

About IASWI:

The International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI) is a progressive, non-partisan campaign in support of workers' rights and struggles in Iran. The IASWI was formed in 1999 and formally launched in January 2000 with the following objectives:

- Support workers' movement demands and struggles in Iran, including the right to organize free and independent labour organizations and the right to strike.
- Strive for an absolute end to the systematic repression, persecution, imprisonment, torture, assassination and execution of labour activists and political opponents in Iran.
- 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

IRAN: Violation of international labour standards

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), in 32 years of its repressive reign, has consistently suppressed Iranian labour movement and workers' 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. The IRI 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 Labour Councils"; and the official state-sanctioned "Workers' House."

After the end of Iran-Iraq war, IRI adopted neo-liberal policies and structural adjustment program of the World Bank and IMF. Massive privatization took place. The IRI implemented policies of labour market deregulation and the selling off of factories and state-owned enterprises. Many state-owned factories were sold to influential families and leaders of IRI, their sons or other capitalists.

Most employers, including the state as the largest employer in the country, have been laying off thousands of workers while refraining from hiring workers on a permanent basis. They have been contracting out big segments of the production units in such huge industrial complexes as the Iran Khodro (Iran's largest vehicle manufacturing company), National Oil Industry, Minoos Industrial Group, and in textile industry and many others.

In the process of implementing aggressive privatization and contracting out policies and programs, companies have transferred responsibilities toward workers to sub-contractors, through which workers were stripped off of crucial legal rights, including type of work contract, job security, work place health and safety, wage and benefit protection, working hours, etc.

It has been over a decade that permanent positions have rarely been offered to workers. Workers are forced to sign contracts for less than 3 months or blank contracts. Currently, according to various reports, about 80% of the workers who are employed by public and private companies are on temporary contracts.

Freedom of association and the right to organize: All principles of freedom of association is violated in Iran by the IRI and employers. Workers' self-determination and the right to organize and form workers' organizations is a human rights and the prerequisite for a just collective bargaining and social justice. Nevertheless, there continues to be gross violations of these principles in Iran: in Iran workers are denied the right of association, workers' organizations are illegally attacked and crushed and interfered with, and regularly trade unionists are sacked and arrested and at times killed. One main demand of the Iranian labour activists is the freedom of association and the establishment of democratic and independent labour organizations, including unions, councils and so on, without any state or employers' interferences. Workers in Iran do not have genuine representation at any of the international forums including ILO's conferences. The regime sends representatives of the government-organized "Islamic Labour councils" and "Workers' House" which is strongly protested by all labour activists and independent labour organizations.

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.

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As an organization in defence of workers' struggles in Iran, IASWI, welcomes 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. Taking this approach into consideration, we will continue to promote worker-to-worker solidarity, contact and cooperate with unions, local, national and international labour federations as well as labour and progressive activists, based only on the interests of the working class.

The IASWI does not however support collaboration with governments and other organizations that are directed and/or financially supported by governments and capitalists in any country. Such collaborations are against the underlying

Repression of labour activists: Thousands of labour activists have been persecuted and prosecuted in Iran since the Islamic Republic took power in Iran in 1979. Many were executed in early 1980s when the regime crushed all independent workers' organizations. Massive repression of the independent labour organizations continues in Iran. Several hundreds of activists of the labour movement were arrested in recent years and were subjected to harassment and prosecution and arbitrary dismissals. Many labour activists have been sacked by employers only because they had undertaken the trade-union activities. Any activity to create an independent labour organization is repressed. The lack of the right to organize and the prohibition of strikes continues in Iran. Security forces are monitoring all manufacturing and large workplaces. They persecute workers and threaten them with redundancy and arrest. Last year, the regime executed Farzad Kamangar, a teacher from Iranian Kurdistan, despite international campaigns for his freedom.

