



12 September 2023

Written submission to the Human Rights Committee (CCPR) on the implementation of the ICCPR in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 4th periodic report (CCPR 139th session, 9 October - 3 November 2023)

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) together with Education International (EI), the global federation of teacher unions, welcomes the opportunity to make a written contribution on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, in advance of the 139th session of the CCPR taking place between 9 October - 3 November 2023.

This submission sets out some of ITUC's and EI's key concerns and recommendations related to the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) by the government of Iran. This submission highlights concerns with regard to freedom of assembly (Article 21 ICCPR) and freedom of association (Article 22 ICCPR) with the hope of supporting the Committee's consideration of the 4th periodic report by Iran.

Yours sincerely,

David Edwards

General Secretary
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SUBMITTING ORGANIZATIONS

International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) represents 200 million workers in 163 countries and territories and has 332 national affiliates. The main areas of activity include the following: human and labour rights; economic and social policy; equality and non-discrimination; and international solidarity. The ITUC has close relations with the Global Union Federations and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC). It works closely with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other UN Specialized Agencies.

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Education International (EI) is organizing teachers and education workers through its 383 member organisations, representing more than 32 million teachers and education support personnel in 178 countries and territories. EI has consultative status with the UN agencies, particularly UNESCO and the ILO.

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**Joint Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee to inform consideration of the
implementation of ICCPR by the Islamic Republic of Iran
2023**

ITUC, EI

SUMMARY

This submission discusses the increasingly prevalent trade union rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran has transgressed its international human rights obligations with severe violations of freedom of association and assembly, including repression of peaceful demonstrations, police brutality, arrest and systematic detention, torture to obtain confessions, sentencing and imprisonment of the protesting workers and their representatives, including trade unionists from other countries. The climate of pressure, fear and extreme physical violence gravely undermines the ability of workers to exercise their freedom of assembly and association, protected by Articles 21 and 22 of ICCPR. At the same time workers' rights are severely restricted in law. Workers cannot freely exercise their right to to establish and, subject to the rules of the organization concerned, to form or join organizations, federations, and confederations of their own choosing, to organise their administration and activities, to freely elect their leaders and to formulate their programmes for furthering and defending the interests of workers. With the independent trade union unrecognized, labour activism criminalized and labour leaders routinely imprisoned and tortured in Iran, workers cannot make their voices effectively heard and their labour rights violations addressed. In 2022, consecutive to the extrajudicial killing of Jina Mahsa Amini, students and human and trade union rights activists have been further threatened. The Government of Iran has taken no meaningful steps to address these gaps. According to the 2023 Global Rights Index of the International Trade Union Confederation, Iran is one of the worst countries for workers with "no guarantee of rights".¹ The persistence of these violations and the failure of the state bodies to seriously address the situation continues to expose workers engaging in trade union activities to imminent danger and irreparable harm.

UPDATE FROM THE LAST REVIEW

In its Concluding Observations issued after the 3rd review of Iran in 2011,² the CCPR expressed concern about severe limitations of the right to freedom of assembly and association and noted the continuing reports of harassment or intimidation, prohibition and forceful breaking up of demonstrations, arrests and arbitrary detentions of human rights defenders (para 26). The CCPR called on the Government of Iran to ensure that the right to freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed to all individuals without discrimination, and to release immediately and unconditionally anyone held solely for the peaceful exercise of this right, including trade unionists, to investigate the threats, harassment, and assault and to prosecute the perpetrators.

The situation has not improved since then. The past 12 years have seen a consistent increase in the violation of workers' rights in Iran. Calls for democracy and equality have been met with violence from state police forces. Iran has still not ratified any of the core ILO Conventions concerning freedom of association and collective bargaining – Nos. 87 and 98. Its compliance

¹ INT'L TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION, 2023 ITUC GLOBAL RIGHTS INDEX: https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/2023_ituc_global_rights_index_en.pdf

² <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/474/49/PDF/G1147449.pdf?OpenElement>

with the freedom of association principles has been reviewed several times by the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association. There are currently 3 open cases – 1 with the active³ and 2 with the follow-up⁴ status (Case no. 2508 and Cases nos. 2807 and 2566 respectively). The cases concern several and continued acts of repression against trade union organizations, harassment of trade unionists and activists; arrests and detention of trade union members, leaders and workers. While these cases have been submitted between 2006-2010, interim reports from 2011–2023 – including the most recent reports from the years 2019-2023 - demonstrate a lack of progress in bringing the laws and practice in Iran in compliance with the international labour standards.

