

In this special edition in commemoration of the 4th anniversary of the murder of Khatounabad workers, only a few available letters and documents have been enclosed. Many workers' and progressive organizations in Iran and around the world condemned this brutal attack on workers by the Islamic regime of Iran. However, as it is mentioned in the statements below, no one has yet been identified as responsible for the killing of workers. Justice for the murdered and injured Khatounabad workers and their families has never been achieved. However, the struggles still continue!

A Week of Action Called by joint campaign of Iranian labour activists abroad- Regarding the murder of Khatounabad Workers in 2004— 18-26th January 2008 Click: <http://www.workers-iran.org> for full statements:

- *1- We demand the trial of those responsible for Khatounabad murders in a just court
- 2- We demand compensation for the family of the victims
- 3- We demand the abolition of all temporary contracts and provision of job security for workers
- 4- We demand immediate freedom of all imprisoned workers, including Mahmoud Salehi, Mansour Osanloo, as well as the identification and prosecution of those who attempted to assassinate Majid Hamidi.
- 5- The right to organize independent workers' organizations, to organize meetings and strikes, the right to decent work, the right to housing, the right to education, the right to free health service as fundamental, basic rights of Iranian workers.
- 6- While defending students' movement and those arrested in recent weeks, we call for the release of all political prisoners in Iran and especially students arrested in December 2007 in Iranian universities, who were demonstrating on the anniversary of Iran student day (a day commemorated since the Shah's regime).
- 7- We strongly condemn the expulsion of Afghan and other migrant workers
- 8- While defending the just demands of the women's movement, we demand equal pay for men and women and abolition of any form of gender discrimination.
- 9- We demand the immediate prohibition of child labour in all areas.
- 10- We oppose intervention of military, security and intelligent forces in labour affairs.

11- We demand an end to all forms of state repression of social – political organisations.

Iranian workers are protesting and shouting:

- Pay us the unpaid wages; we have to be paid for our work
- Stop sacking workers, we must have a right of housing
- we must have the right to free education and health
- we must have the right to set up our own independent organizations, the right to strike and the right to organise gatherings.
- Arrested workers, students, women and intellectuals must be released.

Let us use our week of action, 18th January 2008 -26th January 2008, to expose the capitalist nature of the Islamic regime.

Join our protests!

Long Live International solidarity!

Down with the capitalist regime of the Islamic Republic!

The Week of Action is Called by:

- Committee of Solidarity with the Iranian Workers - Australia
 - Committee in Support of Workers in Iran – Toronto, Canada
 - Association of Solidarity with the Iranian Workers – Norway
 - A Group of Progressive Workers in Exile – Switzerland
 - Committee of Socialist Solidarity with Iranian Workers – France
 - Association of Solidarity with Iranian Workers – Köln, Germany
 - Association of Solidarity with Iranian Workers – Frankfurt and Suburb, Germany
 - Association of Solidarity with Iranian Workers – Hanover, Germany
 - Committee of Solidarity with Iranian Workers – Hamburg, Germany
 - Solidarity Group with the Labour Movement-Berlin-Germany
 - Iranian and Swedish Workers' Solidarity Committee
 - International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI)
 - The solidarity center with Iranian workers, Guttenberg, Sweden
 - Jamal Cheragh-Weisi Labour Association
- *Translated with the help of HOPI – UK

Action against the Repressive Islamic regime of Iran at the anniversary of the murder of the workers of Khatounabad. Protest against the brutal practices of the regime against the activists of the workers', students' and women's movement.

Photo exhibition over the labor disputes, current struggles of the Iranian working people and executions of the young and under-age. In solidarity with the week of action called by the campaign of Iranian labour activists abroad.

