosseini and Nezam Sadegi are still suffering from injury and soreness.

The attack happened after the labour activists had arrived in Karaj following a hard working week to meet friends and attend the annual general meeting. These pioneers of workers' movement, who are a part of the working class as the main producer and creator of everything in our society, do not deserve such a violent confrontation. What have they done except expressing the workers' demands and announcing their claims from the owners of capital. The attack at the annual general meeting of the "Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' organizations" happened while workers in Iran are suffering from mass dismissals, unpaid wages, lack of the right to form independent organizations and other social problems. Don't the labour activists have any right to defend their legitimate rights against the capitalist onslaught and exploitation? How is that all capitalists without any constraint can exploit workers but workers do not have the right to fight against this inequality? This is undoubtedly the duty of members of the Coordinating Committee to support workers right to organize and unite against the capitalist discrimination despite police repression.

We once again condemn the attack and arrest of 60 of the members of the Coordinating Committee. We call on all workers, labour organizations, domestic and international human rights organizations to take all necessary measures to support the release of the members of the Coordinating Committee arrested in City of Karaj. Workers and labour activists do not deserve to be in prison. Police suppression towards workers and workers organizations will not prevent working class struggles for a world without inequality and discrimination.

Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' organizations – 17th of June 2012

<http://www.khamahangy.com/>

An eyewitness account of arrests of labour activists and members of the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' organizations

A few are on the list of speakers, and one is talking. The talk is about meager wages, poverty level of life of workers, temporarily and blank work contracts, mass expulsion of workers and.... About 60 members of the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations and other labor activists and guests have gathered in a house on the outskirts of the industrial city of Karaj. This is the annual gathering of this Coordinating Committee, and also an occasion to discuss workers' issues and problems, and how to approach and confront their problems. Majority of the participants have come here directly after work and the fatigue of work is still evident on their bodies. It's close to lunch time; all tired, hungry, and waiting for food which they're about to have soon. Since the house is rather small, all have to sit very close to each other and speak in a quiet voice so as not to disturb the neighbors.

Suddenly there are sounds of commotion and shooting. Neighbors are screaming. All conversations stop; they decide to step outside to see what's going-on. The door is swiftly broken, and a swarm of armed men rush the gathering, screaming: "All you scum on the floor, or we'll start shooting." A few protest and ask the invaders for their credentials and search warrants. Their simple queries are answered with kicks, batons, fists and insults. They force everyone to lay on the floor, and hand cuff everyone from behind. What a scene!

The floor is packed with arrested workers and labour activists, agents are walking on their backs, one could hear the sound of their bones cracking. Security agents are screaming and cussing, they're beating up a few severely. I raise my head to see what's going on, I see an old man named *Rahman Ebrahimzadeh* (father of the incarcerated labor activist Behnam Ebrahimzadeh) getting hit by a young man. On the other side I see *Mahmoud Salehi* getting beaten up. Besides him, *Mohammad Abdipour* is protesting our treatment, and although he keeps getting hit, he continues his protestation. *Alireza Asgari* as well is getting beaten up and cursed but keeps protesting against the agents' illegal entry into the house. *Mazyar Mehrpour* is bravely standing up, getting hit and yet objecting to security agents' conduct. Although *Vafa Ghadery's* body is not that big, he's standing up still like a mountain, one glance at him and it makes one feel very assured. Agents hit a young girl's head against the wall. Suddenly a baton hits me in the head, and a voice: "You stupid animal, didn't I tell you to keep your head down." This is followed by kicks to my head and back.

