

**In This Issue**

- Latest arrests
- Reza Shahabi's latest statements and updates
- Sample Protest letter
- Article
- In loving memory of Yadullah



**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

**Latest arrests of labour activists in Iran**

Since January 2012, we have witnessed a series of persecution and arrests of labour activists in Iran. Sharif Saaed-panah and Mozafar Saleh-nia, both executive member of the free union of workers were arrested for two weeks and released on 80 million toman bail each on January 19, 2012. They were incarcerated in Sanandaj prison and after two weeks of joint campaigning by Free Union of Workers and the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations they were released. However, during the same time, Mr. Sheis Amani, who has been incarcerated numerous times previously, also an executive member of the Free Union of Workers, was arrested on January 16, 2012 while inquiring about his detained colleagues at the Sanandaj justice department. He has been transferred to Sanandaj central prison. Another executive board member of the Free Union of Workers, Sediq Karimi, was forced to return to the prison for his participation in a May Day event four year ago (2007). He had spent two months in jail, along with Sheis Amani and a few other activists, in that time and their sentences were subsequently waived by the head of the judiciary at the time but was reactivated in recent months by a special court in Sanandaj.

In addition, two well-known labour activists in City of Tabriz, Shahrokh Zamani and Mohammad Jarahi, who were previously imprisoned and released on bail were -rearrested and transferred to Tabriz prison. Shahrokh Zamani is facing 10 year imprisonment and Mohammad Jarahi is facing 5 year jail time.

Please refer to the sample protest letter below for more information.

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**Recent statements from Reza Shahabi and Reza Shahabi Defence Committee**

**Communiqué number 20 of Reza Shahabi Defence Committee**

According to the communiqué 20 of Reza Shahabi Defence Committee, Reza Shahabi was scheduled for a neck surgery on January 31, 2012; however, after pre-surgery assessments he was taken back to his ward. The reason for this was explained by his doctors as being highly dangerous at this time because Reza does not have the physical strength necessary for this operation. Reza

Reza has gone through physical and mental torture for the past 20 months in jail and would need a period of physiotherapy and healing before being ready for a major operation that could potentially .paralyze his body

Medical recommendation is to allow Shahabi to be transferred from the prison to home under .medical supervision and care for at least three months to prepare him for the operation

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**Reza Shahabi's denial letter regarding the statement published in Vahed syndicate's website and reconfirmation of his previous statement**

Communiqué number 17 from the Reza Shahabi Defence Committee

After the publication of Reza Shahabi's statement on 19/01/2012, an article was published in Vahed syndicate's website in which the content was false; it was aimed to sabotage the credibility of Reza

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

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

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

**Contact IASWI:**

info@workers-iran.org  
alliance@workers-iran.org  
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**IASWI Position**

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

Shahabi's message and to misrepresent its content, which needs to be addressed. The article that was published in the Syndicate's website contained a lie in the name of Reza Shahabi. After Reza Shahabi was informed of the statement in Vahed syndicate's website, he wrote a letter and stated that the statement, which may have been prepared by only one person with specific aims and motives, was untrue, and hence he expressed his displeasure of the Syndicate's website.

It seems that the statement published in the Syndicate's website is a combination of imagination, lies and destruction of personal characteristics and orchestrated by a "writer" with a special interest against the interest of the labour movement and also contrary to the beliefs of Reza Shahabi and possibly in order to create problems for him. The letter which seems to have been written by one "writer" is reminiscent of the fact that the writer may imagine that the bigger the lie the more believable it becomes!

However, Reza Shahabi, in his second letter in connection with the 'Human Rights Award', again stated that Mehdi Kouhestani is neither his representative nor a like-minded person and he is not representing any workers' organisations in Iran.

Reza Shahabi's letter is as follows. Here we attached, as an evidence, a scanned copy of the Reza Shahabi's first handwritten letter (statement 19/01/2012) with his signature and his second letter in which he denied the statement in syndicate's website.

**Reza Shahabi Defence Committee**

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With greetings and respect to the board members and activists of Vahed workers' Syndicate and to the esteemed members of my defence committee and all labour activists and organizations;

May I respectfully present, Monday night I was informed of the content of a statement published in the syndicate's website, in which it alleged that Reza Shahabi, has denied his statement published on 19/01/2012 by his defence committee. A statement concerning a human rights prize that has been given to a person named Mehdi Kouhestani while neither both my family and I nor my defence committee were aware of. In fact the reality is that I approve my first letter.

