

In This Issue:

- **Urgent Action: Let's save Reza Shahabi**
- **Reza Shahabi's open letter: I am only one manifestation of extortion on prisoners' health**
- **Third round of protest petition: Thirty thousand workers demand increased wages and protections**
- **Tabas mine disaster in Iran**
- **IASWI's communiqué on Clothing Sweatshops Fire Disaster in Bangladesh**
- **About the "Workers' Parliament" of the "Workers' House" and WFTU**
- **Mahmoud Salehi: In Praise of European Workers' Militancy on November 14th**
- **Send a protest letter to the IRI: Demand the release of detained labour activists in Iran**
- **Updates on imprisoned labour activists**
- **Follow IASWI on twitter** 

Urgent Action: Let's save Reza Shahabi

Communiqué # 43 Reza Shahabi Defence Committee: Reza Shahabi has decided to go on an indefinite wet Hunger Strike, as a response to security agents' insults and intimidation tactics.

On Monday December 17, 2012 during Reza Shahabi's family visitation and meeting with his wife and daughter he announced that in addition to refusing to take his medication, he will also go on an indefinite wet Hunger Strike in response to security agents' insults and threats, and also to highlight lack of medical treatment he has been receiving. He announced that his Hunger Strike shall go on until he is free to leave prison, on bond, for medical treatment that he requires.

While in hospital for his medical examinations, Mr. Shahabi was insulted and threatened by a security agent that was transferring him. Upon his exit from hospital, the security agent threatened him twice, telling him: "You're a dissenter and anti-revolution pretending to be sick, making us pay all this monies for your treatment," and also "I'll be teaching you a hard lesson you'll never forget."

Beside chronic back and neck pains which require immediate treatment, Reza also suffers from high blood pressure, causing reoccurring nose bleeds. His decision to refuse medication and food will seriously jeopardize his life.

Reza Shahabi Defence Committee condemns all harassment and threats and insults against him. We are seriously concerned about his health. All responsibility for his health lies with the Judiciary and security forces. We demand immediate medical care for Mr. Shahabi, to be carried outside of prison, in proper facilities.

Reza Shahabi Defence Committee
December 17, 2012
www.k-d-shahabi.blogspot.com / k.d.shahabi@gmail.com
Committee Spokesperson: Mahmoud Salehi
Translated by IASWI

IASWI: Reza Shahabi on hunger strike since December 17, 2012

Updated on December 25, 2012

Free Reza Shahabi Now

(See Sample Protest Letter below)

Reza Shahabi, an Iranian labour leader imprisoned since June 2010, went on hunger strike on Dec 17, 2012 to protest against mistreatment by jail guards as well as prevention of his medical treatment by the judicial authorities. He has announced that he will refuse taking his medication and eating food until he is allowed to be transferred to a hospital outside prison for complete treatment. The latest news about Reza Shahabi on December 25th, on the eighth day of the strike, indicated that his physical health has deteriorated significantly. Reza was taken to the prison's medical clinic at the 6th day of his hunger and medical strike. After taking blood pressure, medical staff intended to intervene by injecting serum and giving him medication; this was met with Reza's refusal and thus he was transferred back to his ward. Since the start of his hunger strike, Reza has about 7 kg weight loss.

Mr. Reza Shahabi who had gone under major surgery of his neck in July 2012 and according to doctors' recommendations was in need of at least "two months rest at home", and "incapable of withstanding any further punishment," was sent back to Ward 350 of Evin prison on August 14, 2012. Since then, his health deteriorated significantly. In addition, his jail guards have been very insulting and he has been threatened recently by one of his guards. Reza was taken to hospital on December 15, 2012 but the jail guard accompanying him refused to allow him stay for proper examination and forced Reza, with threats of beating and assaulting him, to go back to prison.

Reza Shahabi is the Treasurer and Executive Board member of the Syndicate of workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, which belongs to the Municipality of Tehran and has about seventeen thousand employees. All Executive board members of this union have been persecuted, dismissed and many were jailed since the formation of the Syndicate in 2005. He has recently been sentenced to 6 year imprisonment and five year ban on all union activities as well as 7 million Toman fine; the appeal court seems to have confirmed his sentence for four years imprisonment, five year ban on all union activities and 7 million toman penalty. Reza Shahabi's health deteriorated significantly after severe beatings and mistreatment following his arrest. The authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran are directly responsible for any consequence resulting from continued imprisonment and mistreatment of Reza Shahabi.

