

# Iranian Workers Bulletin

In Defence of The Labour Movement in Iran

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December 2006

## A Caged Bird Will Still Sing



source: <http://ikna.blogspot.com/2006/05/blog-post.html>

**Text of letter from Mansour Osanloo to Board of Citizenship Rights Review (no changes made to original text):**

With greetings and congratulations for the arrival of the holly month of Ramadan, and wishes for your success in tending to people's affairs! I respectfully inform you that I, Mansour Osanloo, employee of

Vahed Bus Transit Co. of Tehran and suburbs, and president of the board of directors of the Company Union, was arrested by plain-clothes men claiming to belong to the Ministry of Information, one of whom went by the name of Mr. Asna Ashari, in front of my home, located at 48, Western Golbarg Avenue on December 20, 2005 (84/10/1). I was held in ward 209 of Evin prison for 7 months, under temporary confinement. During the said period, considering the rights of citizens and prisoners, I was mistreated in the following manner, which I hope will be investigated by your office. I was held in solitary confinement in a cell for the duration of 3 months and 23 days, with the exception of short periods, during which I had cellmates, who did not have similar charges as mine. One belonged to a group affiliated to Al Qaeda, who believed one goes to paradise by killing 7 shi'a believers, which caused me much psychological distress. In the corridors of the ward, I had to wear a blindfold at all times. When being taken to the Court House, I was ➤ Page 2

## Freed?

Mansour Ossanlou the President of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Sherkate Vahed) was released on bail on 19 December 2006 following his re-arrest a month earlier. On 19 November Ossanlou was violently arrested by plain clothes security officers outside his home in Tehran and taken to the notorious Evin prison. The Minister of Justice and spokesperson for the Judiciary announced a few days later that he had been taken into custody because he had apparently not handed himself over to the prison authorities when an arrest order and summons was issued for him. However, Ossanlou's legal representatives strongly rebuffed these allegations by denying that any such order or summons was received and added he had only acquired an order to attend court on the 20 November, a day after his arrest. On 5 December the Revolution Prosecutor's Office of Tehran demanded 30 million Tomans (\$33,000) ➤ Page 3

## 2006: A YEAR IN REVIEW



Subsequent to the 2005 general election, 2006 saw through the first full year of Ahmadinejad's administration. On a p p o i n t m e n t Ahmadinejad pledged that his government would be committed to creating an 'atmosphere of friendship, kindness, solidarity and amity in society' and a marked reduction in the army of unemployed persons. Since then, he has continuously given a numerous speeches on the significance of upholding justice and liberty domestically as well as internationally. Despite the endless rhetoric which is often aimed at the West, on the values of 'justice, love and kindness'; 2006 lay witness to the exact opposite. An ever more vicious state apparatus clearly in ➤ Page 5

▶ from page 1:**A Caged Bird Will Still Sing**

handcuffed by the guards. Interrogations were carried out in special rooms and were always accompanied by harassments and threats to the effect that I would be staying in prison as long as they wanted to keep me there, and that the judge counted 90% on what they tell him and my defense counted for nothing. Then, for a full month, my visiting rights, use of telephone and use of the courtyard for fresh air, were suspended. While in prison, I broke no rules. They exerted a lot of psychological pressure by changing the interrogation teams and asking questions, which had no pertinence to the charges they had laid on me. The allegations against me were the usurpation of the union title for our organization and attempt at jeopardizing the security of the country, but they forced me to share details about my private life, my work, and my relationship with friends and colleagues. They had created an atmosphere to make me feel guilty about my family and fear my own and my family's death. When parliamentarians visited Evin prison, they did not allow them to visit ward 209. My interrogator told me to refrain from speaking to inspectors and keep whatever has happened to me in ward 209 to myself. They made it understood that either I stay in prison for 15 years or I cooperate with the interrogators. They told me no matter where in the world I live; they have the power to annihilate my family. Even after I was released from prison, the harassments continued. They phoned me repeatedly and asked me to meet them to, which I did not comply. Later, in the Revolutionary Court, in an empty room on the third floor, they continued the same conversations. They asked me to contact them once a week and report my activities to them. I did not comply with their requests and fearful of consequences, I went to the U.N. office in Tehran and explained my lack of security and personal and occupational condition to the person in charge of human rights issues. After



