

- **A Brief Report on May Day 2008 Events in Iran**
- **Government Banned Independent May Day Rallies**
- **Labour activists were arrested across the country for organizing May Day events!**
- **The Letter by the Free Union of Workers in Iran to the ITUC**
- **Updates on Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Workers and Alborz Tire Workers**

The government banned all independent May Day events across the country. They even prevented workers to hold a picnic in Chitgar Park near Tehran-Karaj highway on Friday [the weekend in Iran] before May Day. For about 1000 workers and their families, government sent over 1000 security forces to shut down the park. Despite these repressive measures, workers immediately moved to another park nearby (Jahan-Nama Park) and were able to celebrate May Day. In other cities, demonstrations and gatherings took place despite official bans and the presence of security forces.

- According to Iran-News, labour activists were not permitted to enter the only officially allowed May Day ceremony organized by the government-sponsored Worker's House. The ceremony was supposed to take place at Kheirrol-amal Stadium of Tehran with the participation of Alireza Mahjoobi, the head of the WH (who is also an MP), but it was cancelled without prior notice. The security forces did not allow independent labour activists to enter into the stadium, amongst them Mr. Reza Shahabi from Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company and Jafar Azimzadeh, a member of the newly formed Free Union of Workers in Iran, were not allowed in by police. In previous years, independent labour activists took their slogans and demands into the official events as well.

- According to various confirmed reports, some of the organizers of May Day rally in Sanandaj were arrested. The rally took place before Sanandaj's Social Security building and after the meeting some of organizers and activists were arrested and jailed. All these activists have since been released on bail. Their names are: Salah Zamani, a construction worker and a member of the Centre in Defense of Children Rights, who was rearrested, jailed and tortured following a March 8<sup>th</sup> event two years ago. Others included: Shiva Kheirabadi; Abdullah Najari, a worker activist, who had been imprisoned following a May Day event in Sanandaj a few years ago, Ghaleb Hosseini, Ali Hosseini, Bahaeddin Sadooghi and Sousan Razani

- The Free Union of Workers in Iran reports that three labour activists were arrested during May Day event in Oshnaviyeh in Kurdistan province. Hamid Athaari, Nasrin Mahmoudi Azar and Aram Ebrahim-khas were arrested at their work prior to the event. Since then, Ms. Nasrin Mahmoudi-azar has been released on bail.

- Taha Azadi, an alternate board member, and Javanmir Moradi, a board of director member, of Free Union of Workers in Iran, and another worker named Saeid Hazrati were arrested during a May Day event in Assaluyeh (located on the shore of the Persian

Gulf some 270 km SE of the provincial capital of Bushehr, and the closest land point to possibly the largest natural gas field in the world, the South Pars Gas Field.) Since then, Saeid Hazrati has been released but Moradi and Azadi continue to be in detention. According to the [www.roozonline.com](http://www.roozonline.com), these two labour activists were transferred to a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility and were being interrogated. According to a report by the Free Union of Workers in Iran both Moradi and Azadi have been in handcuffs since their arrest. According to Moradi's wife, Fouzieh Khalesi, the authorities have not allowed him to use his glasses and his eyes have been red and swollen. They also refused to give him his medications. Also, according to the Free Union of Workers these activists were transferred today, May 6, 2008, from Intelligence detention in Assaluyeh to the Intelligence office in Bushehr \* *(See below the letter of the Free Union of Workers in Iran to the ITUC.)*

- Roozonline reports that "Many prominent activists received calls from the Ministry of Intelligence asking them not to participate in independent May Day rallies."

- In Saez, hundreds of security forces were dispatched to prevent May Day activities in the city, however workers, including bakery, municipal and oil company workers, as well as teachers and university and high school students participated in the event.

- May Day Resolutions this year emphasized on workers' solidarity all around the world. They tackled job insecurity, privatization, dismissals, unpaid wages, and lack of independent workers' organizations as consequences of the existing global capitalist system. The resolution in Sanandaj called for the following demands:

- The International Workers Day- May 1<sup>st</sup> must be declared as an official holiday in the calendar and its celebration should be freely organized by workers.
- The right to organize and the right to strike are essential and the basic human rights. We believe that Workers' Council is the most effective form of organization to carry workers' collective will.
- We demand job security for all workers, cancel temporary contracts and stop dismissal and endless job losses
- We want sufficient unemployment insurance for workers and all other job-ready people. This insurance and all other benefits must be paid by employers.
- Wage rate for workers must be at an acceptable living level and should not be below the poverty line.
- We demand complete social rights for migrant workers and stop their dismissal and lay offs.
- We demand an end to tripartite labour relations in dealing with workers' issues. Minimum wage and work conditions must be decided by workers.
- We demand protective laws and regulations on hazardous jobs and intervention of real workers' representatives on the issues like retirement and disability.
- We support all social movements including women liberation movement as well as students' movement, teachers, nurses and so on. And we demand recognition of their organizations.