Lack of job security: Given temporary and contractual work, blank contracts and non-payment of the wages, the workers live under conditions more than precarious. Currently, about 80% of the workers who are employed by public and private companies are on temporary contracts. In 2000, Iranian Parliament, exempted workshops employing five or less than five workers from the Labour legislation depriving close to three million workers of the minimal rights stipulated in this legislation. Later, parliament approved the 'Reorganization and Restructuring of the Textile Industries', leaving tens of thousands of workers out of work. Parliament also exempted workers in carpet weaving workshops from the provisions of the labour law. In January 2003, the "Iranian Supreme Council of Labour", composed of representatives of Islamic labour councils, employers and the government, approved the exemption of workshops of 10 employees or less from the Labour Legislation. Workers are forced to sign "blank contracts" which is an equivalent to workers' giving up all their rights and any future dispute and the acceptance of any wages and working conditions. In large manufacturing units, workshops have been transformed into small units entrusted to the contractors and subcontractors who impose insecure working conditions on workers. This policy makes it possible for the owners of the Manufacturing units to deny assuming any responsibility towards the workers thus forcing workers to accept unbearable working conditions set by subcontractors.

Wages: The minimum wage was announced in March 2011 by the Ministry of Labour to 330,000 toman, which is about \$300. Whereas the rent of a simple room in a low-income district of the capital is about 300 dollars! Under these conditions most workers cannot even meet their basic needs. This wage system, which disregards the real cost of living and inflation rates, devalues the wages and increases the moonlighting. It generates unemployment and exclusion because the majority of the unemployed do not receive any allowance nor any Social Security coverage. According to independent workers' organizations the price of necessary items such as meat, eggs, cooking oil, rice and sugar has experienced a 50 to 120 percent increase in the year. Based on international standards the wage of an average Iranian worker is 4 times below the poverty line. Not only that, the removal of subsidies by the government in recent months and lack of timely payment as well as indecent contracts have joined hands to put added pressure on Iranian workers.

Non-payment of wages: Delay of payment of the miserable wages at times ranges from one to even more than two years. Still more odious is the fact that in certain centers of production and as a private individual in the sectors of services where millions of people work, they are paid in a sporadic way, sometimes with several months of delay. The IRI, and the employers, regularly violate the international convention on wage protection, and goes even further by repressing the protests of the workers against non-payment of their wages. Workers are repressed and challenged by the security forces whereas no employer has been brought to justice for the non-payment of the wages. A great number of movement of working protest in 2010 in Iran, was for the payment of the delayed wages. Today in Iran this problem takes of such proportion and spread so much that led certain poor and hopeless workers to the suicide.

Women's conditions: The situation of women is worse than that of the men in almost all aspects of employment and societal standards. According to official statistics the women gain 59% of the wages of a man for an equal work. Moreover, they constantly undergo the sexual harassment

principles of the working class international solidarity and compromise the struggle for the formation of free and independent labour organizations. Furthermore, such collaborations with states and capitalist classes would contribute to the subjugation and control of the labour movement in the interest of the capitalist system. Furthermore, while supporting workers' struggles against the repressive Islamic Republic of Iran, IASWI opposes economic sanctions and military interventions by Western forces/allies against Iran.

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especially by the employers. As the result of many years of systematic gender discrimination, women constitute about 12 percent of the "active" labour force, and all together 95 percent of women workers across Iran are employed in workshops of 10 employees or less which are not protected by the labour law.

Afghan Workers: The situation of the Afghan workers in Iran is particularly alarming. They are stripped of any rights and probably the most exploited workers of Iran. No labour standards protects them. The majority of children of Afghan migrant workers are not entitled to the public education. A racial discrimination, propagated by the government, weighs on them; because of the irregularity of their stay in Iran, employers frequently refuse to pay their wages. They are subject to police brutality and persecution. They are forced to accept work in sub-standard conditions for ridiculous remuneration. The exercise of a great number of professions is interdict to the Afghan workers in Iran. Even with those which have the work and residence permit the most arduous and badly paid work is proposed.

Industrial accidents: In many of the industrial workplaces, the expansion of the contracting companies has resulted in considerable increase in the health and safety accidents, injuries and deaths. The non-observance of workplace health and safety standards made a significant number of victims in 2010: in Iran-Khodro (the largest manufacturing company in Iran), the oil refinery of Abadan, the mine of coal BAB NIZOU, etc. tens of workers lost their lives in 2010. These industrial accidents, show in an obvious way that the most elementary and internationally recognized rights of workers are ridiculed in Iran.