this, once again they summoned me to the Revolutionary Court and threatened me with imprisonment, and in order to avoid going to jail one more time, they asked my wife and I to sign a statement saying we would not see any of my long time friends and colleagues. I know them for 20 years and among Iranians it is not acceptable to turn away friends or family from your home. The men also call my wife's work place and my son's cell phone and ask them to tell me to meet them. This causes a lot of distress for my family. They are so scared of my being harmed that they don't allow me to go as far as the head of the street alone and they always follow me. The phone calls continue. They asked me to go out of town on a trip. After I left town, they still kept calling my wife's work place and my son's cell phone asking them to ask me to contact them. I finally called them last week; they again reprimanded me for not having called sooner. Where in our penal code does it say that a man, who has been released after 8 months in temporary confinement and has placed bail equivalent to 150 million Tomans, who hasn't been tried and hasn't been sentenced yet, should meet with interrogators and inform them of his whereabouts? I love my country, my revolution and my system of government, but I want the existing problems and shortcomings of the law and those contrary to independence and freedom in the Islamic Republic to be corrected and people feel happy and satisfied in their own country. I, therefore request, that you investigate the above-mentioned case. I have made this complaint for the betterment of the country and the satisfaction of its citizens and the achievement of a society based on law.

Respectfully,

Mansour Osanloo

▶ from page 1:**Freed?**

bail as the condition for Ossanlou's release despite a bail of 150 million Tomans (\$163, 000) being paid only in August this year.

Ossanlou's detention sparked international condemnation with 4500 letters sent directly to President Ahmadinejad from various workers organisations including the IFT, ITUC, AFL-CIO, CGT, TUC, CUPW, JSU, JRU, Koun-Rokyo etc. The Deputy Chair of the Parliament of Venezuela was among those who sent a letter, whilst John McDonnell submitted an Early Day Motion calling for the British Government to press the administration in Iran to respect trade union rights and ILO conventions as well as arrange for Ossanlou's instant release. The motion was ratified by 32 Members of Parliament. In an "unprecedented" move the EU strongly condemned the arrest and stated that it was "without credible justification" whilst also expressing concern as to the manner in which it was conducted, given that it was operated by plain clothes officers who did not present a warrant. Amnesty International weighed in and demanded Ossanlou's "immediate and unconditional release".

### *'We hope for peace'*

***The following is a statement issued by Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company on the second release of the syndicates President Mansour Ossanlou;***

**In the name of the Highest Tehran and Suburbs Bus Drivers Syndicate (Vahed)**

**We Celebrate the Re-release of Mansour Ossanlou**

Mr. Mansour Ossanlou, President of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Drivers (Vahed) Syndicate, was freed on 300 million rials bail on December 19, 2006, after enduring thirty days in Section 209 of Evin Prison.

He was severely beaten when plainclothes agents arrested him. The agents were not satisfied with the first beating so they took him to a vacant street and nine agents attacked him violently while he was handcuffed, landing blows to his face, head, and abdomen. During this beating they tightened his scarf around his neck to the point of strangulation. As he stood there with a swollen and bloody face,

The outcry of denunciation which proceeded Ossanlou's arrest worked favorably in creating his release and brought to the attention of many the bullying tactics and repression which has been employed by the authorities in the long running campaign that the Sherkate Vahed activists have been engaged in. The embattled trade unionist has been subject to state intimidation ever since he and fellow union activists attempted to re-establish Sherkate Vahed as an independent union in May 2005. The significance of international reporting is great for not only does it spread the news of the plight of the people of Iran (rather than the government's nuclear ambitions) but it more importantly plays a fundamental role in informing and leading international pressure from human rights organizations workers groups etc against the authorities in charge. This marked interest has effectively tied the hands of the regime, and goes a long way in preventing the occurrence of yet another 'casualty in custody', thus restricting the already repressive measures of the government. ■

they cursed and insulted him. They then transferred him via the back entrance, to the third floor of the Tehran Prosecutor's office, where he briefly met with a judge. There, he complained to the judge about his illegal treatment. He was subsequently taken into solitary confinement in branch 209 of Evin prison.