Date: Saturday, 26 January 2008

from 14:00 to 16:00 clock

Place: Station place Luzern (**Bahnhofplatz Luzern**)

Join us and support the workers, women, students and other progressive movements in Iran

Organized by:

A Group of Progressive Workers in the Exile (Switzerland) and International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI)- Switzerland

Contact:

- email: Kargar1357@hotmail.com
- Telephone number: 0041765161866

***Urgent Call for Action!**

Protest Murder of Workers in Iran

Iranian security forces and Kerman Province's special guards brutally attacked protesting workers at the Nazkhaton's Copper Smeltery in the City of Babak, Province of Kerman on January 24, 2004, killing at least four and injuring dozens others.

The attack was a bloody response to a sit-in and protest action held by the company's contract workers and their families, including many elder women who were there to support their children. The company has decided to lay off all their contract workers, which are almost entirely residents of this small city, despite its continued operations and hiring.

All main Iranian news agencies and newspapers covered this incident and President Khatami was forced to send a delegation to probe it. However, the residents of the city continued their protests despite heavy presence of army and special guards of the regime across the city. There have been clashes with the security forces in different parts of the city and scores of people have been arrested. The city is half closed and people have been gathering in front of the residences of the murdered workers demanding immediate identification of those responsible for their killings.

There is an overwhelming lack of trust towards Khatami's delegations since they have never been accountable and sincere in the past. There have been numerous similar cases that these types of delegations ended up blaming the victims as well as exonerating those responsible amongst the regimes' authorities from any wrongdoing.

The government of Iran does not have any credibility to probe into such gross violation of human and workers rights. We are therefore asking international labour organizations particularly ICFTU and other global unions and their affiliates to not only protest against this inhuman actions of the authorities of the Iranian government but also demand an independent delegation representing labour and human rights' organization to directly investigate the situation that led to the shooting, killing and injuring workers and their families and identify those responsible for this butchery.

There are a number of issues for consideration in this process:

- The role that the Governor of Kerman and the City of Babak's authorities played in this incident.
- Helicopters were used prior to and during the shootings. Where did these helicopters come from and who ordered their raid on protesting workers.
- How many people have exactly lost their lives and how many got injured? Unofficial news report of 7 to 15 dead and up to 300 wounded.
- How many people have been arrested in total? According to several reliable sources, a number of those ar-

rested had been tortured.

- The families of those lost their lives must receive proper compensation. Both the Company and the governor's office as well as the government of the Iran are responsible for this harm.

- The role that government's privatizations policies and practices have played in creating such an unsafe and insecure conditions for working people should be taken into account. The temporary contracts imposed by companies and their subcontractors have left hundreds of thousands of workers in Iran with no job security and benefits. The government is in violation of numerous internationally recognized labour and human rights regarding their responsibilities towards the citizens of Iran.

- Lack of independent workers' organizations and the right to strike which is another violation of workers' universal rights has caused so much pressure and anxiety on workers and their families because they feel their voices are unheard and repressed. Present so called labour groups, including "Islamic Labour Councils", "Workers' House" and "guild associations" are not recognized by Iranian workers because they are sponsored and linked to the government and do not represent the interest of the working class in Iran.

- The current relationship between the International Labour Organization and the Iranian government, particularly with the Ministry of Labour, needs to be examined by the labour groups within the ILO and through other means to preclude any justifications of the anti-worker and oppressive policies and practices of the Iranian government.

Please send a copy of your protest letter or a report on your actions to:

International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran
alliance@workers-iran.org
January 24, 2004

*Four years after the killing of striking workers in Khatounabad by the regime's security forces and special guards, no proper and independent investigation has been done and no one has been found guilty and the victims' families have received no compensation. Please send your protest letters to:

- President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir
- Leader of the Islamic Republic: Email: info@leader.ir

**Khatounabad Strike: Background Information:
Some Q & A Following the incident– January 2004:
What were the functions of the workers protesting layoffs? Were they miners, metal workers, construction workers?**

These workers were already announced redundant by the contractors that have built the Khatoun Abad Smelting Plant. Khatoun Abad Smelter is a new plant. Workers were promised to be hired on a permanent basis after the official opening of the plant, but the company did

not keep their promises (ILNA). Some were general labourers, construction workers as well other skilled workers that were mostly residents of the village of Khatoon Abad and the City of Babak. According to the Kerman Province's governor, in an interview with ILNA (Iranian Labour News Agency), the Khatoonabad's Copper Smelter project was being developed at the village of Khatoon Abad, which is 5 kilometer from the City of Babak. This project had employed about 1500 contract employees to build and prepare the smelter. Since the production has begun within the last couple of weeks, they told workers that they would only need 250 workers. So, they decided to let the rest go.

