

# IRAN BEYOND NEWS

Special Edition on International Workers Day, May 1, 2011



## Happy International Workers' Day

The Despotic- religious Regime of Iran  
Denied Iranian  
Workers to protest on the international  
Workers day  
May 1, 2012

Turkish workers support Iranian workers by responding to the petition campaign "Stop Repression of Iranian Working Class!" launched by the Association of International Workers' Solidarity (UID-DER)

## Iranian Workers May Day March Prohibited

labor organizations observed the date in several indoor locations.

The government has chosen to arrest workers instead of assisting them

## Free jailed workers in Iran



Shahrokh Zamani

Mansoor Ossanlou  
Ebrahim Madadi  
Mohammad Jarahi  
Reza Shahabi  
Behnam Ebrahim-zadeh  
Shahrokh Zamani



Mohammad Jarahi



Ebrahim Madadi



Reza Shahabi



Behnam  
Ebrahim-zadeh



Mansoor Ossanlou



Koorosh Bakhshandeh

Mansour Osanloo, the head of the Vahed Company bus drivers' union, was jailed for four years and was only recently released after a wave of international pressure.

Human Rights Watch has expressed repeated concern over the situation of several prominent labor and union activists, including Reza Shahabi, Ali Nejati, Ebrahim Madadi and Behnam Ebrahimzadeh

## **This is the question on the mind of the majority of Iranian workers Do you know what it means to be destitute?**

The current catastrophic situation for workers is unprecedented in Iranian history. Workers' wages relative to inflation are now a pittance in Iran and they hardly cover family expenses. But even this low income is held back for many months. An economy based on brokerage is a stranger to manufacturing, and in such an economy there is no clear definition of labour and worker; everything is temporary and unstable. Factories and workshops close one after the other, and workers are laid off. Those workshops that appear to be still functioning are facing shortages in raw material and a decline in demand. The market is flooded with low-quality Chinese goods of all kind, which leaves no room for domestic manufacturing. Domestic production costs are high and cannot compete with the heaps of low-quality foreign goods. And workers are the first victims of this haphazard situation.

### **80 percent of workers live below the poverty line**

Labour activists report that 80 percent of workers live below the poverty line. And their situation, mostly with spouses and children, is almost unimaginable. Providing for food and rent as well as the medical and educational needs of their children is almost impossible. It is not surprising that most of the people who sell their kidneys are from such families. It is hard to believe that the workers at the Mazandaran textile factory have not been paid for 16 months, but unfortunately it is true. The director of the Worker's House of Mazandaran says workers gathered in front of the governor's office to protest their situation but made no headway.

### **workers questions political games**

workers questions political games and electioneering, saying: "Production and employment do not care about reformist or principalist.... Instead of political games and partisan stubbornness, you must find a way to save the people and think about true public service



## **New minimum wage is below the poverty line!**

Early in March 2012 the Iranian regime set the monthly minimum wage for workers' families in the current Iranian year (20 March 2012-20 March 2013) at 389,754 tomans (€261). This represents an 18% increase on last year's minimum wage and at first might seem generous. Yet the regime's own phoney 'labour' organisations have recommended that the minimum wage should rise by 40%. This is because some government agencies have set the severe poverty line for a family of four at 820,000 tomans (€549). So the new minimum wage has been set at less than half the severe poverty line! Iranian workers and teachers are denied many protections of basic workers rights, as defined and articulated under longstanding international labor standards. Iranian workers are deprived of such fundamental rights both under Iranian labor law and in practice.

## **Iranian Workers May Day March Prohibited**

The Islamic Republic government refused a permit to hold a May Day march so labor organizations observed the date in several indoor locations. This year the International Workers Day fell on April 30 in Iran due to leap year changes in the Iranian calendar. According to Iranian labour laws, 11th day of the month of Ordibehesht is International Workers Day and this day which usually coincides with May 1 in the Gregorian calendar has fallen on April 30 this year.

Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA) reports that application for a permit to hold a march on Worker's Day was denied by the government even though the application was put in by the government organization, House of Workers.

Workers held gatherings in various Iranian cities in addition to the capital, and issues of low wages and lack of job security were their top concerns.

Iranian labour groups report that the government has refused to cooperate with workers on holding May Day events for over five years.