VIOLATIONS IN PRACTICE

Repression of peaceful demonstrations in Iran

Ongoing brutal suppression of the Jina Mahsa Amini protests Civil unrest and protests against the Government of Iran following the death in police custody of Jina Mahsa Amini began on 16 September 2022 and are ongoing. The authorities continue to repress the exercise of the right to freedom of association and assembly by undertaking mass waves of arrests of trade unionists and workers in Iran. Since the start of the peaceful protests more than 18,000 individuals have been arrested across Iran, including hundreds of students. Around 500 protesters have been killed, many of them were from the working class, ethnic and oppressed groups, including at least 60 students/children under the age of 18. At least 30 arrested protesters have been sentenced to death for their participation in the nationwide protests. At least 7 have already been executed. In August 2023 the security officials started to impose signed commitments from union leaders and activists stating that they would not take action to commemorate the first anniversary of Jina's extrajudicial killing on 16 September.

Protesting workers beaten and detained by security forces during the mass protests in 2019

A series of nationwide civil protests took place in 2019, followed by the violent crackdown against the protesters. So far the Iranian Government has failed to provide any real measure of accountability for the militarized and deadly response that took place. The authorities continue to harass the families of those killed during the protest. The Government's actions had a heavy impact on workers. An illustrative case is provided by the treatment of workers involved in the protests at a major industrial complex in the city of Arak, 281 kilometres west of the capital city, Tehran:

The industrial complex in question produces road construction equipment for Iran and other Middle Eastern countries. It has been set up before the Islamic Revolution and it was privatised in 2017. Immediately following the privatisation, problems emerged for workers. The new owners started to delay wages. Working conditions deteriorated. Workforce has reportedly been reduced from 8 000 workers to 1 000. Workers have been protesting these changes since 2017. In September 2019 they joined the nationwide protests. Almost 900 workers of the industrial complex were demonstrating on 16 September. The authorities responded with brutal suppression of the protest. Special security forces attacked the workers, injured up to 20 and

³https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:20060:0:FIND:NO:20060:P20060_COUNTRY_ID,P20060_COMPLAINT_STATU_ID:102800,1495810

⁴https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:20060:0:FIND:NO:20060:P20060_COUNTRY_ID,P20060_COMPLAINT_STATU_ID:102800,1495811

detained 40 more. Approximately 30 of those arrested were detained for up to 2 weeks. At least 6 workers were detained for a month and a half, being released only on 28 October.

Systematic detention, sentencing and imprisonment of trade union leaders in the education sector

A series of strikes and protests took place across Iran from early 2018 against the country's economic situation. Teachers participated in the nationwide strikes organised by the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers Trade Associations (CCITTA) on 14 and 15 October 2018 to protest the repression of their rights to freedom of association and the ongoing detention of trade union leaders. Iranian authorities responded by a systematic criminalisation of peaceful protesters and union leaders. Numerous teacher unionists have been subjected to harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, detention in solitary confinement for several consecutive days, torture to obtain false confessions, unfair trials, and unduly prolonged prison sentences. Many of them lost their jobs as the courts issue preliminary or definitive dismissal orders. Many detained teacher unionists have suffered health deterioration during the incarceration but have been denied medical furlough. Another worrying phenomenon is the increase in the amount of the bails for temporary release from prison that in some cases reached over 50,000 USD (2,500,000,000 Tomans). The authorities are now threatening to seize houses and belongings of the bondsmen. Several union leaders from the Marivan Teacher Trade Association saw their legal case transferred to the Islamic Revolution Court, known for conducting high-profile political trials.

