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## About IASWI:

The International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI) is a progressive, non-partisan campaign in support of workers' rights and struggles in Iran. The IASWI was formed in 1999 and formally launched in January 2000 with the following objectives:

- Support workers' movement demands and struggles in Iran, including the right to organize free and independent labour organizations and the right to strike.
- Strive for an absolute end to the systematic

## Report on petrochemical workers' strike

In protest against temporary contract, and also against contract agencies, thousands of workers on temporary contracts working in government-owned petrochemical complexes in Bandar (Port) Imam, south of Iran launched a strike action on September 25, 2011. The strike ended on October 09, 2011. The complex has about 6500 workforce including about 4300 contract employees. Temporary contracted workers are fighting for the right to collective bargaining and direct and permanent contacts with employers.

Prior to the current strike at Bandar Imam, workers in the Tabriz petrochemical company in March 2011 undertook strike action for the right of collective bargaining. Workers in other sectors and international organizations gave the striking workers necessary strength and confidence. The strike was suspended following government promises that it would respond to the demand of the striking workers in 3 months time, this turned out to be an empty promise.

According to various sources, 70-80% of Iranian workers are working on temporary contracts without any job security, and about 80% of them are beneath the poverty line. Workers in workshops with fewer than ten workers are not even covered by labour legislation. For the workers who work under temporary contracts no term of employment is given. The official minimum wage is approx. £190 a month which applies to the poorest 8 million workers, not counting those who work in workshops with fewer than ten workers who are mostly paid less than the minimum wage. In some cases workers have not received payment of wages for up to eighteen months or even a longer period. There is also a complete lack of health and safety standards in the workplace, placing workers at high risk of injury.

The strike ended on October 9, 2011 after the City of Mahshahr's and the Complex's authorities responded to workers by claiming that workers' demands are much broader in scope than their ability to respond. They apparently made a new promise that they would discuss workers' issues and demands with The Ministry of Petroleum and would report back to workers by the end of the month. Regardless of whether this strike would lead to an achievement of workers' demands, the action of strike itself was a significant step forward for all Iranian workers on temporary contracts. Striking workers at Bandar Imam have turned the basic and urgent needs of the Iranian working class into militant demands, serving as a benchmark for future strike actions elsewhere.\*

The International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran will continue to support the struggle of the petrochemical workers of Bandar Imam. We fully support their demands for removing contract agencies from their industry and achieve collective and permanent contracts and official status across all workplaces.

We ask labour organizations, unions and progressive political parties, as well as all freedom-loving and equal-rights seeking people all over world to show their solidarity and give support to the working class struggles in Iran.

International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI)  
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repression, persecution, imprisonment, torture, assassination and execution of labour activists and political opponents in Iran.

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

The IASWI has been working in collaboration with many labour and progressive activists and organizations in Iran and around the world to strengthen worker-to-worker solidarity in defence of workers' rights and struggles in Iran and against the repressive Islamic Republic of Iran and its capitalist and neo-liberal policies and practices. As an international solidarity campaign in support of workers in Iran, the IASWI has colleagues and branches in North America, Europe and other parts of the world that work collaboratively towards the realization of the above objectives.

#### **Contact IASWI:**

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## **Solidarity with Petrochemical Workers' Strike in Iran**

Many labour organizations inside Iran expressed solidarity in support of petrochemical workers' strike including Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Workers' Syndicate, Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, The Free Union of Workers in Iran and the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations.

Various trade unions internationally announced their support of striking workers in Bandar Imam Petrochemical Complex. For instance, The Belgian Trade Union Federation ABVV-FGTB; French trade union federations CGT, FSU, UNSA, Solidarités and Switzerland' CGAS have been actively supporting petrochemical workers' strike.

On October 7, 2011, for the occasion of "World Day for Decent Work" representatives of various Unions participated in an action which was organized and coordinated by Swiss trade unions including CGAS and UNIA. The event started with a rally outside the United Nations and ended with a march to the ILO headquarters. In this protests the representative of Geneva syndicates, Switzerland, Mr. Claude REYMOND of CGAS, once again declared their support for the striking petrochemical workers.

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## **Solidarity with Striking Petrochemical Workers in Iran**

### **On behalf of the CGT, FSU, UNSA, Solidarités, Trades-Union Federations, France**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 6,500 workers from different sections of the petrochemical industry, one of the most profitable industrial sectors in Iran, went on strike. They are protesting against employment agencies which act as 'procurers' of workers (to the industry) and enforce very low wages and a minimum of contractual rights.

The strikers want to hold their destiny in their own hands, to bargain collectively, and to be directly employed by the petrochemical companies, with secure contracts. These demands are in line with international conventions on rights at work. They have formed strike committees to better coordinate protest actions, which is perfectly legitimate.

The security forces have begun harassing and attacking the strikers, three of whom were arrested and imprisoned for 48 hours. They were released under pressure from the strikers.