# iran labor report

## May Day 2012 in Iran

The steep economic downturn, spreading plant closures, high inflation rates, and political repression have caused great strain on the Iranian working class in 2012.

While workers across the globe held marches and rallies celebrating the international workers' day, Iranian workers' requests for a march or for celebrations were flatly turned down for the fifth consecutive year this year. Even the official labor organizations were denied permits. While the Interior Ministry feigned ignorance concerning requests for permits, the Iranian Labor News Agency published a copy of the formal request by the Workers House lodged on April 10. With no permits forthcoming, a small gathering was held at the Workers House main office where Alireza Mahjoub and Hassan Sadeghi, the head and executive deputy of the Workers House, made lukewarm speeches complaining about the refusal to grant ten permits. They also discussed a series of grievances about official practices.

A similar gathering was reported by Shoushtar Workers House following rejection of request for such a march. This gathering was held one day earlier than May 1.

A small impromptu gathering took place in the Kurdish city of Sanadaj. According to the reports by Free Union of Iranian Workers, on Tuesday evening May 1st, hundreds of workers in that city congregated at Sirus street chanting "we are workers, we are hungry", "workers workers, solidarity". The workers rally and march planned for Ferdowsi square was canceled due to heavy security presence. The Sirus march was clamped down quickly. According to Mokarian News Agency, the workers held signs reading: "bread, housing, liberty" and "imprisoned workers should be released".



### **The Economic Woes and the Cuts in State Subsidies Program**

The Subsidies Elimination Plan is to go into its second phase any day now. According to the Central Bank statistics released on April 28, the monthly minimum wages in 2010 lost the equivalent of \$170 to inflation. The 2011 numbers, though not released, indicate even further erosion of purchasing power of the workers. Alireza Mahjoub, the head of the Workers House and a parliamentary deputy, recently declared that: "according to the official statistics, 100 thousand workers lost their jobs last year in more than 1000 production facilities in the country." According to Mahjoub, the unemployment rate amongst women is twice the number for men and the women in many large facilities and

carpet weaving plants receive two thirds of the wages ratified by the High Council on Labor. Fearing losing their jobs, “they (the workers) often refrain from making any complaints.”

According to Mohammad Nahavandian, the head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mines, “what we have presented (on the implementation of state subsidies elimination plan) indicates that the 30% of government earnings earmarked for the production sector has not actually been delivered and this has resulted in the closing down of many production facilities.”

According to the official statistics, in the course of the last two years, the official employed population declined from more than 21 million to 20 million and 500 thousand.

The rate of decline is now even more steep.

Faramarz Tofighi, a labor activist and member of the Wages Committee says: “Due to current crisis in the production facilities, 30% of workers in these facilities have lost their jobs since March 20, the persian new year”.

Many of the workers still holding their jobs suffer from wage theft or not receiving their earnings for months on end, and in some cases for more than one year. Many of the strikes and protests go back to this issue.

By the end of the last Iranian new year, ending in March, the official minimum wage was set at 250 dollars a month (390,000 toman). According to Mohammad Saki, an inspector with the High Council of Islamic Labor in Iran, “the poverty line in Tehran province is about 1 million 50 thousand tomans (or 670 dollars) a month while the workers wages is short of 600 thousand tomans (400 dollars).”

Ismael Haghparast a member of the steering committee of Housing says: “Today the minimum wage set by the High Council on Labor is 390 thousand toman (equivalent of 260 dollars), hence, the workers earn half of what is said to be the poverty line. You can not expect a person receiving less than the poverty wages to be able to buy a house.”

### **Blank Signature Contracts**

According to Abolfazl Fathollahi, deputy head of High Center for Iranian Workers Trade Associations, more than fifty percent of the contracts between the workers and employers is based on blank signature contracts. This is of importance since 85 percent of work places in the country are small facilities and are exempt from the Labor Law. According to Fathollahi, “70 percent of women agree to the employers terms while this is 30 percent for the men, in other words less men are willing to work with terms less than written into the Labor Law.”

The economic hardship in the country and the huge pool of job applicants have resulted in an employees market where the employers can easily impose their own terms. With the implementation of the so-called state subsidies elimination plan and loss of state energy subsidies, it is not only the smaller facilities but also large plants that have shifted towards temporary and blank signature contracts with female workers suffering much of the consequences for now.