2. When did the strike begin and what triggered the violence?

The protest was in a form of sit-in and rally outside the smelter. It was in its 8th day when the violence started. Workers and their families were blocking the main entrance to the smelter during which they noticed the presence of more security forces as well as special guards that were brought to the area by helicopters from Kerman. Mr. Karimi, Kerman's Governor, admitted in his interview with ILNA, on Jan25th, that because they witnessed that the sit-in and protest had been continued, they decided during the meeting of the province's security's council, to assign more security forces to address it, so they brought special guards from the Central city of Kerman. However, he is claiming that these guards were not given the power to fire against the protesters and that their role was primarily to open the blockages made by protesters. Having said that, Mr. Karimi has emphasized that security forces, under some circumstances have the permission to fire at people and they don't require permission from the Security Council!?

City of Babak's MP, Mr. Mansur Soleymanni, Meymandi, however asserts that the responsible authorities could not manage the crises. He told parliament that helicopters carrying special police units were sent in to break up the protests in the village of Khatoonabad, near the Shahrehabak (City of Babak). The security forces became confrontational with protesting workers and started arresting and persecuting them. This triggered the violence in which security forces fired at demonstrators. At the same time some units were dispatched to the City of Babak to control the situation during which they had clashes with residents of the city as well.

3. What was the name of the employer?

Khatoon Abad Smelter is a project of "National Iranian Copper Industries Company". The NICICO is responsible for extraction of mines, manufacturing of copper products and by-products, distribution and sale of such products in Iran. Khatoon Abad is located at 45 Km from Sarcheshmeh Copper Complex in Kerman Prov-

ince. Sarcheshmeh, Khatoon Abad as well as Miduk Copper Complex are all projects of NICICO. Miduk and Khatoon Abad are very close to the City of Babak. Khatoon Abad Smelter was built in partnership with China's National Non-Ferrous Metals Co. The NICCIO, which is government controlled (it's under the wing of the Ministry of Industries and Mines) has been contracting out many of its operations, including the building of Khatoon Abad Smelter. Protesting workers demanded to be hired by the main company not the subcontractors. So, the company ultimately responsible for the project is NICICO. (NICICO website)

4. How many people died and were injured?

It has officially been declared that 4 people have died. (ILNA, BBC, Mashregh News Paper, etc.). Their last names have been announced as Mahdavi, Javadi, Momeni and Riyahi (Peykeiran.com). Number of injured people is not definite. There are various reports on the number of people injured during this incident. BBC Persian Reported of 4 killed and over 20 injured. Radiofarda's (radiofarda.com) according to a local news, reported that approximately 100 people were injured, which were hospitalized in Sarcheshmeh and City of Babak. France News Agency even reported a higher number of dead and injured.

5. Where exactly were the workers killed? In front of the factory or on the factory premises itself?

Worker had been in a sit-in position for 8 days before were attacked by security forces on January 23rd. They were protesting outside the Khatoon Abad Smelter, blocking the main road to the smelting plant.

6. Were they fired at from the helicopters?

It is acknowledged that helicopters were used to bring the special police forces from Kerman; however, there is no reliable news if these Special Forces fired at protesters from the helicopters. This is one of the issues, among many others, that need to be clarified during an independent investigation of the incident.

7. How many people were arrested?

Apparently scores of workers, their families and supporters were arrested throughout a couple of days, especially on January 23rd and 24th. On average 100 people have been reported of being arrested. According to news published in Peykeiran.com the commanding officer of Kerman Province's Security Forces, Isa Darayee, disclosed that 80 people were arrested in this incident, and they have still kept 15 of them and they are under interrogations.