During his arrest, contrary to all manner of civil rights and judicial norms, he was never charged with any crime. He was not allowed to make even one telephone call to speak with his family. He was not offered any meaningful judicial proceeding. His attorney and the rest of the legal community believes the repeated arrest of Mr. Ossanlou and other Vahed Syndicate members are on completely unsound legal grounds.

While expressing happiness at Mr. Ossanlou's release the Vahed syndicate declares its strong objections to the illegal arrests of Mr. Ossanlou and other Vahed Syndicate members.

The syndicate also thanks all of the international workers' organisations such as International Trade Union Congress (ITUC), International Transport Federation (IFT), Confederation Generale du Travail (CGT), Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), ▶

➔ unions from Italy, Germany, Canada, Venezuela, as well as other unions. We thank the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other labour, human rights and social organisations inside and outside the country, whose hearts beat loudly for social justice and independence of Iran's people. We also thank the attorneys of the Vahed Syndicate, and give heartfelt thanks to Mr. Ossanlou's respected family, especially Mrs. Ossanlou.

These illegal actions continue at a time when 50 Vahed syndicate members have been suspended and have been deprived of pay or benefits for over eleven months. With total cruelty, the authorities have

refused to answer these worker's repeated implorations for justice.

The Vahed syndicate once again asks the responsible authorities to cease and desist their illegal activities and to end the harmful conditions these workers live under.

We hope for peace, justice and freedom for the entire world.

Tehran and Suburbs Bus Drivers Syndicate (Vahed)  
December 21, 2006 ➔

## Statement on ousted Bus Workers

### In the name of the Highest Tehran and Suburbs Bus Drivers Syndicate (Vahed)

### Keep Your Promises, and Avoid Stepping on the Law and on Worker's Rights

Concurrent with their protests in the winter of 2004, the Vahed Company's workers confronted beatings, firings and arrests of themselves, their spouses and children, by the Islamic Worker's Councils of Vahed, the Mayor's security forces, Vahed's security forces, the Iranian National Intelligence and Security Forces, and the military. These unjust and illegal acts have continued to this day, of which the arrests of Mansour Ossanlou, Seyd Davood Razavi, Abdolresa Tarrazi and Gholamreza Gholamhosseini in the last few days have been the most recent example. As a result of these complaints, Vahed's management was dismissed, and the highest-level authorities decided to put Vahed directly under Municipal supervision, and the Mayor Mr. Ghalibaf took primary responsibility for Vahed. At a meeting of Zone 6 bus drivers, at the Azadi Stadium with the Board of Directors of the Vahed Workers Syndicate, Ghalibaf stated: "Hard-working workers of Vahed have 34 issues and I promise to relieve all of them in a favourable manner as soon as possible". In Response to the objections of those present he stated: "A MAN is making you a promise". The workers once again swallowed the potion of gullibility and accepted the promises.

Dear Hard-Working and Noble Colleagues:

Some of our demands that were promised to be

resolved but remain outstanding are as follows:

1. Restatement of all workers who were suspended as a result of fighting for their rights and their colleague's rights
2. A pay raise that results in a living wage for a family of four
3. To make contract workers permanent, and to give workers on the bus routes and in other sections milk and lunch
4. Regular face-to-face meetings of the Mayor with the Vahed Worker's Union in order to plan and follow up on the relief of issues of Vahed's workers
5. Resolving some of the issues arising from the Housing Cooperative, Credit Cooperative, and Consumers Cooperative of Vahed workers
6. Providing drivers assistants to help with returning morning shift drivers and departing night shift drivers
7. Standardisation of the mechanical workshops in terms of sanitation, safety, flooring, etc.
8. Eliminating discrimination between Vahed workers and the workers of the municipal office of Tehran to include the right to housing, child allowances, and health insurance
9. To refrain from building a building for the workers in the former No.2 mechanical shop located across from the Central office of Vahed

Unfortunately, other than the expansion of privatisation, which inevitably only benefits those people that are "better than us", the management and causes back-breaking inflation through the transportation of the citizens of Tehran. ➔

► Dear Colleagues:

Currently, despite the existence of unfavourable conditions to you, and complaints from several International and Labour Organisations worldwide, and in an act that is 100% illegal and unjust, it has been eleven months that fifty colleagues of our union are struck between the scissors of the Iranian Intelligence and Security forces, the beloved country's Labour Department, and the Municipal office, suffering from suspended work, no pay and no bene-

fits.