International Alliance in support of Workers in Iran

All incarcerated workers shall immediately and unconditionally be freed Harassment and persecution of all labour activists must cease instantly

On November 12, Mr. Ali Nejati was transferred to Dezful's Fajr prison, based on trumped up charges. He was accompanied to his trial by family and fellow workers. Mr. Nejati, a leading 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 is being 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.

Mr. Reza Shahabi, the treasurer of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company, has been incarcerated for more than a year and half now. While he's enduring extreme hardship in jail, no verdict has been brought up against him in the past 19 months. Mr. Shahabi also suffers from various ailments, and was recently transferred to a hospital for medical imaging and tests for acute discomfort of shoulders and neck.

Mr. Ebrahim Madadi the Vice-President of Tehran bus workers' Syndicate, has been imprisoned for the past three years. He suffers from severe eye debility and diabetes. While he's in the last months of his sentence, he has not received any medical attention which he is entitled to.

In the case of Mr. Behnam Ebrahimzadeh, member of The Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Workers' Organizations, and a Children's Rights advocate, a suspended sentence of five years, was recently confirmed by a "Court of Appeals." Mr. Ebrahimzadeh has been incarcerated in Evin prison for 17 months now, based on false accusations. He has been under immense psychological and physical pressures.

Mr. Ayat Niafar a well known Iranian Labour activist, and another member of The Committee to

internationally recognized human and workers' rights and freedoms for all people in Iran.

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IASWI Special Bulletin
November, 2011

Pursue the Establishment of Workers' Organizations was arrested on Monday October 17, 2011 and released on bail on a heavy bail of about US\$92,000.

Mr. Ali Akhavan an associate of The Centre in Defense of Workers' Rights, was arrested at his house in May of this year, sentenced to a year and a half prison term. Based on the ruling handed to his attorney he still had two weeks to report to the prosecutors in Evin prison.

In the cases of Messrs, Sheis Amani, and Sedigh Karimi,- both members of Board of Directors Iranian Workers' Free Trade Union-, annulled sentences from four years ago, were reactivated again, and they were notified as such. Mr. Karimi's father's house was raided for his arrest.

Mr. Kourosh Bakhshandeh, a member of Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations, was sentenced in absentia to a one year suspended sentence. He was arrested August of this year, and freed the next month with a very heavy bail.

The cases above and many other subpoenas issued against labour activists, all indicate an increased level of pressures by capitalist-Islamic regime applied to labour activists and their families. Islamic Republic is fearful of an expansion of workers' protests, assemblies and strikes. It attempts to stifle such an upsurge through: pressuring labour activists, fragmenting the working class through intimidation and division, prevention of independent workers' organizations....

While condemning these repressively criminal acts, IASWI also warns of the dire medical and general conditions of imprisoned workers and holds Islamic Republic responsible for any consequences. All incarcerated workers shall immediately and unconditionally be freed. Harassment and persecution of all Labour activists must instantly cease.

The anti-worker, repressive policies of the IRI and its conspiracies against workers shall be comprehensively neutralized, with an ever more extended class organizing on a national scale. IASWI shall do its share and part in transmitting the voices of workers' protests in Iran through its campaigns.

**International Alliance in support of Workers in Iran
November 2011**

A PROPOSED RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF WORKERS IN IRAN

Participants at the LabourStart conference in Istanbul, Turkey, November 18-20, 2012:

- Condemn the persecution of labour activists in the Iran, calls for immediate and unconditional freedom of all jailed activists and support the right of Iranian workers to freely establish independent workers' organizations
- Will continue to work with independent Iranian labour organizations to strengthen worker-to-worker solidarity.
- Oppose economic sanctions and military interventions by the Western forces/allies against Iran

we will do so because:

- Anti-labour and harsh austerity policies have consistently been imposed on Iranian workers by the ruling Islamic Republic of Iran
- Iranian workers have no right to organize or strike and often face persecution and imprisonment; many labour activists have been imprisoned, tortured and prosecuted
- Economic sanctions and war against Iran will be ultimately aimed at undermining the rights and self-determination of the peoples of Iran in their struggle for freedom and social and economic justice. Workers and the general public will be the main victims of such cruel measures.