After 15 minutes everyone is forced to stand up, without shoes. One by one we're paraded in front of a camera held up by an agent. Two steps below him another agent, tasked with giving everyone that passes him a kick. A water pipe has been broken by bullets of the security forces and all arrestees are forced to pass under the flowing water, as if someone is tossing water after them, wishing them to come back soon!*

The neighbors are very frightened with all the shooting and commotion, and keep asking what's going on? The agents tell them that we're a bunch of corrupt and terrorists! There are so many vehicles parked outside, with heavily armed men inside, as if they're about to confront a platoon, or a big group of armed robbers! Everyone is pushed from their heads into vans, a few fall on the ground. An old man is pushed and his head hits the car's door; blood flows everywhere. Everyone nearby screams in protest, and though they're threatened they step forward, pick up the old man and carry him gently inside the vehicle. They pack so many people in each vehicle, we could hardly breathe. Inside the vehicle is very hot and packed. Plastic handcuffs are very tight and they start to damage our wrists. In about half an hour we arrive in *Rajaei Shahr* prison. Everyone is evacuated from the cars and forced to stand up in prison yard without shoes, our bare feet start burning up as the ground was very hot. Some are cuffed in their hands and feet. Everyone is lined up, and a bag of shoes is emptied in front of us. After everyone put on their shoes, we're directed towards prison's entrance. As we're passing through, the big sign above the entrance reads: "***Year of National Production, Supporting Iranian Capital and Labor.***"

We all have a smile on our faces; we keep looking at each other and laugh. Plastic cuffs keep getting tighter and we keep moving in the labyrinth of the Capital. They stop everyone at one point and put blinders on our eyes. An agent screams: "Everyone faces the wall, empty everything in your pockets, heads down," anyone raising her head gets a very hard hit on back of the neck. Everyone is divided into different cells. Inside cells there are heated discussions. Everyone is in high spirits: "We'll defend the Committee and the labour movement to the end. We haven't done anything wrong. We've only defended the rights of our fellow workers. We'll continue these struggles to the last drop." And indeed the movement is defended.

Long interrogations begin that same night. Interrogators try to connect us to political groups, but they're faced with stern rebukes in defense of workers' movement and the nature and the mission of the Coordinating Committee. Most interrogations are accompanied by beatings and nasty and ugly insults. This goes on till next evening. Saturday evening the cells are opened up, some names are called and they were let go. There are still nine incarcerated. One of prisoners, *Faramrz Fetratnejad* is severely ill, and in need of special medication and care. Another prisoner, *Rayhaneh Ansary*, is the sole custodian of a young girl, whose father has passed away, and has no one but her mother to take care of her. *Jalil Mohamadi* is the sole caretaker of his elderly mother and in his absence who knows what will happen to his mother. The concern for the condition of labour activist, *Alireza Asgari*, is very high because his interrogation involved beatings and severe torture, and his interrogators were trying to charge him up on false accusations but he defended himself vigorously. There's also no information regarding Ms. *Mitra Homayoni*, and Messer, *Mazyar Mehrpour*, *Saied Marzban*, *Siros Fatehi*, and *Masoud Salimpour*.

A few days back during the annual conference of International Labor Organization, Iranian government was given new positions, despite protests and widely circulated reports of suppression and repression of workers in Iran by Iranian and international workers' organizations. This international organization due to its nature took the side of Capitalists, thus implicitly giving a seal of approval for further repression of workers, labor activists and their organizations.

An account of a witness; 18 June, 2012

Translated by IASWI; original in Farsi: http://www.khamahangy.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=960:1391-03-31-05-53-43&catid=10:1389-12-23-23-55-18&Itemid=26

Protest at Iranian Embassy in Ottawa

Where: The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran – 245 Metcalfe St. Ottawa
Time: 12:00 to 3:00 PM
Date: Friday June 22, 2012

Speakers from CUPE, CUPW and others

To all labour, progressive and human rights organizations in Canada

Condemn repression of labour activists in Iran

Join a demonstration outside the Iranian Embassy in Ottawa on Friday, June 22nd to protest against severe repression of labour activists in Iran. On Friday, June 15, 2012, about 60 members of the "Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations" were arrested by the agents of the Intelligence Ministry after they raided a house in city of Karaj while an annual meeting of the coordinating committee was underway. Participants in the meeting were severely beaten by the security agents and transferred to Rajai Shahr prison in Karaj. The majority of detainees were released on June 16th with the exception of two women and seven men who have been detained incommunicado. Their colleagues and family members are seriously concerned about their safety. They are: Mitra Homayooni, Reyhaneh Ansari, Alireza Asgari, Saeed Marzaban, Cyrus Fathi, Masoud Salimpour, Maziar Mehrpour, Jalil Mohammadi and Faramarz Fetrat Nejad. Many more labour activists have been arrested, imprisoned, persecuted and sacked from their workplaces. The repression of the Iranian labour movement has been intensifying.