The reality is that Mehdi Kouhestani is neither my representative nor a like-minded person; he has never had any authority to represent the Vahed Workers' Syndicate or any other workers' organisations in Iran.

After publishing my statement on 19/01/2012 (first letter) by my defence committee, one of the members of the Vahed syndicate who was not happy with my statement, on Saturday 21/01.2012 announced that this statement will raise questions about Mehdi Kouhestani and the Vahed Syndicate. On the contrary, I believe that my statement, apart from showing my position, proclaims Vahed syndicate's independence from the individuals who pursue anti-worker agenda. This member of the Syndicate repeatedly asked me to deny my statement. I declared that; what I have written is nothing but the truth. To ensure that there are no discrepancies between my original statement, even unintentionally, and the one that got published, I told him that I would compare differences in my written text with the one released by the defence Committee. When I compared them, I realised that there is no changes in the statement, therefore the Defence Committee had done their responsibility flawlessly. I hereby declare once more that the released statement by Reza Shahabi defence committee on 19/01/2012 is fully approved by me.

I am very sorry to see that the statement published in the Syndicate's website has absolutely misused my declaration that " I will compare the statement with my written text" and hence unfortunately, the whole statement published in the Syndicate website, with has particular motives and reasons, is false and fictional.

consideration, we will continue to promote worker-to-worker solidarity, with unions, local, national and international labour federations as well as labour and progressive activists, based only on the interests of the working class.

IASWI does not support collaboration with governments and other organizations that are directed by and/or financially supported by governments and capitalist institutions in any country. Such collaborations are against the underlying principles of the working class international solidarity and compromise the struggle for the formation of free and independent labour organizations in Iran. Furthermore, such collaborations with states and capitalist institutions would contribute to the subjugation and control of the labour movement in the interest of the capitalist system. In addition, 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.

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Dear friends

I announce my objection to the Vahed Syndicate's website and then to the organisation that dedicated the prize. I, due to the lack of access to sufficient information, do not know the funding sources of this specific organisation and who its members are. It is praiseworthy if other friends could investigate these cases. I only believe in contacting with organisations that are striving for the interests of the labour movement. Nevertheless, my conclusive objection at least is that why and for what reason and with whose recommendation Mehdi Kouhestani was selected to receive something on my behalf.

Mehdi Kouhestani is neither my representative and nor a like-minded person and he is not representing any workers' organisations in Iran.

In the end, and once again, my request from all is that to consider all materials published by the Defence Committee of my opinions, and please contact this committee for all reasons.

Reza Shahabi,

Worker in jail- The Treasurer and a member of the Board of Directors of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus company

23 January 2012; 23 Hour

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Distributed by Reza Shahabi Defence Committee

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[www.k-d-shahabi.blogspot.com](http://www.k-d-shahabi.blogspot.com)

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**Reza Shahabi's communiqué about a human rights award\***

Communiqué number 16 from the Reza Shahabi Defence Committee

I have heard that an award for human rights in the field of labour has been dedicated to me and delivered to a person named " Mehdi Kouhestani". I would like to announce publicly that neither me nor my family and friends, who believe in workers' independence, were aware of this event.

It is also necessary to explain that "Mehdi Kouhestani" is neither my representative nor a like-minded person.

Lastly, I would like to ask my friends and all workers and workers' organizations to discuss all cases only with my defense committee.

**Reza Shahabi – An imprisoned worker**

The Treasurer and a member of the Board of Directors of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus company

January 19, 2012

**Phone number for Reza Shahabi Defense Committee' Spokesperson:**

**Mahmoud Salehi: 09188747104**

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\* For information about the questionable award that Reza Shahabi protests about refer to: <http://humanrightsintl.org/statement/december/2011-12-15-s001.htm>



### IASWI position:

As an organization in defence of workers' struggles in Iran, IASWI, encourages international solidarity and collaborative efforts by the independent labour organizations and trade unions. This approach in promotion of labour solidarity does not imply any formal or informal consent or agreements, or the sharing of similar ideas and beliefs, on any other issues. Taking this approach into consideration, we will continue to promote worker-to-worker solidarity, 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 support collaboration with governments and other organizations that are directed by and/or financially supported by governments and capitalist institutions in any country. Such collaborations are against the underlying principles of the working class international solidarity and compromise the struggle for the formation of free and independent labour organizations in Iran. Furthermore, such collaborations with states and capitalist institutions would contribute to the subjugation and control of the labour movement in the interest of the capitalist system. In addition, while pro-actively supporting workers' struggles against the repressive Islamic Republic of Iran, IASWI opposes economic sanctions and military interventions by Western forces/allies against Iran.