The French organisations that are part of the 'Maghreb – Middle East Trades – Union Collective' support the legitimate demands made by the Iranian strikers. They salute their courage and call on the Iranian authorities to respect workers' legitimate rights.

We stress once again that Iranian workers are not alone in their struggle for their rights, and that organised labour in France, stands with them in their struggle, which is conducted under conditions of severe police repression.

Long live international solidarity

6<sup>th</sup> October 2011

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- Strive for an absolute end to the systematic repression, persecution, imprisonment, torture, assassination and execution of labour activists and political opponents in Iran.
- Promote the

## Solidarity message to Petrochemical Workers' From The Belgian Trade Union Federation ABVV-FGTB

The Belgian Trade Union Federation ABVV-FGTB has been informed about labour activists in the Iranian petrochemical sector (especially strikers) are being harassed en – some among them – even arrested by the security forces. ABVV-FGTB condemns, not for the first time, the continuous gross attacks on workers' rights in the country.

ABVV-FGTB wants to express his deep solidarity with this workers and also sustains the just and legally demands of the strikers. ABVV-FGTB wants also to salute their courage during this difficult times and situation.

This support confirms our belief that international trade union solidarity knows no borders and the Belgian affiliates of our trade union are together with the workers in Iran in their struggle for better conditions. Decent Work is indeed worldwide a primordial for both ILO and ITUC.

Best regards,  
Christian VANCOPPENOLLE  
Policy Advisor/Coordinator a.i.  
International Relations Dpt.  
ABVV-FGTB Federaal

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## Communauté genevoise d'action syndicale (CGAS)

Around the Iranian New Year (March 2011) the workers of the petrochemical factories of Mahshar (Southern Iran) and Tabriz (North West Iran) struck to obtain collective bargaining, secure contracts, and official contracted status for sub-contracted workers.

The state and the employers, promising to satisfy these demands, convinced the workers to end the strike. Not only did they not keep their promises, they also began repression against worker activists.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, 6,500 petrochemical workers in Bandar Imam (Southern Iran), began a strike, taking up the same demands.

It must be noted that sub-contracted and permanent workers are standing shoulder to shoulder in this strike. They are determined not to be satisfied with mere promises but to continue their strike until their demands are met.

The trades-union movement of Geneva sends them (Bandar Imam strikers) their full support and invites Iranians living in Geneva to take part with us in the "World Day for Decent Work" on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2011.

Tuesday, October 4, 2011 by Claude Reymond

<http://www.cgas.ch/SPIP/spip.php?article1911>

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

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## Iranian Petrochemical Workers Strike, Demanding Elimination of Subcontractors



<http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4712-Iranian-Petrochemical-Workers-Strike-Demanding-Elimination-of-Subcontractors>

Under strong intimidation and threats, 6,500 workers at the government-owned Mahshahr Bandar Imam Petrochemical complex, in the South-West of Iran, took strike action on 28 September, demanding an end to management's use of subcontracting firms at the plant. Workers' rights are continuously undermined by intermediary companies, in a familiar pattern seen around the world. Workers are not directly employed by the factory where they work, and so are unable to bargain collectively with management, forced to work in substandard conditions with low wages and allowances, all based on precariously temporary contracts.

Workers at the Tabriz petrochemical company at the plant conducted an 11-day strike in March this year on the same demands. That strike was suspended after an empty government promise to respond to workers' demands within three months. While CAL workers do not receive their production and efficiency bonuses, their contract agency collects those benefits. Despite of management threats and arrests of union activists, the union is committed to continuing the action until their demand is met.

On paper, the management has supposedly committed itself to eliminating the subcontracting firms for some time but its actual implementation in most facilities is yet to happen.

The Free Union of Iranian Workers reports that on the seventh day of the strike, three oil workers were summoned to the security office and immediately put under arrest. These were Mansour Abbasi, a worker with the Khawrazmi subcontracting company and a workers' representative; Mohammad Bagher Bagheri, worker at Fars Industries contracting company and a workers' representative; and Jasem Bandarani, another worker at the Khawrazmi subcontracting company. The arrests followed protest rallies near the main offices of the petrochemical complex which included marches and chants. The three arrested workers have since been released.

Reports suggest over 70% of Iranian workers are employed on temporary contracts, with no job security. Many other shocking abuses are reported, from poverty wages often beneath the low minimum wage, non-payment of salaries for up to 18 months, extremely dangerous working conditions, and little to no legislative protections.

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### \*Strike at Petro Sina Company

According to Free Union of Workers in Iran, workers at Petro Sina Company in City of Abadan has gone on strike for demands similar to that of Bandar Imam petrochemical workers. The Petro Sina Company is another contractor that provides technical and engineering services, procurement of equipment and machineries, installation up to start-up , repair and maintenance and in general execution of petrochemical , oil, gas and other industrial projects. More update on Petro Sina workers' strike action will be issued subsequently.