**Turkish workers support Iranian workers by responding to the petition campaign “Stop Repression of Iranian Working Class!” launched by the Association of International Workers’ Solidarity (UID-DER)**

## **Great interest for UID-DER’s Appeal! Solidarity with the Iranian Working Class is growing!**

The petition campaign “Stop Repression of Iranian Working Class!” launched by the Association of International Workers’ Solidarity (UID-DER) is attracting great interest. Apart from workers, the campaign is supported by trade-union leaders and officials, intellectuals, artists, scholars, representatives of those parties and associations that are sympathetic to labour cause. They show their interest by putting their names in the petition.

We are telling workers, trade-unionists, intellectuals and artists about the repression of Iranian working class and the bans on union activity. Also we are telling that in Iran there is no right to getting unionised and strike in Iran, that the basic rights and freedoms are suppressed, that workers’ leaders such as Mansour Osanloo and Reza Shahabi were imprisoned, that some workers’ leaders were even hanged by the mullahs’ regime. We call on to develop international workers’ solidarity.

Our association, UID-DER, upholds international unity and solidarity of the working class, opposes the attacks targeting the established gains of the working class and also fights for achieving new rights. In our campaign against the attempt of abolishing the right to severance pay we came into contact with hundreds of thousands of toilers and collected nearly 60 thousand signatures. UID-DER’s bond with the working masses finds its expression in the context of international solidarity as well. Conducting the Turkish part of an international campaign launched by Japanese trade-unions for getting all nuclear power plants around the world shut down, UID-DER reached tens of thousands of people. In that campaign workers were told why nuclear power plants have to be shut down and capitalism was exposed. Our solidarity campaign to protest the repression and persecution of Iranian working class is also attracting great interest, and it is continuing. Apart from the trade-unionists, intellectuals, artists and workers listed below, we thank wholeheartedly all our brother/sister workers who joined the campaign with their signatures and expressed their solidarity with the Iranian working class.

**Bayram YILMAZ:** Association of International Workers’ Solidarity (UID-DER), Chairman

Ertuğrul KÜRKCÜ: Member of Parliament, Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)

Levent TÜZEL: Member of Parliament, Democratic Congress of Peoples (HDK)

Atilay AYÇİN: Turkish Union of Civil Aviation Workers (Hava-İş), Chairman

Eyüp KAPLAN: Hava-İş, Treasurer

Gürel YILMAZ: Motor Vehicle Workers’ Union of Turkey (TÜMTİS), General Secretary

Seyfi EREZ: TÜMTİS, Treasurer

Celalettin CAN: 78’ers Initiative, Spokesperson

Selma GÜRKAN: Party of Labour (EMEP), Chairwoman

Nazım ALPMAN: Journalist-writer

Banu GÜVEN: Journalist

Feryal ÖNEY: Musician, Frontwoman of Kardeş Türküler (Songs of Fraternity) music band