## Send protest letter:

### Background:

Labour activists in Iran are being constantly harassed, sacked and arrested by the Iranian government authorities. The latest and most known examples are as follows:

- Reza Shahabi, treasurer and a board member of the Syndicate of bus workers of Tehran and suburb, has been in custody in the notorious Evin prison for more about 20 months. He was arrested on 12 June 2010 without a charge. After almost a year on 25 May 2011 he was tried in a court in Tehran on charges of "propaganda against the Islamic State" and "conspiracy against National Security". As a result of mistreatment of Shahabi in jail, his health has deteriorated significantly. There is a growing fear that Reza might become paralyzed as a result of his worsening health conditions. Reza is now in a hospital with guards awaiting a major surgery.
- Mr. Ebrahim Madadi, the Vice-President of Tehran bus workers' Syndicate, has been imprisoned for the past three years. He was released on November 30th, 2011 but unjustifiably rearrested on December 7, 2011. Mr. Madadi suffers from severe eye debility and diabetes.
- Mr. Behnam Ebrahimzadeh, member of The Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Workers' Organizations, and a Children's Rights advocate, has received five years prison term, by a "Court of Appeals." Mr. Ebrahimzadeh has been incarcerated in Evin prison for about 18 months now, based on false accusations. He has been under immense psychological and physical pressures.
- On November 12, Mr. Ali Nejati was transferred to Dezful's Fajr prison, based on trumped up charges. Mr. Nejati, a board member of the Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Workers' Syndicate, had already spent six months in jail based on the same bogus charges. While imprisoned, new charges were brought up against him, and although he was cleared of all charges in the preliminary court proceedings, subsequently he was sentenced to spend another year in prison. Mr. Nejati has been sent to jail while he's suffering from severe heart ailment, recently had a heart operation. Due to his condition he has to follow a certain daily diet, accompanied by medications, plus monthly check up by his physician.

Since January 2012, we have witnessed a series of persecution and arrests of labour activists in Iran. Sharif Saaed-panah and Mozafar Saleh-nia, both executive member of the free union of workers were arrested for two weeks and released on 80 million toman bail on January 19, 2012. They were incarcerated in Sanandaj prison and after two weeks of joint campaigning by Free Union of Workers and the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations they were released. However, during the same time, Mr. Sheis Amani, who has been incarcerated numerous times previously, also an executive member of the Free Union of Workers, was arrested on January 16, 2012 while inquiring about his detained colleagues at the Sanandaj justice department. He has been transferred to Sanandaj central prison. Another executive board member of the Free Union of Workers, Sediq Karimi, was forced to return to the prison for his participation in a May Day even four year ago. He had spent two months in jail, along with Sheis Amani and a few other activists, in that time and their sentences were subsequently waived by the head of the judiciary at the time but was reactivated in recent months by a special court in Sanandaj.

In addition, two well-known labour activists in City of Tabriz, Shahrokh Zamani and Mohammad Jarahi, who were previously imprisoned and released on bail were arrested and transferred to Tabriz prison. Shahrokh Zamani is facing 10 year imprisonment and Mohammad Jarahi is facing 5 year jail time.

There are hundreds of other workers who have been persecuted, sacked and imprisoned by the anti-worker government authorities. I condemn the continuous gross attacks on workers' rights in Iran. I demand the immediate and unconditional freedom of all jailed labour activists and call on the

Islamic Republic of Iran to respect the right of workers to organize, strike, assemble and freedom of association and expression.

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;  
cc: info@workers-iran.org

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## Reza Shahabi must be free!

### An article by Omid Rezai

Reza Shahabi, an Iranian labour activist, has been held in Block 209 of Tehran's notorious Evin jail, for months without conviction or even proper charge. Paying attention to the reality of his case shows that the situation for workers and working-class movements in Iran is different to that in Europe only in degree; bureaucratic and bourgeois-legalist excuses manufactured ad hoc to justify his continuing political incarceration, his alleged second trial remaining always just around a corner, since he was found to have no case to answer to on 25th May.