8. When were they arrested?

People were arrested after the clashes with protesters on January 23rd in Khatounabad and subsequently in the City of Babak. Because protest by residents continued in Babak, more people were arrested in the city on January 24th.

9. Where does the reports on torture come from?

Mostly from Farsi websites as well as Iranian opposition groups. They have based their reports, such as the one on the reliable news site *peykeiran*, according to the statement reported by the detainees who were released. Many had to sign agreement that they would keep quite about the incident or might face further charges.

Four Killed in Protest by Striking Workers in Iran

January 25, 2004

AFP

TEHRAN -- Four people were killed and many others seriously injured when security forces clashed with striking workers at a copper factory in southeastern Iran, an MP said Sunday.

Mansur Soleymanni Meymandi told parliament that helicopters carrying special police units were sent in to break up the protests in the village of Khatounabad, near Shahrebabak, in southeastern Kerman province.

Workers had downed tools a few days earlier to support their demands for permanent contracts, the reformist deputy said.

Special forces attacked the village and the clashes spread to Shahrebabak, where four people were killed, he said.

Meymandi criticised the authorities for failing to handle the crisis, saying police had launched an "illegal operation which humiliated people," and called on President Mohammad Khatami and parliament speaker Mehdi Karubi to intervene.

Trade unions have no bargaining power in Iran, where the right to strike does not exist.

A Year after the Killing of Workers in Khatounabad! The Iranian Government Must Not Get Away with the Crime!

January 20, 2005 - A year ago, on 4th Bahman 1382 (January 23, 2004), Iranian security forces and Kerman Province's special guards brutally attacked protesting workers in the town of Khatounabad and the city of Shahr-e-Babak in Kerman Province, killing at least four and injuring dozens others. The attack was a bloody response to a sit-in and protest action held by the Nazkhaton's Copper Smelting plant's contract workers and their families.

Due to the persistence of the sit-in and the protest, the province Security Council, on which the governor of Kerman province and the governor of Shahr-e Babak city had seats, had decided to dispatch more security forces to the area. Special police forces were consequently brought in from Kerman city in helicopters to break the strike. The security forces initiated attacks and used force and firearms against the protesting workers in front of the plant and in the city of Shahr-e-Babak. As the result, at least four workers were killed and dozens wounded. General (Sardar) Mohammad Bagher Ghali-baf (Head of Iran's Security Forces) later confirmed that the police had fired the shots that killed the striking workers.

Given all the available facts, however, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as usual, covered up the incident by denying independent international investigation and by refusing to take full responsibility for the police brutality and the killing of the protesting workers. Thus far, the Iranian working people and the public at large have not seen any official response from the government authorities following all the national and international protests and subsequent to the ICFTU's complaint to the ILO. And we have not seen anyone being prosecuted for the killing and maiming of people.

The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has constantly used security forces to crush labour protests or to intimidate labour activists. The growing solidarity and support by the international labour movements, especially since the Khatounabad killing, and the escalation of labour actions and organizing efforts across the country could create a more favourable condition for workers in which the security forces and the authorities would have to be more cautious about the use of violence and intimidating tactics. The recent strike at the Kurdistan Textile Factory in the City of Sanandaj is a relevant example.

As we thank the international labour movement for their support of workers' rights in Iran, we are urging free labour organizations all over the world to regard the advancement of workers' rights in Iran as one of their main priorities in their international affairs for the upcoming years. In particular, approaching the anniversary of the Killing of workers in Khatounabad, we are asking all concerned organizations and individuals to denounce the Iranian government's refusal to take responsibility for the incident and to demand immediate identification and prosecution of all those responsible- regardless of their ranking within the government, for the killing and maiming of the protesting workers. Furthermore, all people who were victimized and the families of those who lost their lives must receive fair and proper compensation. IASWI (alliance@workrs-iran.org)

International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran

The attack on workers in Khatonabad is condemned!