International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI)

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[IASWI @IASWInfo](#)

Reza Shahabi's open letter: I am only one manifestation of extortion on prisoners' health

What has happened to me, Reza Shahabi, the prisoner on ward 209 of Evin prison, and been imposed on my health, my treatment, and my medical care, has also been imposed on all other prisoners in here. I find myself forced to speak out. Health care and attention in here is severely precarious and has caused grave concern for us, our families and friends. I would like to share this concern with our communities in Iran and around the world. I also would like to praise doctors and health professionals that perform their duties in prison, but remain confined within limitations of this dysfunctional inattentive order of things.

Any prescription from prison's physician can take ten to twenty four hours to be actually given to us, leaving the prisoner with only more pain and discomfort. Prison's medical facility is poorly staffed and equipped very

inadequately; if a prisoner is injured and needs stitches, medical staff refuse to operate because of a lack of anesthesia, or stitching needles and threads, or an operating doctor.

Prisoners that have to be transferred to hospitals outside of prison face an even greater dilemma. They get caught up in a closed circuit of procedures and bureaucracy that leads to more pain, discomfort or even death. Even if coroner confirms recommendations by the prison's doctor, they all are placed at the disposal of the prosecution's office, but his office without any single medical qualification, determine whether there is a medical case or not, and decide, based on who the prisoner might be, whether the prisoner deserves to be hospitalized or not. Such conduct becomes status-quo when all matters are politicized and considered security concerns. Our families all go through incredible difficulties and hardship to pursue our cases through legal channels.

Each time our requests for medical care succeeds, it could take anywhere from two to six weeks, and even then it has yet to be approved by the prosecutor. Even when in hospital and receiving medical care, the treatment remains incomplete and we have to be returned to hospital before a certain deadline, and we are back to square one again. It is enough to make you wish you were dead....Often they accuse you of malingering or a desire to get to the hospital instead of prison. Is the detection of malingering the responsibility of doctors and the medical system or the prosecutor who is always suspicious of detainees and opposed to them.

Another affliction causing us pain is our teeth and the lack of treatment for them. Dental services in prison are inadequate, expensive, and cumbersome. We need to wait very long period for Dentists who mostly are not experts in all dental treatments.... Prisoners lacking funds are simply refused any care. The usual response is: Either cash or back in cell.

I Reza Shahabi, a sacked worker of Vahed Company and a prisoner with no source of income have been captured in this vicious circle. I have had a critical operation on my neck and spinal cord, and according to doctors' recommendation needed to rest at home with continued medical care; alas none has been provided. I have been suffering tooth ache for a long time; they broke my front tooth in detention number 209 and it is in constant pain.... To top off all these problems, we also have privatization becoming the operating principal in prisons as well, resulting in nothing but a continued silent death for prisoners.

This topic of privatization has also reached prisons, with the same usual results: benefits for the few well connected and semi-public organizations and mass poverty for legions of workers. In Rajaie Shahr prison even prisoners' cell spaces are traded. Here in Evin prison we buy all our daily needs, which are of very low-quality and very high prices from a store that belongs to prisons employers. One might be fortunate enough to have some aid and support, but such resources are not forever, neither provided for all.

Human dignity is imperative. Until when do we want to live in need and want, in a country so resourceful, with no regards for economic sanction....We have been imprisoned for merely asking for our rights, condemned to privation, gradual death, and general disregard for our health and well being....

I have for my part been left no choice but to go either on a Hunger Strike, or to refuse the inadequate medical care I receive at the moment. By doing this perhaps official in charge would take notice. I'm sharing my decision with my fellow union colleagues, workers' organization and labor and civic activists in hoping of receiving the original medical recommendations, which were opposed by the prosecutor's office.