According to the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations (CCITTA), the following list of Iranian education union leaders and members, all affiliated to provincial sections of the CCITTA, have been targeted by the Iranian authorities for participating in peaceful protests or otherwise engaging in trade union activities :

Sara SIAH POUR, a teacher and headmaster born in 1979, joined the Teacher's Association of Tehran in 2015. She was close to teacher union leader Esmail ABDI. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) filed two complaints against her activities on behalf of teacher rights to the court in 2020, and another one in 2021. She was acquitted in court for all these cases. On 23 August 2022, she was brutally arrested by the IRGC on her way to school. She was interrogated and kept in solitary confinement for ten days. The IRGC threatened her family, forcing her to commit to stop advocating for the imprisoned teachers. She was released on 3 September 2022. The court hearing was presided by Judge Salavati, a well-known judge of the Islamic Revolutionary Court, on 2 January 2023, where she was denied access to a lawyer. She was condemned to 5 years in prison for assembly and collusion, an additional 1 year in detention for propaganda-related activities against the regime, a 2-year ban from leaving the country, a 2-year prohibition of membership in political organizations and online activities. An appeal court was held in February 2023 without her knowledge. The sentence was confirmed for 5 years detention. The court has also issued a preliminary dismissal order that would result in her losing her job.

Jafar EBRAHIMI is a teacher, on the board of directors of the Tehran Teachers' Trade Association, and he also holds the position of an inspector of the CCITTA. His latest arrest took place on 30 April 2022, after his house was raided and he was arrested without a warrant. On 31 January 2022, Branch II of Karaj Revolutionary Court had sentenced him to 4 years and 6 months in prison on the charges of "propaganda activities against state" for publishing official statements for the CCITTA, and "gathering and collusion with the intention of acting against the

national security” for attending the 40th day memorial services for those killed in the November 2019 protests at the Sakineh Behesht Cemetery in Karaj on 26 December 2019. Ebrahimi appealed the sentence and was granted bail but he was re-arrested in April 2022. In late October 2022, the Tehran Revolutionary court sentenced him to 4 years on the charge of “assembly and collusion” and 1 year on “propaganda against the regime.” Based on article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code, which allows defendants to serve only the longest sentence in cases involving multiple convictions, the 4 years will be enforceable. He was also banned from leaving the country and from membership in political and civil groups for 2 years. On 27 November 2022, the Tehran Court of Appeals upheld a 5-year sentence against him. In December 2022, Jafar Ebrahimi was transferred to a hospital for a health emergency. He was chained in his hospital bed and was guarded for 4 days by 2 security officers. In September 2023, information from inmates indicated that Jafar Ebrahimi suffers from acute diabetes with intestinal disorders and that he may lose his vision entirely. Despite the alarmed request, he has been denied medical furlough and on 3 September 2023 was transferred to another prison facility outside Tehran. The authorities have also levied new charges against him, accusing him of "threatening the security of the nation" and "disturbing the peace of society." Jafar has refused to accept any prison food in protest against this illegal transfer and the new charge imposed on him. He is currently on a semi-hunger strike, and given his health condition, this poses a significant risk to his life.

Mohammad HABIBI is a spokesperson for the Tehran Teachers’ Trade Association. He has been a teacher for 18 years, employed by the Iranian Ministry of Education. Habibi has suffered judicial harassment for years because of his union engagement. He had been terminated twice from his teaching position under the pretext of the “unjustified leave of absence” while he was in detention. In August 2018, he was sentenced by Branch 26 of Tehran Revolutionary Court to an executable 7 and a half years imprisonment on charges of “collusion against national security”, “propaganda against the state” and “disrupting public order” for his peaceful involvement in trade union activities. In November 2020, he had been released from the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary after serving 30 months, after his sentence was reduced based on a new directive issued by the head of the Iranian judiciary. In April 2022 he was arrested on charges of spreading propaganda against the regime and society as well as conspiring against national security. His house was raided, and electronic devices belonging to him and his wife were confiscated while he was violently arrested. In October 2022 he was sentenced to 3 years and 7 months of imprisonment. The court has issued an order of definitive dismissal for Mohammad Habibi so he will now be blocked from being a member of a trade union.

Hashem KHASTAR is a Board member of the Teachers Trade Association in Mashhad. He is a retired teacher from the agricultural technical school. On 31 July 2022 Khastar was informed that he was to appear in court for a hearing the next day. He was placed in detention and is still currently held in the Vakil Abad prison, in Mashhad in the province of Khorassan. He is 70 years old and is the oldest active member of the teachers' union, often deprived of even the most basic rights of a prisoner. We recall that Khastar has been jailed many times by the Iranian authorities for his trade union activities.