Protesters demand:

- Immediate and unconditional release of all detainees
- Free all currently imprisoned labour activists including leaders of bus workers' and sugarcane workers' unions
- The right to organize independent organizations and the right to free speech, and freedom of assembly and expression

For more information, please contact: Phone: 4163331726 or 4164077922

Email: info@workers-iran.org OR shora.poshtibani@yahoo.com

International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (Canada)
Council in Support of People's Struggles in Iran (Toronto, Canada)

Demonstration in London-UK

In support labour activists in Iran

Date: Thursday, June 21, 2012; 17:30 to 18:30 pm

Location: Amnesty International UK ; The Human Rights Action Centre
17-25 New Inn Yard London EC2A 3EA

Solidarity council with social movements in Iran-UK
International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran-UK

In the latest crackdown on labour activists and independent workers' organisations by The Islamic Republic of Iran, about 60 labour activists were arrested on 15th June 2012.

The arrest took place while members of the 'Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' organisations' were holding a meeting in a house in the city of Karaj. The house was raided by agents of the Intelligence Ministry. Those arrested were severely beaten and assaulted and then transferred to Rajai Shahr prison in Karaj.

The majority of detainees were released on June 16th after being interrogated, with the exception of two women and seven men who have been detained and are not able to contact anyone outside the prison. Their colleagues and family members are seriously concerned about their safety.

During the last few years hundreds of labour activists have been arrested, imprisoned, persecuted and sacked from their workplaces. The repression of the Iranian labour movement has been intensifying in recent years as workers have been fighting to defend their jobs and livelihood against Capitalist economic policy of the Islamic regime.

Many Labour activists, including the leaders of Tehran's bus workers trade union and Haft Tapeh sugar cane workers trade union are currently in prison.

We demand:

- Immediate and unconditional release of all detainees
- Free all currently imprisoned labour activists and all political prisoners
- The right to organise independent organisations and the right to free speech, and freedom of assembly and expression.

We are calling on all labour and human rights organisations and concerned individuals to express their condemnation for attacks on labour activists and labour organisations.

Contact us for more details on how to support workers activists in Iran.

Solidarity council with social movements in Iran-UK
International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI)-UK

info@workers-iran.org
www.workers-iran.org
June 21, 2012

Les syndicats français condamnent la vague de répression à l'encontre de militants ouvriers en Iran

Les organisations syndicales françaises CFDT, CGT, FSU, Solidaires et UNSA condamnent avec force la répression à l'occasion de l'assemblée annuelle du "Comité de coordination pour la création d'organisations ouvrières".

Le 15 juin 2012, plus d'une soixantaine de militants parmi lesquels de nombreux membres du Comité ont été attaqués, arrêtés puis torturés par les forces de sécurité de la ville de Karaj. Pendant l'opération, les forces répressives tiraient des coups de feu en l'air pour terroriser la population. A l'heure actuelle, une dizaine d'entre eux sont toujours emprisonnés, et pour certains, de lourdes cautions leur sont réclamées.

Nous nous préoccupons vivement de leur sort, notamment celui de Mahmoud Salehi, invité à notre séminaire qui s'est tenu au mois de mai à Paris et dont la santé est fragile.

Nous réclamons la libération sans condition de tous les travailleurs ainsi que des autres militants des mouvements sociaux emprisonnés comme Reza Shahabi qui est détenu depuis deux ans et condamné à six ans de réclusion pour ses activités syndicales.

Les organisations syndicales françaises soutiennent les revendications des travailleurs iraniens pour la création de syndicats indépendants. Elles saluent leur courage et appellent les autorités iraniennes à respecter les droits des travailleurs.

Nous assurons encore une fois les travailleurs iraniens en lutte de la solidarité du monde du travail organisé en France et notamment des organisations syndicales signataires du présent appel.