Reza Shahabi,
A member of the board of directors of the Syndicate of Workers of Vahed Company
Ward 350 of Evin Prison, December 2012

A summary translation by IASWI. Link to the original letter:
http://www.etehadbinalmelali.com/html12/27_azar_91_shahabi_42.html

Third round of protest petition in Iran: Thirty thousand workers demand increased wages and protections

Workers in Iran are deprived of the right to organize and create independent trade unions and other labour organizations. Nevertheless, they are fighting tirelessly to achieve the right to organise, strike, freedom of expression and assembly. Further, they demand pay equity for women and men, sliding scale wage increase against inflation and so on. Yet, in denying workers' just demands, the Iranian regime has shamelessly sacked, imprisoned and tortured many worker activists and been harassing their innocent families as well. Many of the worker activists who have been defending workers' rights in Iran throughout the past number of years have been incarcerated, tortured and their family members been living with a devastated situation.

Free Union of Workers in Iran (also known as the Iranian Independent Workers' Union or "IIWU"), is one of the independent organisations of labour activists in Iran that strives towards achieving workers' rights and demands. IIWU is not recognised officially according to the Islamic Republic's labour law. Though, IIWU, similar to other independent organizations, has been a subject of intimidation and persecution by Iranian Regime, it has explored every possible avenues pressuring government to concede to the demands of many millions of Iranian workers. The IIWU has now launched its third round of collecting petition from workers across Iran. The first collection started in May 2012 where 10,000 signatures were received. The second petition gained a further 10,000 signatures in October 2012. The third petition published on December 18, 2012 received an additional 10,000 signatures from workers around the country. It is imperative to highlight that labour organizing and campaign is one of the hardest and riskiest activities in Iran; therefore, the significance of these signatures ought to be considered within such a broader political context.

The Free Union of Workers in Iran stated to the Minister of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Affairs, that according to the official reports, following the first round of austerity measures and cutting subsidies in recent years, more than 50% of the factories were either closed down or facing serious financial difficulties. During this period, hundreds of thousands of workers have lost their jobs and made redundant. Wages are below the poverty line and many factory workers are often paid with delays of several months. All benefits of thousands of workers in the auto industry (khodro-sazi) have been cut and these workers have been receiving a basic salary since the beginning of the current year. Thousands of retired workers, who are poorly paid, are unable to survive with the present high cost of living. (See the original letter in Farsi: <http://www.etehadeh.com/?page=news&nid=2726>).

In this petition the signatories protested against "reform of the Labour Law". Labour Law in Iran does not recognise any form of independent workers organisations such as workers councils and trade unions. The minimum wage is reviewed every year by a body, comprised respectively from so called "representative of workers" who are selected from the "the *Supreme Islamic Labour Council*", employers' delegates and government delegates from the Ministry of Labour, all of which are affiliates and instruments of the existing regime. The aim of the Labour Law "reform" or "amendments" is to creating a harsher situation for workers by making contract work completely legal and empowering the employers to more easily sack workers. Also the regime has been striving for years to fully satisfy the IMF requirements as well as the pro-capital agenda of the employers' group of the ILO.

The third petition, comprising in total 30,000 signatures, shows workers' anger and dissatisfaction and how the ruling regime has disregarded workers' demands that have been piled up since the revolution in 1979.

At the moment, the minimum monthly wage in Iran is approximately 389000 toman, which is equivalent to £111.10. But the basic living cost is approximately four times higher for the average household in Iran. The minimum wage income is well below the poverty line. Moreover, there are tens of thousands of workers that have not received their wages for months and their protests for payments have mostly been crushed by the security forces. It is important to emphasize that a very large number of workers are paid even below the legal minimum wage especially Afghan

workers as well as women and those who have been excluded from the provisions of the labour law.

Workplace health and safety is very inadequate and lacks basic standards in most workplaces. Even based on a report by the semi-official Iranian Labour News Agency, ILNA, which is a government-sponsored media outlet, on average five workers die every day due to lack of health and safety in the workplace. On Tuesday, 18th December, eight coal miners died in an incident in a mine near Tabas city, north east of Yazd province.