To those gentlemen responsible we announce again: "Don't whitewash, but solve the problem".

December 11 2006

Tehran and Suburbs Bus Drivers Syndicate (Vahed)



► from page 1: 2006: A Year in Review

crisis clawed at established freedoms against shows of defiance carried out by a brave and uncompromising labour movement. Below is a brief chronology of just some of the repressive stories and courageous acts of resistance which occurred this year.

### **26 January**

The Sherkate Vahed Syndicate was declared illegal by the mayor of Tehran who also vowed to prevent their planned strike for 28 January. To meet this objective the security and intelligence forces employed various forms of intimidation and repressive tactics including physical violence, hiring strike breakers, disseminating and distributing propaganda which denounced the strike as subversive and those planning to partake as saboteurs and traitors.

### **27 January**

During police raids on their houses more than 100 Sherkate Vahed members were arrested, reports later revealed they were forced out of bed and beaten up.

### **28 January**

Day 1 of strike saw a dramatic increase in the level of state repression; in the early hours of the day, bus drivers from Sherkate Vahed were beaten and forced to work. An estimated 1300 union members were arrested, with hundreds of their wives and even children taken into custody at the notorious Evin prison where they faced interrogation from prison officials. The authorities crushed the strike using tear gas, batons and threats against those who did not yield. On each picket line where some 600 to 700 workers were expected to assemble, the security forces out numbered them 3 times over, they used an amalgam of verbal and physical abuse in order to force the workers to back to work. Replacement drivers were enlisted from the military and Basij (paramilitary force) to replace the absent workers. A majority of the members of the Board of the Union were taken into custody.

### **29 January**

Over 700 members of the Union remained in custody.

More than 30 arrested workers had been seriously injured in the altercations and required immediate medical attention.

### **8 March**

Police and plainclothes agents charged at a peaceful assembly of women's rights activists in Tehran, physically beating hundreds of both men and women who had congregated to mark International Women's Day. Amnesty International reported that physical violence was routinely employed against those present on the demonstration, to take one example, Simin Behbehani, an elderly feminist poet, was beaten with a baton and kicked repeatedly by security forces. Journalists present at the protest who had filmed the event were reportedly arrested, only released from custody after their rolls of film and photographs were confiscated.

### **14 March**

46 workers, including five members of the Sherkate Vahed Executive board have their contracts terminated.

### **April**

It was announced that a further 116 Sherkate Vahed workers were set to be sacked or made redundant.

ILNA reported that riot police attacked demonstrating workers of the Rasht City Textiles company, severely injuring scores of workers who claimed their wounds ranged from broken legs, necks and cracked skulls.

### **1 May**

May Day rallies in Tehran and Sanandaj came under attack by security forces. They used batons to beat people up and applied excessive force in detaining individuals. Reports stated that one bus driver had his fingers broken and a woman was severely beaten. At least 17 demonstrators were arrested, among them members of the Executive board of Sherkate Vahed.

### **23 May**

A string of protests broke out on the Tehran



► University campus following the expulsion of senior members of staff. The authorities responded sternly suppressing the demonstrations using both the police and intelligence forces. Some 25 students were arrested including prominent student activists Abed Tavancheh and Yashar Qajar, a further 45 were taken to the hospital prior to being taken into police custody.

### **12 June**

A peaceful women's protest demanding gender equality before the law was brutally attacked by hundreds of security officers who beat, injured and arrested more than 100 mostly women activists. For the first time, a huge number of female security personnel participated in the suppression.

### **July**

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs revealed that in the months of April and May 2006, 50737 were made unemployed; a 26% rise compared to unemployment figures in the same period during the previous year.

### **31 July**

Political prisoner and student activist Akbar Mohammadi, 39 died whilst in custody. During his prison term Mohammadi was subjected to both physical and psychological torture. His plight caught the deserving attention of international human rights organisations.

### **26 August**

8 days of a sit-in protest by workers of the (Parris) Pars Factory in Sanandaj was violently suppressed by members of the police and agents of the security forces. Workers were violently attacked with batons and tear gas; a large number of workers were taken injured whilst 2 were arrested.