18 Juin 2012

Contacts des membres du collectif syndical

CFDT : Philippe Réau preau@cfdt.fr + 33 6 48 36 03 93

CGT : Ozlem Yildirim o.yildirim@cgt.fr + 33 6 51 28 73 01

FSU : Dominique Giannotti dominique.giannotti@fsu.fr + 33 6 84 23 25 68

Solidaires : Alain Baron contact@solidaires.org + 33 (0) 1 58 39 30 20

UNSA : Saïd Darwane darwane@unsa.org + 33 6 71 85 16 65

Link to the original letter by French trade unions:

[French unions condemn the wave of repression against labour activists in Iran -June 18, 2012](#)

Click the link below, you will find:

[A protest letter from the President of The Norwegian Transport Workers' Union to the Iranian ambassador of Norway, protesting against the recent arrests of about 60 labour activists in Iran.](#)

[Protest letter by Norwegian Transport Workers' Union to the IRI 's Ambassador-June 19, 2012](#)

Send a protest letter to the IRI: Demand the release of detained labour activists

Sample Protest letter:

I (we) have been informed that:

on Friday, 15th of June, 2012, at 12 noon, about 60 labour activists including many members of the "Coordinating Committee" were arrested by the agents of the intelligence Ministry after they raided a house in city of Karaj while a meeting of the coordinating committee was underway. Arrestees were beaten by the security agents and transferred to Rajai Shahr prison in Karaj. According to an update issued by the "Coordinating Committee" in the afternoon of June 16th, the majority of detainees were released on bail with the exception of the following labour activists. Mitra Homayooni, Reyhaneh Ansari, Alireza Asgari, Saeed Marzaban, Cyrus Fathi, Masoud Salimpour, Maziar Mehrpour, Jalil Mohammadi and Faramarz Fetrat Nejad.

According to the Coordinating Committee the labour activists arrested included: Mahmoud Salehi, Mitra Homayooni, Vafa Ghaderi, Reyhaneh Ansari, Khaled Hosseini, Saeed Marzban, Cyrus Fathi, Ghaleb Hosseini, Mohammad Abdipour, Jalal Hosseini, Alireza Asgari, Masoud Salimpour, Abbas Andriyany, Sediq Amjadi, Fattah Soleimani, Maziar Mehrpour, Mohammad Molanai, Vahed Seyyedeh, Jalil Sharifian, Sediq Khosravi, Yusuf Ab Kharabad, Afshin Nadimi, and Faramarz Fetrat Nejad.

We continue to witness many labour activists unjustly in prisons in Iran, like Reza Shahabi, Ali Nejati, Shahrokh Zamani, Mohmmad Jarahi, Ali Akhavan, Behnam Ebrahimzadeh. However, this raid on a workers' meeting is absolutely outrageous and inexcusable; it is a gross violation of the most basic rights of workers which is recognized by international conventions and universal human rights.

I (we) strongly condemn the recent raid and arrests of over 60 workers in Karaj. I (we) demand the immediate and unconditional freedom of all labour activists in Iran.

Print Name	Union/Local/Organization/Position/Country

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; info@humanrights-iran.ir; avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir; bia.judi@yahoo.com; info@mlsa.ir; CC: info@workers-iran.org

About IASWI:

The International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI) is a progressive and non-partisan campaign formed in 1999 and formally launched in January 2000. The IASWI has been working in collaboration with many labour and progressive organizations and activists 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 anti-worker policies and practices of Islamic Republic of Iran. The IASWI is an independent organization and does not receive funding from any government or government-affiliated organizations, corporations or political parties. While we pro-actively support workers' struggles against the repressive Islamic Republic of Iran, IASWI opposes economic sanctions and military interventions by Western forces/allies against Iran. The economic sanctions and threats of war are nothing but inhuman instruments in the hands of world capitalism against the working class. The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to use the threat of war and policy of economic sanctions as an excuse to further repress workers and disadvantaged people in Iran and intensify fear and intimidation throughout the country.