Mahmoud MELAKI, member of the board of directors of the Teachers’ Trade Association of Bushehr, has been subjected to repeated arrests by the security forces on false charges, due to his affiliation with the union and his advocacy for the rights of teachers. On December 17th, 2022, he was apprehended by the IRGC. Previously, he had been banned from entering the school's educational facilities for 2 years. As per the latest court ruling, Mr. Malaki has been suspended for a duration of 6 months. He is also one of the teachers who received a preliminary dismissal order.

Eskander (Soran) LOTFI is a member of the board of directors of the Teachers Trade Association of Marivan, Kurdistan province, and the spokesperson for the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Association. He was last arrested on 30 April 2022 after a social encounter with two French teacher unionists (their case is described below). He was arrested after traveling back to Mariwan to organise the May Day celebrations, which in Iran also correspond to Teachers Day. He was initially detained in a detention facility in Sanandaj, then transferred on 30 May 2022 to Evin prison. He was held in solitary confinement and transferred several times from ward 2 to a cell from the Ministry of Information to a joint cell to ward 4. He has been constantly interrogated and tortured during the 78 days of his incarceration in the Evin prison. He consistently refused to sign a confession. On 23 September 2022 he was briefly released again on bail of 2,000 million Tomans (over 50,000 USD). But he got rearrested and held in the Marivan detention center for two nights and then transferred again to the Evin Prison on 25 September for 40 days. From 4 November 2022 he was held for 18 days in the greater prison of Tehran. He was released on bail of 500 million Tomans. His whereabouts are unknown, and he may be in hiding. His trial was passed to the Islamic Revolution Court and his case is handled by Judge Salavati.

Shaban MOHAMMADI is a Board member of the Marivan Teachers Trade Association. On 31 January 2022, he was arrested and detained in an unknown location without access to his family, lawyer, or doctor. He was released on bail on 20 February 2022. On 30 March 2022, Shaban Mohammadi was arrested again, physically assaulted by security officers and threatened prior to his participation in teachers' gatherings. In the early hours of 30 April 2022, he was arrested in Marivan together with other teacher union leaders from Marivan subjected to physical violence, his house searched and had all electronic devices confiscated. On 11 May 2022, he was arrested again while he was visiting his fellow union leader Massoud Nik Khah (see below). On 5 June 2022, he was transferred to the Evin prison. He was released on 1 August 2022 after posting a heavy bail of 2000 million Toman. Mohammadi was not at home on 8 October 2022 when security forces broke into his door at 7am. Since no legal document from the judiciary was produced to justify his arrest, he did not present himself to the authorities. Since then, he has been in hiding in fear of being re-arrested. His whereabouts are unknown.

Massoud NIK KHAH is a Board member of the Teacher' Trade Association in Marivan, Kurdistan. He was arrested on 30 April 2022 prior to the May Day celebrations. He was held in a security detention center in Sanandaj, until his transfer to Evin on 4 June 2022. On 12 May, security forces raided his house and confiscated the phones of all members of the family. All the entrance exam papers for entrance into higher education and computer of his son were taken. During his detention, often in solitary confinement, he was tortured by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. On 20 August 2022 he was released on a heavy bail of of 2000 million Toman. He was arrested and detained again on 8 October 2022 and was subsequently detained in a Marivan security detention centre for 2 days, then fr 43 days in the Evin prison and, subsequently, for 13 days in the Greater Tehran prison. He was released on a new bail of 500 million Toman on 5 December 2022. Accordingly, between 30 April and 5 December 2022, he was incarcerated for 168 days with an interruption between 20 August and 8 October. He is still facing charges. His case was tranferred to the Islamic Revolutionary Court handled by Judge Salavati. He has been in hiding in fear of being re-arrested. His whereabouts are unknown.

Esmail ABDI is the former general secretary of the Tehran Teachers' Trade Association. He was a mathematics teacher at a high school in Eslamshahr in the province of Tehran. He has been detained since 2015 in the Evin prison, after having been arrested in order to prevent him

from taking part in the global Congress of the Education International. His health situation is very worrying as he is not getting medical supervision. In August 2023 he has been denied medical furlough. According to the various successive judicial decisions, his release is not due until 2031. Since his arrest, Abdi has been held in three prisons: Evin, Karaj Central Penitentiary, and in Karaj's Kechui prison. The requests for retrial introduced by his lawyer and his family were rejected 4 times. However, in December 2022, a court finally accepted the request. Despite the above, the intelligence forces still refuse to release him, even on medical grounds.