### **6 September**

Valiollah Feyz Mahdavi became the second political prisoner and student activist killed in the hands of the Iranian authorities in just over a month.

### **16 September**

Military and intelligence forces armed with batons and tear gas attacked workers from the Farsh e Alborz carpet company following their decision to march to the local

government offices. In subsequent confrontations some forty people were injured and approximately forty people were arrested. Whilst in police detention the workers' cars were vandalised.

### **September**

The delegate of Tehran workers announced that hundreds of small plants had been closed and more than 10,000 workers had been made redundant, because of the chaotic balance of payments policy which relies heavily on the import of goods at the expense of national industries.

### **October**

Military personnel carried out raids at a number of the homes belonging to workers of the Iran Khodro car manufacturing company. Raids usually targeted satellite dishes.

Iranian Labour Minister, Mohammed Jahromy proclaimed that 15 million of those in employment have no Health and Social Security cover. Furthermore, he stated that by the end of the fourth government programme, almost 4.5 million more people would join the ranks of the 3 million unemployed. Despite this the executive for Social Security in Qom city recently reported that over 1,300 religious students and trainee clerics are covered by his organisation and duly insured.

### **19 November**

Mansour Ossanlou the President of the (Sherkate Vahed) Syndicate Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company was rearrested. Plain clothes officers dragged Ossanlou away outside his house in Tehran, producing no warrant and using both physical and verbal abuse when they were questioned as to their authority.

### **11 December**

University demonstrations triggered violent clashes between student activists and crowds of Basiji militia.

### **18 December**

The Guardian reported that student activists who had staged protests against President Ahmadinejad were forced to go into hiding in fear for their lives after his supporters; vigilantes from the militant Ansar-e Hezbollah group threatened them with revenge. ■

## Joint IFT/ITUC submission on the Freedom of Association in Iran

**SHARAN BURROW**

PRESIDENT

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**GUY RYDER**

GENERAL SECRETARY

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SECRETARIO GENERAL

TUR/JS

5 December 2006

Freedom of Association: Islamic Republic of Iran (CFA Case n° 2508)

Dear Mr. Somavia,

Further to the joint ITF - ICFTU communication of 24 July 2006, the ITUC (organisation succeeding the ICFTU and the WCL) and the ITF hereby submit additional information to the complaint against the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (case n° 2508 of the Committee on Freedom of Association).

When the ITUC and the ITF filed their complaint with the Committee on Freedom of Association Mr. Mansour Osanloo, President of the Executive Board of the independent "Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs United Bus Company" (in Farsi: Sandikaye Kargarane Sherkate Vahed Otobosrani Tehran va Hoomeh), was still in detention and had been detained since 22 December 2005. Shortly after the complaint was lodged with the Committee, he was released on bail on 9 August 2006. Bail was set at the exorbitant amount of 150 million toman (\$US 165,000) by a Tehran court. According to our sources, union colleagues, friends and relatives had to commit their private property as collateral in order to secure his release.

### ***Re-arrest of Mr. Mansour Osanloo***

Mr. Mansour Osanloo has now been re-arrested, on 19 November 2006. He is again being held in Evin Prison's high-security area "Section 209", where prisoners charged with political offences are held.

Our sources have informed us that Mansour Osanloo was arrested whilst he, Ebrahim Madadi and Haiat Gaibi were on their way to the office of the Ministry of Labour in Tehran East to discuss the dismissal of over 50 employees by the Vahed bus company. They were all members of the union. This information has also been reported by official Iranian news agencies like the Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA) and the Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA).

A week before his arrest he had undergone eye surgery. His eye was still heavily bandaged when he was arrested. Despite his physical condition the plain clothes agents who arrested him were violent. At least five agents told Mr. Osanloo that he was under arrest, but refused to show an arrest warrant or explain to him and his companions the reason for his arrest. Instead they fired gunshots into the air and threw Mr. Osanloo violently into a waiting car. They also kicked Mr. Madadi who protested at the arrest.