Poverty and income inequality have been serious concerns in Iran during the past number of decades. An official report from Children's Rights Defenders in Iran has announced that above three million children between 6 to 14 are leaving school because of poverty. They work on the streets, small factories, shops and other similar places to support the family financially. However, it needs to be stressed that the impacts of such inequalities have intensified since the imposition of economic sanctions by the US government and its allies increased.

Free Union of Workers in Iran warns the government to consider the workers' demands or further actions and protests will be organized. On Wednesday 19th December 2012, some members of this organisation and other activists staged a protest in front of the Islamic Parliament and handed over their petition to the Parliament. They said that they will continue with collecting signatures and will protest against the changes in the Labour Law which is completely anti-worker.

They also demanded to free all labour activists that have been incarcerated simply because they defend workers' rights and demanded formation of independent workers organisations and trade unions, higher wages, and workplace safety, equal pay for women and men and payment of wages in arrears.

The Free Union of Workers in Iran also demands:

- 1- To stop immediately any anti-worker reforms in labour and social security laws.
- 2- Any amendments to the labour laws and social security should be with firm and direct involvement of elected independent representatives of workers' general assemblies, in factories and production centres, and should aim to end the harsh conditions that currently workers and retirees across the country are grappling with.
- 3- The minimum wage for workers and pensions for retirees must be immediately increased, based on the Article 41 of the labour law, and overseen by elected representatives of workers' general assemblies and industrial and public sector workers.
- 4- Industrial modernization legislations such as Article 10 approved by the Cabinet for dismantling contractors, decent insurance for all construction workers and the demands stated in the protest petition must be the order of the Ministry of Labour as the most pressing demands of the workers (<http://www.etehadeh.com/?page=news&nid=2726>).

In the second part of the petition, Free Union of Workers in Iran stated that average base salary for the last two years to calculate workers' pension has changed to the average salary for the past five years resulting in a noticeable loss of pensions. Further, though millions of construction workers have paid the cost of insurance and registration fees, yet their insurance benefits have not been established. Construction companies are also engaged in plundering the workers' wages; and job insecurity, layoffs and plant closures in the current year, in comparison to previous years, have increased.

Free Union of Workers in Iran also strongly condemned the government's plan to increase the age of retirements, and two percent increase in pension payment by workers and less pension pay. In fact workers will pay more, work more years and receive fewer pensions.

Prepared by: **International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI)**

December 25, 2012

Tabas coal mine disaster in Iran

Workplace safety has been one of the key demands of workers in Iran since the 1979 revolution; however lack of workers' independent organisations, lack of regular inspection on Health and Safety issues at work and lack of appropriate Health and Safety systems and equipments have increased the risks in all workplaces. Workers are constantly victims of unsecured work environments in Iran.

Miners and construction workers are some of the most vulnerable workers, and major victims, when it comes to the lack of workplace safety. Most recently, a mine explosion in northern Tabas in Yazd province on Tuesday 18th December 2012, led to the death of eight miners. This is not the only disaster for the people of Yazd Province; 18 workers were killed December last year. In December last year, in Yazd Ghadir steel factory 18 workers burned alive in the fire. Capitalism in Iran knows no boundaries to exploit workers.

In an open letter by a number of Tabas miners, maybe now among the victims, on 3rd of May 2011, addressed to Tabas MP, they warned the officials that the lack of safety and mismanagement in Tabas mines was endangering the lives of workers. Their demand was thorough review of the health and safety issues by experts to provide a safe environment for miners, but their demands received no response from the authorities.

People in Tabas city are angry and devastated by the depths of tragedy. All people in the town came out and support the miners' family. Officials have given dishonest excuses and provided no meaningful condolence to the family of the miners who lost their life. IASWI demand the trial of the perpetrators of the tragedy and full compensation for the families of the dead workers. Government and employers are full responsible and liable for this tragedy.

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December 20, 2012

IASWI's communiqué about the Clothing Sweatshops Fire Disaster in Bangladesh ***Capitalism's "gift" for the new year, 2013: Crematory Sweatshops***

Based on reports, at least 112 workers were burned to death and many more severely injured in a devastating industrial fire which took place in a clothing "factory" in Dhaka, capital city of Bangladesh on Saturday November 24th. As in previous industrial fire accidents, such as the one in Karachi, Pakistan; which took more than three hundred lives, the factory owners and state authorities, as usual, have not yet determined the "cause" of this, easily preventable, massive tragedy. An official investigation has also begun.