- Child workers are victims of the capitalist system. We strongly condemn child labour and demand a peaceable and happy life for all children.
- We demand immediate and unconditional release of imprisoned workers including Sheys Amani and Mansour Osanloo. All rulings and sentences against workers and worker activists must be dismissed.
- Condemning the whipping sentences against workers who participated at last year's May Day event in Sanadaj
- Capital punishment and stoning are inhuman acts and must be prohibited.
- We appreciate international efforts in solidarity with workers' struggles in Iran and call for increased support as we need international labour solidarity in our struggles against the capitalist system more than ever before.
- We, workers in Iran, support the struggles of workers against the capitalist system in all countries around the world.

Similar demands were declared by workers in other cities. The Collaborative Council of Labour Organizations and Activists, that includes a number of workers' committees inside Iran such as the Coordinating Committee to Assist the Formation of Workers' Organizations and Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Company workers, in addition, called for the removal of all obstacles for Haft Tapeh workers in order to form "the Syndicate of Workers of the Haft Tapeh Agro-Industry Company". This industrial complex employs about 5000 workers in Khuzistan province. Government officials have been harassing and persecuting worker activists of this company. For instance, just very recently five labour leaders of this company have recently been summoned to court. They are Fereydoon Nikoufard, Ali Nejati, Jalil Ahmadi, Mohammad Heydari Mehr and Ramazan Alipour. These activists are expected to appear in Dezful Revolutionary court on May 20, 2008. Workers at this company have been organizing numerous strikes and job actions for their demands including payment of their wages and their right to organize. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, over 2000 workers rallied outside the CEO of the company in protest over lack of appropriate actions by the company on their demands including the payment of 3 months overdue wages and improvement to the working conditions and the future direction of the company.

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\*To: The International Trade Union Confederation

RE: The imprisonment of Shays Amani and the clampdown on workers on May Day

With greetings

Dear friends and colleagues:

Today, as with many with other years, and despite the persistent pressures we have endured over these years, our union and the handful of existing independent organizations decided to celebrate May Day. However, on the eve of May 1st, Shays Amani – one of the founders of the Free Union of Iranian Workers and the former Executive Director of the Union – was unexpectedly arrested and thrown into jail, in order to create fear and terror among the workers. Shays Amani was one of the dismissed

workers of the Kurdistan Textile Company and for years represented the workers of this factory. He was arrested on May Day of last year and spent 42 days in prison. The initial court ruling sentenced Amani and Sedigh Karimi – another executive member of our union – to two and a half years in prison. The two were released on a bail of 50 million Tomans (approximately \$5,500) and were awaiting the ruling of the Appeals Court. While attending court to submit his property documents on April 23, 2008, Mr. Amani was arrested and detained, before the Appeals Court ruling had been announced to him or his lawyer.

In our opinion, this unanticipated arrest of Shays Amani on the eve of May Day, had no other objective than the creation of fear among workers and the prevention of May Day celebrations, as the subsequent actions of the Police Force also demonstrate.

1. Despite the recurrent efforts of our Union's executive in Sanandaj, the governor of the city did not issue us a permit for May Day celebrations, and, coupled with the clampdown by Security Forces, our colleagues were forced to conduct these ceremonies without issuing a widespread call-out, and outside the city of Sanandaj.
2. In Tehran, hundreds of Security and Police Forces prevented May Day commemorations by forming blockades around Chitgar Park and closing the entrances, and provoking fear and terror through a spectacle of force by the Special Unit and the Forces' motorbikes.
3. In Sanandaj, six of the participants in May Day celebrations were arrested in front of the Social Welfare Organization building (they have all since been released).
4. In Asalouyeh, after heeding the calls of our Union, workers congregating for May Day commemorations were met with Police Forces who confiscated the workers' placards and arrested three of the participants, Javanmir Moradi and Taha Azadi, both members of our Union, and another worker by the name of Saeed Hazrati. Moradi and Azadi remain in handcuffs in the custody of Intelligence Forces, and today, their families were banned from visiting.
5. In Ashnavieh city, members of our Union, along with many other activists in the city, had planned May Day activities. However, three activists, Nasrin Mahmoudi-Azar, Hamid Athari, and Aram Ebrahim-Khales, were arrested in their workplaces one day prior. While Nasrin has been released on bail, the two other arrestees remain in custody.
6. Our Union was unable to carry out its planned activities in front of the Ministry of Labour in the city of Kermanshah, due to existing pressures.

These acts of repression are occurring in a context where:

1. Six of the workers taking part in May Day activities in Sanandaj last year received lashes for their participation and, despite calls from millions of workers in Iran and around the world for his release, Mansour Osanloo continues to remain in jail. Furthermore, about thirty workers belonging to the Syndicate of Bus Workers (Sherkat-e Vahed) are continually suspended from work and summoned to court.
2. Five workers from Haft Tappeh's sugar factory were recently summoned to court for defending their rights, and over a hundred workers from the Navard & Profile Company in Saveh and the refrigerator production factory in Marvdasht were expelled from work for taking part in a brief strike. Meanwhile, all forms of workers' organization in industrial and production centres continue to be banned and any worker attempting to

form an independent organization is immediately arrested and expelled from work.