Rasoul BODAGHI is a member of the board of directors of the Eslamshahr Teachers' Trade Association (Tehran Province) and the general secretary of the CCITTA. We recall that Mr. Bodaghi has been the target of government persecution for years. On 2 September 2009, he was arrested and sentenced on 4 August 2010 to six years in prison and banned from social activities for five years by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court for "assembly with the intent to disrupt national security" and "propaganda against the state." In September 2015, at the end of his jail sentence, Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court, sentenced him to a further three years in jail. On 28 April 2016, he was released from Evin prison. On 11 December 2021, his house was raided by security officers in Tehran, during which he was physically assaulted and arrested. During the arrest, security officers confiscated his and his wife's communication devices. He was also denied the right to wear appropriate clothing. While detained in the Evin 209 Ward, the nature of the charges against him remained unknown. The family's attempts to get his clothes and prescription glasses delivered to him remained unsuccessful. On 21 December 2021, he had been released on bail. In April 2022, his house was raided, and he was violently arrested and since then he has been held in the Evin Prison. On 12 April 2022, Branch 26 of Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced him to 4 years in prison on the charge of "gathering and collusion with the intention of disturbing the national security" and 1 year in prison on the charge of "propaganda activities against the state" for his peaceful engagement with CCITTA. On 1 June 2022, Branch 36 of the court of appeal confirmed the sentence. He has also been sentenced to a 1-year travel ban, a 2-year ban on residing in Tehran and its neighbouring provinces, and a 2-year ban on membership in political parties and social groups.

Masoud FARHIKHITEH is a member of the board of the Eslamshahr Teachers' Trade Association and co-chair of the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations (CCITTA). On 13 May 2022, during the teachers' protests in various cities in Iran, several protestors including Farhikhteh were arrested. He was released on 8 June 2022 on bail until the end of legal proceedings. The Criminal Court of Tehran sentenced him to one year imprisonment and 74 lashes on the charge of "disturbing public order". The court's decision was later suspended for two years. He was rearrested on 3 December 2022 by the security forces in Karaj, the capital of Alborz Province. He was released on bail on 1 February 2023 and awaits his trial.

Mehdi FATHI is a history teacher and a member of the Teachers' Trade Association in the Fars province. He was arrested and detained again on 7 June 2022 for his participation in a teachers' protest in Shiraz, the capital of Fars. The provincial appeal court sentenced him to eight years in prison. The court cancelled his passport and banned him from leaving Iran. He is currently in the Adel Abad prison in Shiraz. Earlier, he had been violently arrested on 14 September 2021, by security forces. He was denied access to medical treatment while suffering from heart disease. He was prosecuted for his union activities and participation in peaceful protests. On 4 January 2022, Mehdi Fathi had been released on bail after 113 days of solitary confinement in Adel Abad prison. He had been arrested previously in the city of Pasargad after his whistle-blowing actions of exposing the financial misconduct of several local and religious officials and was sentenced to 14 months in prison. He was also fined in a court of first instance.

Aziz GHASEMZADEH is a member of the Teachers' Trade Association of Gilan. He was sentenced to 1 year in prison. On 11 April 2023, he was detained. In August he underwent surgery for which he needed recovery time, however he was swiftly transferred to the Lakan Prison in Rasht. He is currently experiencing prostate issues. He is also one of the teachers who received a preliminary dismissal order.

Zhila KHAYER is an art teacher and a member of the Teacher Trade Association in Kazeroon, Fars province. She was arrested on in Kazeroon in December and held in Adel Abad prison. On 13 December 2022, she was transferred to Soroush Detention Center for interrogation sessions. She has been sent back to Adel Abad prison in Shiraz. She is waiting for the bail to be set for her release.

Shiva MAFAKHERI, a female math teacher and activist with the Teacher Trade Association in Sanandaj Kurdistan province, was arrested in mid-November and her whereabouts are currently unknown. She was arrested because she did not let her students being punished.