112 workers' lives are perished so casually and carelessly. Workers burn into charcoal, inside a clothing sweatshop, and the state promises yet another investigation into the "causes." Repetitiveness of all these large scale industrial disasters is alarming. A very basic introduction and practice of work safety rules would prevent most industrial accidents. But until and unless strong safety codes are enforced, these accidents will continue to occur. Until now no party has taken responsibility for these easily preventable industrial sweatshop disasters. At the bottom, without the support of strong movements from consumers and unions and progressive organizations in solidarity with sweatshop workers, there's little hope for any change in their unsafe working conditions.

IASWI, in deep sorrow, sends its condolences to workers' families and, in solidarity with them, demands justice for workers and full penalty of law for the culprits. The struggle for work safety enforcement and working to elevate any violation of work safety laws as a recognized criminal offense remains a significant long term battle.

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Original statement was issued on November 25, 2012

About the "Workers' Parliament" of the "Workers' House" and WFTU

The "Workers' House of the Islamic Republic of Iran", which is an infamous government-sponsored organization, organized a "Workers' Parliament" at the old parliament building in Tehran in early November 2012. Alireza Mahjoub, the head of Workers' House, an MP, and one of the key forces behind attacks against independent labour organizations like Tehran bus workers' union, chaired the gathering. He told the official media in Iran that at the "Workers' Parliament" the Minister of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Affairs, and former labour ministers as well as the head of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran or Parliament were going to speak.

In addition to some so called Labour MP's they also invited their affiliates, i.e., representatives of "Islamic Labour Councils" as well as some international organizations including World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).

The IASWI issued a statement at the time denouncing the gathering as having nothing to do with real workers' issues in Iran; in reality that was used as another propaganda machine of the anti-worker regime of Iran to further justify its continued repression of independent labour organizations in Iran as well projecting "Workers' House" as a real labour organization. Unfortunately, WFTU leadership once again demonstrated complete lack of judgement and a backward and anti-working class approach by attending this "Workers' Parliament". Neither real labour activists nor any of independent labour organizations and worker advocacy groups in Iran took part in that gathering. A genuine solidarity with workers in Iran would require condemnation of brutal violation of workers' rights and organizations by the Iranian regime as well as condemnation of economic sanction and military threats of the US government and its allies. The anti-worker and ultra-right/ neo-liberal regime in Iran and its "Workers' House" are part of the problem not the solution; any relationship by unions in other countries with these reactionary bodies would lead to condemnation by the Iranian labour movement and all its real activists and organizations.

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Mahmoud Salehi: In Praise of European Workers' Militancy on November 14th

Capitalist order is in deep crisis. Capitalists seek to resolve the crisis by an attack on workers' rights, gains, benefits and living conditions. From the onset of crisis in 2008 until now millions of workers have become unemployed, while wages have decreased and working hours have increased. Many working class families' inability to pay mortgage has forced them into homelessness.

Capitalists are seeking opportunities from such circumstances to take away further social benefits and public spending. Many social benefits have already been cut or reduced. Reduction in work safety expenditure has exposed many workers to hazardous working conditions. Capitalist states have pursued these policies under the banner of "Economic Austerity." Accordingly they have poured billions of dollars into financial institutions that have caused the crisis to begin with; this bailout has exposed the state to more risks and less income.

European workers, for long a direct target of such austerity measures, are now standing up against further attacks on their rights and gains. These workers are waging this fight back through: general strikes, street demonstrations, marches, assemblies, attacking pro-austerity policy makers' gatherings, fighting back against police offensives...

One episode of this class war occurred on November 14, 2012. On this day millions of working classes and liberated people from all over Europe, led by: Spain, Greece, Portugal, Italy, took to streets to participate in general strikes, demonstrations and marches. In response to police attacks the youth in these events were confronting police repression. These strikes were organized by the European Trade Union Confederation. The leaders of the Confederation actually had to do so under the pressure of the working masses. They tried to cry out in protest against economic policies, and for providing jobs and boosting the purchasing power of workers. Conscious workers, however, also chanted slogans against the governments and the capitalist system.