Iranian workers! Eventually the blank temporary work contracts led to the bloodshed and death of workers in Khatonabad in Kerman province. This attack took place at a time when those in power in the government and those who are somehow linked with the working class, talk constantly of workers job security. However the reality is that the current job market in Iran and the economic policies of the country are such that without creating elemental changes one cannot in any way address the job security protections for the contract and temporary workers. The abuse by the employers, especially by the state as the main employer, of the existing circumstances, has created conditions where workers are employed with considerably less rights. The continuation of this process and its transformation to an illegal 'law' by some labour offices and employers, have created conditions where even the Labour legislation passed by the government of the Islamic Republic is not adhered to. Every day more workers are sacked by the committees for the settlement of disputes, joining the ranks of the unemployed or of contract workers. Under such circumstances, the state, as the main employer is itself using contract and temporary workers.

Under such circumstances, in order to escape poverty and to stop further exploitation, workers have to struggle against the implementation of temporary work contracts and contractors. If we don't confront such schemes, our destiny will not be different to that of Khatonabad workers who were attacked only because they had asked for work and continuation of their temporary contracts but seven of these workers lost their lives and tens of others were injured.

If Khatonabad workers were arrested and the perpetrators present themselves as heroic figures, and no one in this country puts these people on trial, it is our fault. Because we are dispersed and we don't have a collective voice! We workers have the same destiny as each other. If today Khatonabad workers are attacked, tomorrow could be workers in Kurdistan province and a day after that the Central province and finally everywhere in the country. Therefore, let's cry loudly that those responsible for the killing of workers in Khatonabad must be put on trial and punished for their crimes.

Workers in Iran! The key to gaining victory is to be united. Let's, regardless of our colour, race, ethnicity, gender, language, etc, bring the greedy capitalists to their knees.

Long Live the Memory of the Victims of Khatonabad in Kerman Province

***Mahmoud Salehi** (One of the victims of the Labour Office in Saqez, Kurdistan Province)- *Mahmoud wrote this statement in 2004 before he was arrested on May Day. Amongst his original charges, he was also charged with issuing this statement "in relation to the killing of workers in Khatonabad and blaming the government for the killing of these workers".

Iran Khodro Workers Honour Fallen Workers of Khatounabad

A group of workers at Iran Khodro Company (the largest automotive producer in the Middle East and Central Asia regions with over 58,000 employees) has issued a statement in which they have honoured the workers of Khatounabad and Share-Babak who were killed by the Islamic Republic's security forces on January 24, 2004. Iran Khodro workers announced that they will gather in the company's Cafeterias during the coffee and lunch breaks on January 24, 2008 to honour the fallen workers of Khatounabad. They also asserted that the reactionary anti-worker policies such as the temporary contracts and the contracting out have taken workers' job security away from them and are major problems facing workers. The security forces of the capitalist government of Iran killed workers just to protect the interests of capitalists and employers. Workers of the Tehran Vahed Bus Company, Alborz Carpet Company (FARSH-E ALBORZ), located in the city of BABOLSAR, and Parris textile workers in Sanandaj, as well as Iran Khodro workers and others have been facing similar repressive policies and practices and the pro-capitalist laws.*

*Security forces also opened fire on workers and drivers in the Persian Gulf Port Daylam, killing one worker and wounding a few others on November 5, 2006. Despite all the available facts, the government did cover up the incident by denying independent investigation and by refusing to take responsibility for the police brutality. Thus far, the Iranian working people and the public at large have not seen any official acknowledgement of responsibility by the government authorities following the killing of workers in the town of Khatounabad and the city of Shahr-e-Babak in Kerman Province or brutal attacks on workers of Vahed/ Saqez/ Alborz/Parris/ Sanandaj and other places. And we have not seen any authority being prosecuted for the killing and maiming of working people and their family members across the country.

Some current international campaigns in support of worker activists in Iran

Send an appeal to the Islamic Republic of Iran to release Mahmoud Salehi immediately or to ensure he urgently receives appropriate medical treatment.