A judge subsequently informed Mr. Osanloo's wife that he was being held in section 209 of Evin Prison for negotiations and discussions with the authorities. According to some sources the family was informed that an arrest warrant did exist and was issued by Tehran's Deputy Prosecutor. The family was also informed that his mother could visit him, but despite waiting for several hours outside Evin prison his mother was not allowed to see him. It was not until 26 November that his wife was allowed to see him, and then only briefly, while he was transferred to court. He did not have access to his lawyers before 5 December 2006. Furthermore, we have just been informed that on 5

► December the judge asked for an additional 30,000,000 Toman bail for the release of Mr. Osanloo, on condition that only his wife, Farzaneh Osanloo, could act as guarantor. Mrs. Osanloo refused.

According to the ILNA, Mansour Osanloo was taken from Evin Prison to Branch 14 of the Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Tehran on 26 November for failing to appear in court concerning the charges pending against him since his arrest on 22 December 2005. These charges are clearly unfounded, given that his case was scheduled for 20 November 2006 and he was arrested the day before. Furthermore, members of Mr. Osanloo's family had put up their houses for security in order to secure his release on 9 August 2006, making it very unlikely that he would refuse to cooperate with the prosecutor.

The ITUC and the ITF consider his renewed arrest to be directly linked to his trade union activities, especially in view of the long history of repression he has already been subjected to.

During his time in prison from 22 December 2005 to 9 August 2006 he was held in solitary confinement for three months and 23 days. He was under severe psychological pressure throughout his prison stay. He was blindfolded and handcuffed at times, and during interrogations he was harassed and threatened that he would stay in prison as long as the police wanted to keep him. At times his visiting rights, use of telephone and access to the courtyard were suspended. Interrogation teams changed all the time and the questions were not all connected to the charges against him. He was forced to share details about his private life, his work, and his relationship with friends and colleagues under threat of being kept in prison for 15 years. The interrogations created an atmosphere which made him fear for his own life and that of members of his family. He was told that if he were to leave the country his family would be annihilated.

Even after he was released from prison, the harassment continued. He was repeatedly asked to report to the police, and police even called his son and his wife at the workplace. He complained to the U.N. office in Tehran about his situation and it was shortly after that that he was summoned to the Revolutionary Court and threatened with imprisonment. He and his wife were asked to sign a statement saying they would cut ties with friends and colleagues. The continued persecution made Mr. Osanloo write a letter to Tehran's Human Rights Commission describing the treatment he had been subject to both whilst in prison and after his release. The letter is attached as Appendix I to this communication.

Despite the continued harassment Mr. Osanloo has continued his trade union activities and participated in and chaired meetings of the Vahed Syndicate and kept up his contacts with the international trade union movement.

The Vahed Syndicate had been invited by the ILO ACTRAV to attend a workshop on "Globalisation and Privatisation" organised by the ILO's Subregional Office for South Asia on 8 November 2006. On their way there Osanloo and nine other Executive Board Members of the Vahed Syndicate were arrested, in the city of Tabriz (North-East of Tehran). They were held for five hours by the local police. Other participants in the workshop included representatives of the Islamic Labour Councils, but they do not seem to have been arrested.

The ITUC and the ITF believe that his continued trade union activities and his contact with international organisations such as the ILO, the UN, the ITF and the ITUC are the key reasons behind his arrest. This calls into question whether the government of Iran is genuinely committed to workers' rights, dialogue with the international trade union movement and cooperation with the ILO.

#### **Vahed members arrested on 3 December 2006**

The Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Sherkat-e Vahed), has informed us that two members of the Board of Directors of the union Seyed Davoud Razavi and Abdolreza Tarazi and trade union activist Golamreza Golam Hosseini were arrested on 3 December 2006 and brought to police station division number 6. They were arrested in Tehran's Khavarani bus terminal whilst distributing trade union leaflets to fellow bus drivers. One leaflet was the translation of the most recent protest letter sent by the ITUC to President Ahmadinejad regarding the continued arrest of Mansour Osanloo. The other leaflet was a statement by the Syndicate about its activities. Seyed Davoud Razavi and Abdolreza Tarazi were released the same evening. Golamreza Golam Hosseini ►

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➡ is still detained as his family has not been able to provide bail, according to our information.

The three are amongst the 50 Vahed bus drivers who have been suspended since their job actions last year. They were scheduled to appear in court the following day.

Kindly bring the contents of this communication to the attention of the Committee on Freedom of Association as additional information to out complaint.