Workers in Iran not only praise these European workers in their militant spirit, but we will also learn and gain new lessons and experiences from the struggles of our fellow workers.

Mahmoud Salehi – November 16, 2012

Translated by IASWI

Link to full text in Farsi: http://www.etehadbinalmelali.com/html12/001_salehi_27_abaan_91.html

Thank you very much for your support and solidarity. Please see protest letters by concerned trade unions, including CUPE, RMT, French unions' collective, Danish unions..., on: <http://www.workers-iran.org>

Sample Protest letter:

Reza Shahabi must be immediately released and promptly treated.

I (we) are writing to protest the continued persecution of labour activist and the gross violation of workers' rights in Iran. We continue to witness many labour activists brutally persecuted and unjustly imprisoned in Iran. In particular, I am seriously concerned about the health and well being of Reza Shahabi. Reza Shahabi, the executive board member and treasurer of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran Bus Workers' Company, has been incarcerated for more than two and half years. Shahabi was severely beaten during his interrogation in detention. He underwent cervical spine operation on July 24, 2012. Medical doctors have been recommending treatment of his back as well. Contrary to doctors' recommendations, Shahabi was sent back to Ward 350 of Evin prison on August 14, 2012. Since then, his health has been drastically deteriorated. On December 17th, 212, Reza Shahabi went on hunger strike to protest intimidating behaviour of his jail guard as well as the continued lack of proper medical treatment. He has also refused to take any medication.

I (we) strongly condemn the unjust arrest and sentence against Reza Shahabi and other labour activists. I (we) also denounce ongoing persecution and arrests of labour activists in Iran. I (we) demand the immediate and unconditional freedom of Reza Shahabi and all detained labour activists in Iran., including Shahrokh Zamani, Mohammad Jarahi, Behnam Ebrahimzadeh, and Pedram Nasrolaahi.

Name:

Organization/Position:

Please send your protests letters to: info@leader.ir, info@judiciary.ir, dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir; iran@un.int; ijpr@iranjudiciary.org, info@dadiran.ir, office@justice.ir, support@irimlsa.ir; info@humanrights-iran.ir; avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir; bia.judi@yahoo.com; info@mlsa.ir;
CC: info@workers-iran.org

See below for more information on above imprisoned labour activists (Updated on December 25, 2012):

- Reza Shahabi is the Treasurer and Executive Board member of the Syndicate of workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, which belongs to the Municipality of Tehran and has about seventeen thousand employees. He has been incarcerated since June 2010. All Executive board members of this union have been persecuted, dismissed and many were jailed since the formation of the Syndicate in 2005. Reza Shahabi was sentenced to six year imprisonment and five year ban on all union activities as well as 7 million Toman fine; the appeal court seems to have confirmed his sentence for four years imprisonment, five year ban on all union activities and 7 million toman penalty. Reza Shahabi's health deteriorated significantly after severe beatings and mistreatment following his arrest. As a result, he underwent cervical spine operation on July 24, 2012. Medical doctors are recommending operations on his back as well. Contrary to doctors' recommendations, Shahabi was sent back to Ward 350 of Evin prison on August 14, 2012. Since then, his health has been drastically deteriorated. On December 17th, 2012, Reza Shahabi went on hunger strike to protest intimidating behaviour of his jail guards as well as the continued lack of proper medical treatment. He has also refused to take any medication.

- Shahrokh Zamani and Mohammad Jarahi, both from Tabriz and members of the Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Workers Organizations, an independent labour organization campaigning for the establishment of independent trade unions in Iran, are currently serving 11- and five-year prison sentences respectively in Tabriz prison, north-west Iran. Shahrokh Zamani, Mohammad Jarahi were all initially arrested in June 2011. Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court in Tabriz later sentenced Shahrokh Zamani to 11 years and Mohammad Jarahi to five years imprisonment after conviction of charges including "acting against national security by establishing or membership of groups opposed to the system" and "spreading propaganda against the system". Shahrokh Zamani and Mohammad Jarahi were both arrested in mid-January 2012 to begin serving their sentences.