Amnesty International: http://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions_details.asp?ActionID=386

Mansour Osanloo and Mahmoud Salehi – Iran: http://amnesty.org.uk/actions_details.asp?ActionID=352

LabourStart: http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=295

Committee in Defense of Mahmud Salehi: www.kdmahmodsalehi.blogfa.com

Mansour Osanloo: ITF: www.freeosanloo.org

ICFTU's Protest Letter to the IRI's President

6 February 2004

Dear Mr. President,

Killing of striking workers in Kerman Province

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which represents more than 151 million workers through its 233 affiliated trade union centres in 151 countries and territories worldwide would like to express its extreme concern over the killing of at least four workers and the injuries inflicted on 40 or more workers in the village of Khatoonabad and the city of Shahr-e Babak (Kerman Province) on Saturday 24 January 2004. The names of four of the dead workers are reportedly as follows: Mahdavi, Javadi, Momeni and Riyahi.

According to our information, the workers were a mixed group of unskilled workers, construction workers and other skilled workers employed in the construction of the Nazkhaton's Copper Smelting plant in the village of Khatoonabad. Their employer, a subcontractor that had built the smelting plant for the National Iranian Copper Industries Company in cooperation with China's National Non-Ferrous Metals Co., had reportedly promised permanent contracts to the 1500 workers who had participated in the construction and preparation of the smelting plant. However, once the construction had finished, the employer only kept 250 workers. The workers therefore went on strike.

The workers had organised work stoppages and a sit-in at the plant in the days up to 24 January. The sit-in had lasted 8 days before violence broke out. Many workers and their families, including many elderly women, had attended the protest and had been blocking the main road leading to the plant and the main entrance of the plant. They were demanding permanent contracts and were protesting against the use of temporary contracts, layoffs and deferred payment of salaries and benefits. We understand that due to the persistence of the sit-in and the protest, the province security council, on which the governor of Kerman province, Mr. Karimi and the governor of Shahr-e Babak city, Seifollah Shahad-Nejad have seats, had decided to dispatch more security forces to the area. Special police forces were consequently brought in from Kerman city in helicopters to break the strike, and they used force against the protesting workers in front of the plant. The confrontation subsequently spread to the city of Shahr-e Babak. The police opened fire during the confrontation and at least four workers were killed in front of the plant and dozens wounded. Some of the wounded were hospitalised in Surcheshmeh and in the city of Shahr-e Babak, some in a critical condition. General (Sardar) Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf

(Head of Iran's Security Forces) later confirmed that the police had fired the shots that killed the striking workers.

Local people subsequently gathered in front of the residences of the dead workers, demanding that those responsible for their deaths be held to account. Protests and confrontations with police reportedly continued over the following days, leading to the arrest of workers and their relatives. According to the commanding officer of the security forces of Kerman province, General Isa Darayee, 80 people were arrested during this incident and 15 were kept for interrogation.

As you undoubtedly know, Iran is under an obligation to respect the fundamental right of workers to freedom of association, by virtue of its membership of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The government of Iran therefore has a responsibility to prevent police from killing and injuring workers exercising the legitimate right to strike.

The ICFTU urges your government to ensure the release of all workers and their relatives arrested in connection to the events of 24 January.

We also call on your government to identify and prosecute those responsible for the death of the striking workers.

Moreover, we urge you to order an independent and impartial investigation into the matter and publicly announce the findings of the investigation. The ICFTU is concerned that the investigation you have ordered by a delegation from your Office would not be seen to be independent and impartial by the international community. The same concern applies to the investigations reportedly undertaken by the Interior Ministry and Kerman Governor's General Office.

Furthermore, we call on your government to ensure the respect in future of workers' fundamental right to strike. Finally, the ICFTU would like to inform you that, in view of the gravity of these events, the ICFTU has no choice but to lodge a complaint against the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association.

I would appreciate it, Mr. President, if you could kindly keep me informed of any action you may be taking concerning the matters described above.