3. Deferments in wage payments have been on a significant rise in the last year. Hundreds of production and industrial centres have refused to pay their workers' wages on time, making it a routine procedure. Workers from tens of production and industrial centres are confronted with the daily realities of having their pay delayed anywhere between one month to two years.

4. In March 2008, during the first days of the Iranian new year, approximately fifty thousand workers were laid off. Due to the prohibition of independent workers' organizations, these workers have no recourse for defending their rights. As a result of these expulsions, the number of child workers in Iran is on a substantial rise.

5. Independent workers' representatives are not allowed to participate in determining the minimum wage, and as a result, the minimum wage established for this year continues to sit below the poverty line, at 219,600 Tomans per month (approx. \$240 US). Meanwhile, the price of rent alone is, on average, 300,000 Tomans a month in the provincial capitals, where 90 percent of the workers live. In addition, due to the lack of job classifications in many factories, the majority of workers receive only the minimum wage, while a considerable fraction of the workers – particularly women – receive salaries below the minimum wage.

Dear friends,

While our Union is grateful for the actions you have taken in regards to Iranian workers so far, we hope that you will forcefully protest the Iranian government for the arrests of Mansour Osanloo, Shays Amani, Javanmir Moradi, Taha Azadi, Hamid Athari, and Aram Ebrahim-Khales. In addition, with the approaching date of the Annual Meeting of the International Labour Organization, and taking into account the fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a member of the ILO while Iranian workers have no independent representatives at the meeting, we request that you – as representatives of our Union – raise the issue of the gross violations of fundamental workers' rights, as outlined in this letter, at the meeting.

With respect,

The Free Union of Workers in Iran

CC: Global Union and the International Labour Organization (Juan Somavia)

May 5, 2008

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**All arrested Alborz Tire Workers have been released on bail conditions.  
International Labour Organizations condemn the arrest and repression of Alborz  
Tire Workers:**

### **ICEM Protests Iran's Brutal Use of Force to Break Up Tyre Strike**

The ICEM has filed a stern protest with the Iranian government over its use of harsh and unnecessary force to break up a tyre strike at Kian Tyre, near Chahardangeh just west of

Tehran. The police force occurred 12 April when troops smashed factory gates and climbed walls to get at strikers.

Some 100 workers were brutalised with electric batons, and hauled off in police buses to incarceration, reportedly at Ahmad Abaad Mostofi police station. For the first 36 hours of detention, workers' families had no news on those who were arrested.

Eventually, most of the 100 were released conditionally, but only after police interrogated them to determine the strike's leaders. Reports say that at least ten are still being held, as are six firefighters who refused to disperse the strikers with hot-water cannons.

Workers at the factory employing 1,200 took strike action on 9 April because of non-payment of wages. They had not been paid since autumn 2007, with the exception of one month's pay plus a US\$120 New Year's bonus.

Kian Tyre was established in 1958 as a joint venture with the American company B.F. Goodrich. In 1979, the enterprise became part of state-owned National Iranian Industries, and in 1994 it was sold to private Iranian owners. The plant had previously gone under the name Alborz Tire Mfg. Co.

#### **IWW: Re: condemning the arrest and beating of Alborz tire workers**

The International Solidarity Commission of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), an international independent labor union, is outraged at the arrest and beating of hundreds of Alborz Tire Manufacturing Company near Tehran on April 12, 2008. The workers were protesting because they have not been paid their wages for five months. As a condition of release, workers were forced to sign letters guaranteeing that they would not protest again. This is a gross violation of the basic human right to freedom of speech and assembly, and the right to strike. Furthermore, the non-payment of wages that the workers were protesting is clearly a great injustice and a violation of Iranian and international law. We ask the question: Why did government forces arrest the victims of this crime (the employees) while protecting the perpetrators (management and owners)?

The ISC condemns this outrageous act on the part of your government and the Alborz Tire Manufacturing Company. We pledge our solidarity with the workers and we fully support their demands for receiving their full wages on time. We call on the government of Iran to immediately release all remaining detained workers and withdraw the conditions on released workers. The Alborz Tire Manufacturing Company and its corporate partners must also be held accountable for violation of basic workers' rights.

Sincerely,  
Michael Pesa

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*Date of Report: May 6, 2008*

*For more information, contact [info@workers-iran.org](mailto:info@workers-iran.org) or [alliance@workers-iran.org](mailto:alliance@workers-iran.org)*

*International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI)*

*Background Information: [www.workers-iran.org](http://www.workers-iran.org)*