- Behnam Ebrahimzadeh, member of The Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Workers' Organizations, and a Children's Rights advocate has been incarcerated in Evin prison since June 2010. Behnam Ebrahimzadeh was initially sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in December 2010 on national security charges. This was overturned by the Supreme Court, and after a retrial he was sentenced to five years in prison after conviction of "gathering and colluding with intent to harm state security", apparently in connection with his labour activities on behalf of The Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Workers' Organizations. This sentence was upheld on appeal in October 2011. Behnam was transferred to solitary confinement in December 2012 and after about 10 days was taken back to his ward 350 of Evin Prison. It is reported that Behnam was transferred to the solidarity confinement because of the statements he had signed, along with other labour and political prisoners, which had addressee workers' and other social justice issues.

Pedram Nasrollahi is a well-known labour activist in Iran's Kurdistan Province and an active member of the Coordinating Committee to Help Form workers' Organizations. He has been arrested and prosecuted many times in the past number of years. The General as well as Revolutionary Courts in Sanandaj city originally sentenced Pedram to three years imprisonment in July 2012. He was sentenced to one year imprisonment for "acting against the Islamic Republic by working with one of the opposition parties", which he absolutely denies, and in addition was sentenced to two years of imprisonment for being "a member of the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations", which is not supposed to be a charge at all. The Coordinating Committee is not an underground labour organization; it is a well-recognized labour organizing group inside Iran and internationally which includes many veteran workers and labour activists like Mahmoud Salehi.

After appealing the original sentences, the appeal court reduced his sentence to 19 months. In relation to the latest charges against him in 2012, Pedram Nasrollahi was first arrested on March 8, 2012 for 48 days; he was eventually released on bail of 70 million toman. After his sentences had been reduced by the appeal court to 19 months, he went to the prosecutor's office to further pursue his case, on November 14, 2012, but he got arrested and sent to the prison. Since then, he has issued a couple of statements from the prison in support of workers' struggles, and this perhaps contributed to increased harassment and new charges against him. The authorities of the Sanandaj's Central

Prison have recently come up with sham charges of "barratry" against Pedram. They also decided to cancel his visitation rights.

Many other labour activists across the country continue to be persecuted and arrested. Many cases go unreported. The latest confirmed reports indicate that according to the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations, on Wednesday, December 19, 2012, agents of the intelligence services of the City of Bukan as well as plain clothes officers arrested five members of the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations, named Jamal Minashiri, Ebrahim Mostaphapour, Ghasem Mostaphapour, Mohammad Karimi and Hadi tanomand. These labour activists were transferred first to the intelligence bureau in Bukan and later to the general prison of Bukan on Dec 24, 2012. At the same time, the security forces had raided the homes of these labour activists and after searching their homes confiscated some of their personal belongings, i.e. computers, books, mobile phone, satellite receivers, etc.

The judge responsible for their cases has told their family members that these activists have security cases but the arrestees themselves informed their family members that they were arrested because of their participation in the Coordinating Committee's general membership meeting on June 15, 2012 in the City of Karaj, which faced a brutal raid by security forces and arrests of about 60 labour activists at the time. Further, the prosecutor office indicated that these five labour activists were temporarily arrested and detained. More updates about these detainees will be issued and posted on IASWI website.

About IASWI: The International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI) was formed in 1999 and formally launched in January 2000. The IASWI has been working in collaboration with many labour and progressive organizations and activists in Iran and around the world to strengthen worker-to-worker solidarity in defence of workers' rights, demands and struggles in Iran and against the repressive anti-worker policies and practices of Islamic Republic of Iran. IASWI is a fully independent organization and does not accept funding or resources from any governments or corporations and their affiliates.

IASWI recently created a twitter account. Our website and twitter account will be improved significantly in 2013.

Please follow us on twitter: <https://twitter.com/IASWIinfo>

**Let's make a more concerted effort in 2013 to help
Free all imprisoned labour activists in Iran**