Thanking you in advance,

Yours sincerely,
General Secretary

**Text of the letter from the ICFTU General Secretary
to the ILO.**

Mr. Juan Somavia,
Director-General
International Labour Office (ILO)
Route des Morillons 4
CH – 1211 Geneva
Switzerland
Fax: + 41 22 799.76.70

TUR/JS 12 February 2004

Dear Mr. Somavia,

Freedom of Association: Islamic Republic of Iran

The ICFTU hereby lodges a formal complaint against the Government of Iran for violations of the principles of freedom of association, the right to organise and the right to collective bargaining.

We have been informed of the killing of at least 4 workers and of injuries inflicted on 40 or more workers by riot police during a strike on 24 January 2004 in the village of Khatounabad and the city of Shahr-e Babak (Kerman Province, in the south east of Iran). The names of four of the dead workers are reportedly as follows: Mahdavi, Javadi, Momeni and Riyahi. Unofficial figures report between 7-15 dead and up to 300 wounded.

According to our information, the workers concerned by these events were a mixed group of unskilled workers, construction workers and other skilled workers employed in the construction of the Nazkhaton's Copper Smelting plant in the village of Khatounabad. Their employer, a subcontractor that had built the smelting plant for the National Iranian Copper Industries Company, in cooperation with China's National Non-Ferrous Metals Co., had reportedly promised permanent contracts to the 1500 workers who had participated in the construction and preparation of the smelting plant. However, once the construction had finished, the employer only kept 250 workers. The workers therefore went on strike.

The workers thus organised work stoppages and a sit-in at the plant in the days up to 24 January 2004. The sit-in lasted 8 days before violence broke out. Many workers and their families, including many elderly women, had attended the protest and had been blocking the main road leading to the plant and the main entrance of the plant. They were demanding permanent employment and were protesting against the use of temporary contracts, layoffs and deferred payment of salaries and benefits.

We understand that, due to the persistence of the sit-in and the protest, the Provincial Security Council, on which the Governor of Kerman province, Mr. Karimi and the Governor of Shahr-e Babak city, Mr. Seifollah Shahad-Nejad both have seats, decided to dispatch more security forces to the area. Special police forces were thus brought in from Kerman city by helicopter.

There are conflicting reports as to how the confrontation began. According to the government's press agency (the Islamic Republic News Agency, or "IRNA"), the confrontation began when 300 motorbike riders started attacking government property, banks and other buildings. A similar explanation was given by Governor Seifollah Shahad-Nejad, quoted on the matter by the Iranian press. However, he contended that the confrontation began when a group of 100-150 motorbike riders took advantage of the tension to start attacking the Governor's residence, banks and private property and that these attacks led the police to open fire. The Governor stated that some of the wounded sustained their injuries in clashes with baton-wielding riot police; he also claimed that some were hurt by flying objects thrown by the workers themselves.

Another version given by Mansour Soleymani Meymandi, a reformist Member of Parliament for the city of Shahr-e Babak, suggested that the local authorities had brought in special police forces in helicopters in order to break the strike, and that these special police forces had attacked the workers in the village of Khatounabad. The confrontation had then spread to the city of Shahr-e Babak, where the four workers were killed and dozens more severely injured. Mr. Mansour Soleymani Meymandi gave this information during a session in Parliament on 25 January, which was later broadcast on national radio.

Reports from Iranian workers' organisations in exile supported Mansour Soleymani Meymandi's understanding of the events. However, the organisations contend that the workers were shot dead in front of the plant, and that the outbreak of violence in the city of Shahr-e Babak was caused by special police forces dispatched there.

The General Secretary of the Tehran-based organisation "Workers' House", Mr Ali Reza Mahjoub, also confirmed that the police had attacked the workers during the sit-in. A communication received by the ICFTU from Workers' House on 30th January 2004 refers to an interview in which Mr. Mahjoub reportedly stated that Workers' House condemned the attack and that it had issued a protest statement. He was reported as placing the root of the problem in the use of [presumably fixed-term] contract labour in Iran. The communication also said that the organisation would be filing complaints with Iranian courts and with the ILO and that it would organise a protest gathering and a demonstration. The ICFTU has received no confirmation so far that any of these have actually taken place.