The authorities have attacked him still further. He has been subjected to aggression and intimidation, pressured to cut even his scheduled fortnightly telephone conversation with his family. In response, Reza began a hunger strike, demanding his immediate and unconditional release. Beginning on 1<sup>st</sup> November, his hunger strike led to the formation of a committee for his defence which attracted hundreds of signatories from across the Iranian labour movement. Mahmoud Salehi, himself recently released from jail, has become the spokesperson for the group. The authorities increased their attacks on Reza, at one point using his weaknesses as an excuse to stop him from talking to his family, telling them that he would not see them.

On the twenty-first day of his hunger strike Reza's move began. When he was transferred to Block 305, Behnam Ebrahimzadeh, another imprisoned labour activist began a hunger strike in solidarity with Reza's. By now, Reza was very weak and both his supporters and jailers worried that his health would be damaged permanently, and that he would have to stand trial disabled, the prison authorities having claimed that a date had definitely fixed for his trial: sometime in January. As Reza's condition worsened, trade unionists from all over the world sought to intervene through sending letters to Evin prison, demanding his immediate and unconditional release. Reza Shahabi's name is already known internationally because of his role in organising the Vahed bus workers' union, one of the first sparks of the increasing wave of strikes and militancy amongst the Iranian working class: so many of those who had supported him last time spoke up again for him again. Unlike the case of Sakineh Ashtiani, a woman condemned to death for 'adultery' (see issue 19 of The Commune) his name barely appeared in the English language media. The difference between the cases is striking; whereas Ashtiani had been, legally, "legitimately" convicted, Shahabi had not. So Reza Shahabi, on hunger strike for unconditional and immediate release, a working-class activist with a network of support of militant Iranian workers, does not fit the imperialist narrative: its colonial ideology of human rights. His story does not sit easily with the usual story about the backwards patriarchy in Iran, and the need to supplant it with a modern, colonial-liberal one. When his family visited Reza told them that it would make him proud to die for the worker's movement. "We are the 99% of society", he told them. "But wealth remains in the hands of 1%. We have to give from our lives at work, but can not even afford to take our children on a holiday for a few days. We can't send them to schools to learn anything. I have fought for our rights, justice for workers. I will continue to do so to the end of my innocent life, standing on my demand; immediate and unconditional release. I do not want release on compassionate grounds. Nor do I want a pardon. I have not committed any crime for the punishment to be cancelled, and no accusation has been made for me to be pardoned from. They have taken half my life. I have to be vindicated and released unconditionally and immediately."

Reza was ultimately taken to hospital. After thirty days and the promise of an immediate and unconditional release, Reza Shahabi stopped his hunger strike. Ten days later he, like Bahnam Embrahimzadeh, Ali Nejati and countless other radical workers, is still in jail. His defence committee have called for supporters to take all possible courses of action to secure his release.

**For more info, contact the Defence Committee: [k.d.shahabi@gmail.com](mailto:k.d.shahabi@gmail.com)**

**International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran: [info@workers-iran.org](mailto:info@workers-iran.org)**

**Coordinating Committee to help form Workers Organisations: <http://khamahangy.com/English.htm>**

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### In loving memory of Yadullah Khosroshahi

It is exactly two years since our comrade Yadullah Khosroshahi passed away. Yadullah had a brain stroke on 2nd of February 2010. While hospitalized his condition began to deteriorate. After conducting tests on him, specialists told his family members and friends attending to his bedside that he had a second stroke. Comrade Yadullah passed away at 5:00 am, February 4, 2010 in London, UK.

Yadullah Khosroshahi was one of the most renowned Iranian labour activists and leaders, a toiler of Iranian labour movement who spent many years incarcerated in prisons of both Monarchy and Islamic Republic of Iran. He was an elected representative of Oil Workers; a former Secretary of Syndicate of Tehran Refinery Workers and former representative of All-Iran Council of Oil Workers. After suppression of workers' councils and workers' autonomous organizations by Islamic Republic, and spending years incarcerated, he was forced to leave Iran. He remained an indefatigable advocate of Iranian labour movement to his last breath.

Yadullah was an enormously active colleague and representative of the IASWI since its formation more than 12 years ago. He was a tireless worker and labour activist who never stopped fighting for the self-emancipation of the working class from the capitalist system.

Yadullah's loving memory will always be with us; he is greatly missed by all friends, family members, labour activists and all of those whose lives were touched by him.

#### International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI)- February 4, 2012

Sympathy messages on the passing of the most prominent Iranian labour leader in exile

#### Contact IASWI:

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[alliance@workers-iran.org](mailto:alliance@workers-iran.org)  
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Figure 1 Yadullah Khosroshahi on the left, holding Free Osanloo sign