Erkan ASLAN: Activist, Senior Chemical Engineer  
Carol BRUCE: International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine, and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), Officer for Gender Issues  
Erol KIZILELMA: Foundation of Social Democracy (SODEV), Chairman  
Onur HAMZAOĞLU: Kocaeli University, Faculty of Medicine, Head of the Department of Public Health  
Özgür MÜFTÜOĞLU: Marmara University, Assistant professor doctor  
Cem TERZİ: Prof. Dr., Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of Medicine  
İzge GÜNAY: Prof. Dr., Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of Medicine  
Cengiz ERÇİN: Prof. Dr., Kocaeli University, Faculty of Medicine  
Ümit BİÇER: Prof. Dr., Kocaeli University, Faculty of Medicine  
Kuvvet LORDOĞLU: Prof. Dr., Marmara University, Department of Labour Economics  
Fatma GÖK: Prof. Dr., Boğaziçi University  
İşin Ünal ÇEVİK: Prof. Dr., Ufuk University, Faculty of Medicine  
Nesrin ALGAN: Prof. Dr., Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences  
E. Yasemin ÖZDEK: Prof. Dr., Kocaeli University  
Azad SAĞNIÇ: Party of Rights and Freedoms (Hak-Par), Deputy Chairman  
Necla AKGÖKÇE: Turkish Union of Petrol and Chemistry Workers (Petrol-İş), Editor of Women Magazine  
Hasan GÜLÜM: Turkish Union of Municipalities and General Services Workers (Belediye-İş), Chair of Branch 2  
Binali TAY: Turkish Leather Workers' Union (Deri-İş), Chair of Tuzla Branch  
Mahmut ŞENGÜL: General Workers' Union of Turkey (Genel-İş), Chair of Branch 1  
Levent DİNÇER: Press, Media, Graphic Design and Packaging Industry Workers' Union of Turkey (Basın-İş), Chair of İstanbul Branch  
Ersin TÜRKMEN: TÜMTİS, Chair of Branch 1  
Mustafa KARATAŞ: Turkish Union of Textile and Garment Industry Workers (Teksif), Chair of Kocaeli Branch  
Bekir TANRIKULU: Turkish Union of Cellulose and Paper Workers (Selüloz-İş), Chair of Kocaeli Branch  
Süleyman AKYÜZ: Petrol-İş, Chair of Gebze Branch  
Mehmet BOĞA: Union of Glass, Cement, Ceramic and Earth Industry Workers (Kristal-İş), Chair of Gebze Branch  
Osman AYSAN: Turkish Union of Petrol, Chemistry and Tire Industry Workers (Lastik-İş), Chair of Gebze Branch  
Necmettin AYDIN: Union of United Metal Workers (BMİS), Chair of Gebze Branch  
Hüseyin ÖVER: Turkish Union of Military Industry Workers (Harb-İş), Chair of İstanbul Anatolian Side Branch  
Rabia Özkaraca ÖVER: Turkish Union of Commerce, Cooperatives and Bureau Workers (Tez-Koop-İş), Chair of Branch 5  
Erdal ŞAHİN: Tez-Koop-İş, Chair of Branch 1  
Vedat KÜÇÜK: Genel-İş, Chair of Kocaeli Branch  
Erdal KOPAL: Revolutionary Road Transport Workers Union of Turkey (Nakliyat-İş), Chair of Gebze Branch  
Nimet TANRIKULU: Activist, Women's Initiative for Peace  
Alev ŞAHİN: Socialist Democracy Party (SDP), Member of Executive Committee of İstanbul Branch  
İlke ACAR: Toiler Movement Party (EHP), Chair of İstanbul Branch  
Murat DENİZKURDU: Banking Workers' Union (Bank-Sen), General Secretary  
İbrahim DUMAN: Association of Kürecik Townsmen, Deputy Chairman  
Erol KAMBEROĞLU: Genel-İş, Member of Branch Executive Committee  
Devrim DUMAN: TÜMTİS, Union expert  
F. İlhami ŞAHİN: DİSK Pensioners' Union (Emekli-Sen), Chair of İstanbul Kartal Branch  
Ali ÖZYURT: Doctor  
Özlem ÖZKAN: Kocaeli University, Associate Professor  
Abdurrahman SAYGILI: Assistant Professor doctor, Ankara University, Faculty of Law  
Örgen UĞURLU: Assistant Professor doctor, Kocaeli University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences  
Ersin KARAGÖZ: Doctor  
Çiğdem ÇAĞLAYAN: Assistant Professor doctor, Kocaeli University Faculty of Medicine, Department of Public Health  
Mehmet TÜRKAN: Scholar, Kocaeli University  
Arzu ERKAN: Journalist, Hayat Tv, Kocaeli Agent  
Rıfat AKÇABOL: Retired Scholar  
Zümrüt SEVİNÇ: Psychologist  
Emel YUVAYAPAN: Research Assistant  
Kağan GÜNAL: Doctor, Private Konak Hospital  
Eren KORKMAZ: Deri-İş, Organising Officer  
Selda ÖZTÜRK: Musician, Kardeş Türküler (Songs of Fraternity) music band  
Muharrem ŞAHİN: Steel Workers Union (Çelik-İş), Chair of Branch 2  
Erdal KARAKUŞ: All Municipality Workers' Union (Tüm Bel-Sen), Chair of Kocaeli Branch  
Engin ÇELİK: Deri-İş, Organising Officer  
Hüseyin AKYOL: Tüm Bel-Sen, Member of Kocaeli Branch Executive Committee