In an interview on 25 January with the "Iranian Labour News Agency" (ILNA), a Tehran-based official news agency published in Farsi language, the Governor of Kerman province, Mr. Karimi, confirmed that special guards from Kerman City had been brought in to break

the strike and ensure free access to the plant.

In view of the abovementioned reports, the latter statement gives the ICFTU reason to believe that the confrontation began when the police used force in an attempt to break the strike.

Iran's head of security forces, General (Sardar) Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf later confirmed that the police had fired the shots that killed the striking workers.

The ICFTU was also informed that some of the wounded were hospitalised in Surcheshmeh and in the city of Shahr-e Babak; some of them were reported as being in a critical condition.

After the confrontation, local people gathered in front of the residences of the dead workers, demanding that those responsible for their deaths be held to account.

Protests and clashes with police reportedly continued over the following days, leading to the arrest of workers and their relatives. According to one of the abovementioned exiled workers' organisations, security forces had conducted extensive house-to-house searches. The other exiled workers' organisation reported that a number of those arrested had been tortured.

Official sources confirmed the arrests. The commanding officer of the security forces of Kerman province, General Isa Darayee, disclosed that 80 people had been arrested during this incident, and 15 had been kept for interrogation. The present status of any such detained workers is unknown to the ICFTU at the time of writing. Different public authorities have reportedly ordered separate investigations into the matter. The President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr; Mohammad Khatami, has ordered an investigation by a delegation from the Presidential Office. The Interior Ministry has reportedly also ordered an investigation into the matter by a delegation of its own and a delegation from the Kerman Governor's General Office is also reported as investigating the matter.

In view of the gravity of these events, as reported by various – and sometimes contradictory – sources, I would like to request you, Mr. Director-General, to forward this communication to the Committee on Freedom of Association as a formal complaint against the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,
General Secretary

Open Letter To ICFTU, Re: Urgent Action on Killing of Workers in Iran

January 31, 2004

This is a follow up to our statement sent to your office

on January 27, 2004 regarding the killing of at least four copper smelter workers in the City of Babak, Province of Kerman on January 23, 2004, after Iranian security forces and Kerman Province's special guards brutally attacked protesting workers at the Nazkhaton's Copper Smeltery. The actual number of those killed and injured on January 23rd and the subsequent days in the City of Babak has been reported ranging from 7 to 15 dead and approximately 300 injured.

ICFTU is well aware that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the past 25 years has imposed the most unbearable political, economic, legal and social conditions on the Iranian working class and deprived masses. According to a report verified by ICFTU about one million workers in various industries in Iran have not received their wages for months or even years. A very large number of workforce in Iran are now in precarious – temporary and contract- jobs with little or no legal protections. All employers' groups, the government of khatami and various parliamentary and political factions within the Islamic Republic are supporting and aggressively engaged in implementing this antiworker neo-liberal agenda. Although workers have been fighting back against all these attacks on their rights, having no rights to organize freely or to strike, their protests and walkouts have relentlessly been repressed by security and intelligent forces. Iranian labour movement needs international labour solidarity and support to fight back against these offensives by the ruling class and its oppressive regime in Iran.

As we have declared in the attached statement, we are urging ICFTU and other workers' organizations to express their strongest outrage and condemnation at this brutal act of the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Furthermore, we are asking ICFTU to take any steps necessary to facilitate a mission of labour delegates and human rights advocates to be dispatched to Iran to directly investigate the circumstances that led to the shooting, killing and injuring of workers and their families and identify all those responsible for this atrocity. We are prepared to assist you in any way we possibly can to realize this mission as soon as possible.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this urgent matter, and we look forward to hearing from you soon. If you have any questions or require more information, please contact us at the above address.

cc: ICFTU Affiliates

The International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI) was formed through the efforts of a number of labour activists in different countries in 1999 to help launch and organize collaborative international worker solidarity campaigns and initiatives in support of workers' rights and struggles in Iran.

<http://www.workers-iran.org>