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary ■

## An Uncompromising Student Movement



Photo by Amireza Tabrizi (IranNews)

Placard on far left reads "Student Movement Ally of Workers Movement and Women's Movement"

Wednesday 6 December (the eve of 16 Azar: Iran's Student Day) witnessed the most recent mobilisation in a string of student demonstrations vehemently denouncing government policy within University campuses. Reports suggest that over 2,000 students participated in the protest outside the University of Tehran, a place immortalised in the memories of many as the scene of a notorious crackdown against striking students under the Shah's regime on 16 Azar (7 December) 1953 which left 3 students dead. The demonstration triggered violent clashes between the students and gangs of Basiji Personnel (paramilitary force) who had attempted to prevent protestors from entering the university grounds.

Student activists claim that since Ahmadinejad's election in 2005, 181 students have been summoned to university disciplinary boards of which 105 have been suspended, whilst 47 student publications and 28 student organisations have been shutdown. A report by the BBC states that Iranian student's allege there is a 'second cultural revolution' in progress within the universities, forcing scores of professor's into retirement and threatening politically active students with expulsion. Nonetheless the protest was not restricted to student affairs, chants included 'Students, Workers, Teachers - Unite and Fight',

'Student Movement ally of the Workers and Women's Movement' and 'Sexual Apartheid shows contempt for human beings'.

Student resentment against the new wave of repression found further fervent expression on 12 December when President Ahmadinejad paid a visit to Amir Kabir University in Tehran. In a highly charged and intense university hall, students heckled 'death to the dictator' throughout the Presidents speech, demanded the release of all political prisoners, and accused Ahmadinejad of being a fascist and a puppet of the hardliners. All whilst holding upside down pictures and then setting them alight as a mark of disrespect. Footage of the speech illustrates that although the protesting students (inside the hall) were in the minority, they were nevertheless vast in number. This was despite reports that pro-regime students had been deliberately brought in to display public support for the President.



Poster: "Fascist President, Polytechnic is not your place"

Ahmadinejad through the course of his speech praised the student movement (aligned students) for its consciousness and courage in the face of dictatorship (ref. to the US) and declared that his administration had created the most open political atmosphere in the history of Iran. However, an article in the Guardian on 18 December 2006 reported that student activists who had taken part in the protests at Amir Kabir University were forced to go into hiding in fear for their lives after the Presidents supporters from the militant Ansar-e-Hezbollah group (ultra-conservative Islamist vigilantes) threatened them with revenge. ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**All reported in ILNA:**

Over a period of a number of months, more than 700 workers from the textile factory "Pooshineh Yaft" and 300 from the company "Pars Carpets" have not been receiving their wages. At dawn, these workers gathered together with their families and blocked the main road from Alborz to Ghasvin in protest, they demanded an immediate resolution from the authorities responsible. Three of the protesting workers from the company were subsequently arrested by military forces.

**10.12.06**

Ali Dehghani, head of "The Society of the Workers of Yazd" has stated that 100 industrial units in the province have been shutdown and the workers left unaware as to what will happen. He also added that in the past seven years, due to a number of reasons, production units such as "Ekbatan Carpets", "Almoot Wood" "Kooroghli", Reza Locks", "Samadyan", "Zaroof Moghavuyi", "Tivar Ziyuran", "Keeseh Iran" and "Tak Shahd" have been shut down and more than 5000 workers made redundant. 72 current workers from "Pars Battery" in Ghazvin and approximately 120 retired workers

have been denied five months wages. These said workers protested in front of the Ghazvin Council Office and nine were arrested under court orders.

**8.12.06**

Dr Ramezan Ali Sadeghzadeh, representative of Rasht in "The Seventh Assembly" and member of the committee of "The Industrial Assembly" explained that for 24 months now workers of "Rasht electric" have not received their wages. Gravely the situation is the same for other units, such as "Foomnat" and "Pooshesh".

**11.12.06**

Ali Asghar Taherkhani, head of "The Society of Workers of Tukestan", explained that 150 workers from the company "Tuk Shahd", loyal employees for more than 15 years, have been made redundant. He also added that this company is under the control of the Committee for National Industry.

**19.12.06**

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**No War or Sanctions, No to the Iranian Regime**