Güzide SAATÇI: Tüm Bel-Sen, Member of Kocaeli Branch Executive Committee  
 Ethem KARTAL: Road, Construction, Infrastructure Public Employees Union (Yapı Yol Sen), Member of Kocaeli Branch Executive Committee  
 Aykut ÇELİK: Turkish Medical Association, Member of Executive Committee  
 Reşit YÜKSEL: Food Workers' Union (Tek Gıda-İş), Anadolu Branch Secretary  
 Meral ÇILDIR: Lawyer, Human Rights Association (İHD)  
 Bülent TOK: Steel Workers Union (Çelik-İş), Regional Officer, Kocaeli  
 Fahrettin ERDOĞAN: Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions (DİSK), Press Office Director  
 Şükriye TÜRKEL: Association in Support of Contemporary Living (ÇYDD), Member of Executive Committee  
 Mehmet ALÇINKAYA: Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)  
 Osman BAHÇECİ: Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP), Member of Executive Committee of Kocaeli Branch  
 Mehmet AYDOĞAN: Education and Science Workers' Union (Eğitim-Sen), Chair of İstanbul Branch 5  
 Meryem ASIL: Lawyer, Progressive Lawyers' Association (ÇHD)  
 Yusuf CEYLAN: Genel-İş, Member of Branch Executive Committee  
 Tuncer ARIN: Genel-İş, Member of Executive Committee of Branch 1  
 Demet YILDIRIM: DİSK, Secretary of Chairman  
 Ümüþ GÜREĞİ: DİSK Treasury Executive  
 Barış ATAÇ: Engineer, Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB)  
 Murat GÜNDÜZAY: Engineer, TMMOB  
 Elvan DEMİRCİOĞLU: Tez-Koop-İş, Member of Executive Committee of Branch 5  
 Aziz KAMAALP: Tez-Koop-İş, Member of Executive Committee of Branch 5  
 Emin KÜLEKÇİ: Engineer, TMMOB  
 Zülfü ÖRNEK: Engineer, TMMOB  
 Yunus Emre ZENGİN: Engineer, TMMOB  
 Aysel Demirci ŞAHİN: Engineer, TMMOB  
 Özkan TORAMAN: Engineer, Chamber of Electrical Engineers, Gebze Branch  
 Fırat GÜNEŞ: Çelik-İş, Gebze Branch Secretary  
 Eyüp AKDEMİR: Petrol-İş, Gebze Branch Secretary  
 Orhanettin YILDIZ: Petrol-İş, Gebze Branch Treasurer  
 Erhan GÜDEK: Kristal-İş, Member of Executive Committee of Gebze Branch  
 Orhan KOÇ: Kristal-İş, Gebze Branch Secretary  
 Doğan KAYA: Çelik-İş, Organising Officer  
 Fahrettin İMAR: Çelik-İş, Union expert  
 Ali Asker KIZIL: Tek Gıda-İş, Chief Union Representative on the shop floor in Kraft co.  
 Eylem ENÜL: Hava-İş, Union expert  
 Ayhan ARMAĞAN: Petrol-İş, Deputy Chairman of Branch 2  
 Ali YURTER: Tez-Koop-İş, Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Haydar DUYAR: Tez-Koop-İş, Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Şevki ASLAN: Tez-Koop-İş, Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Selvi DÖNMEZ: Belediye-İş, Workers' deputy in Branch 2  
 Seyfullah KEŞİNOĞLU: Tek Gıda-İş, Chief Union Representative on the shop floor  
 İsmail KADI: Reporter, local newspaper Gebze Haber  
 Tülay TUŞ: Petrol-İş, Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Sebahattin GÜRBÜZ: Petrol-İş, Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Şivan KIRMIZIÇİÇEK: Petrol-İş, Chief Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Rıfat GULİ: Petrol-İş, Chief Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Muhammet ALTUNTERİM: Petrol-İş, Chief Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Emrah DAŞDEMİR: Petrol-İş, Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Mustafa TOKUL: Petrol-İş, Chief Union Representative on the shop floor  
 İbrahim KARATAŞ: Petrol-İş, Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Ufuk ASKER: Petrol-İş, Member of Executive Committee of Gebze Branch  
 Murat ÇETİNKAYA: Petrol-İş, Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Ahmet ÇELİK: Çelik-İş, Chief Union Representative on the shop floor  
 Savaş ÖZKAN: Genel-İş, Union Representative on the shop floor

Türkçe  
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- International Workers' Solidarity