Tahsin MOSTAFA is a teacher in the rural area of Sarvabad born in 1983. He joined the Iranian teacher association of Sarvabad in 2003. As a headmaster he refused to list the teachers who had participated in a three day sit in in 2009. He was charged with the Islamic Revolutionary Court and received a one year sentence. In 2013 he joined the teacher association at the Marivan provincial level and started authoring articles about the teacher demands and low status. In June 2021 he was elected on the board of the Marivan teacher association. He was regularly harassed and forced into denouncing the CCITTA activities and statements. Following the arrest of three leaders of the Marivan Teacher association on 30 April, all board members have been scrutinized and harassed. Since 1 May 2022 he was the Marivan representative on the national board of CCITTA. He was arrested and beaten several times throughout June 2022 in the Marivan governors office and detained in the Marivan General Prison. In 2023 his charges were tranfered to the Islamic Revolutionary Court. He was additionally charged with participation in the Jina protests. He was demoted as a teacher and his benefits reduced to one third with no possible administrative appeal procedure.

Pirouz NAAMI is the general secretary of the Khuzestan Teachers' Trade Association. He was arrested during the 2022 Jina uprising. He was released on bail after a month, but recently the regional office of the Ministry of Education informed him that the security forces had cancelled his latest permanent contract with the Ministry and his payment is reduced to an older contract. This unlawful act is a big financial blow to him and his family and is used as a punitive tool to silence the teacher activists. In 2023 he was sentenced to 1 year in prison and a 2 years ban from union activities and traveling abroad.

Hamid RAHMATI is a retired teacher member of the Teacher' Trade Association in Shahreza, Isfahan Province. He was arrested in 2019 and was sentenced to 36 months in prison, 74 lashes and was fined twenty million tomans (480 EUR) by a Criminal Court in Isfahan Province for "inciting and encouraging violence through social media." He went on hunger strike. Rahmati has been arrested multiple times since 2008. He was rearrested on 2 October 2022.

Farzaneh NAZARANPOUR, a teacher residing in Tehran, was detained at the end of winter in 2022, and was sentenced to 10 months in prison for charges like "propaganda against the regime" by the Revolutionary Court of Tehran. She was released from Evin prison on July 02, 2023, under electronic surveillance.

Nahid SHIRPISHEH is an imprisoned teacher and the mother of Pouya Bakhtiari, one of the victims of the November 2019 protests, who is currently in prison. She was detained on July 11,

2022, by security forces. Mrs. Shirpisheh was tried by Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court of Karaj on charges including "assembly and collusion" and "propaganda against the system." She was sentenced to 5 years in prison for these charges.

Anoush ADELI, a member of the board of directors of the Teachers' Association in Gilan, was arrested on June 15, 2022. This imprisoned teacher was sentenced to 1 year of imprisonment for charges of "propaganda against the system" by Branch 18 of the Provincial Review Court of Gilan. This sentence was confirmed by Branch 3 of the Revolutionary Court of Rasht. Anoush Adeli has been serving this sentence in Lakan prison in Rasht since April 8, 2023.

Asghar AMIRZADEGAN, a member of Fars Teachers' Trade Association, was detained for participating in a peaceful teachers' gathering in Shiraz. He has been transferred to Shiraz prison. He is currently experiencing digestive system problems and severe stomach bleeding issues.

Mahmoud SADIQIPOUR, a member of the Teachers' Trade of Gilan, was sentenced to 1 year in prison. On 11 April 2023 he has been transferred to jail and is currently serving his sentence to Lakan Prison in Rasht since 8 April 2023.

Zeinab Hamrang Seyyed BEGLOO was arrested on 12 March 2023 by security forces in Tehran and sentenced to 5 years in prison for "gathering and collusion" without access to a lawyer. She is imprisoned in the Evin prison.

Javad La'al MOHAMMADI: He is a teacher from Khorasan. He, as a political activist, has been detained in Vakil-Abad Prison in Mashhad since April 2022. La'al Mohammadi was one of the 14 signatories of a letter which requested the resignation of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran, which has had consequences for its signatories.

Fatemeh TADRISI, a teacher, was detained on May 09, 2023, for participating in a peaceful teachers' gathering in Tehran. She was transferred to Garchak Varamin prison.

Omid Shae MOHAMMADI, a member of the Teachers' Trade Association of Divandareh-Kurdistan, and **Farzaneh NAZARANPOUR**, a teacher residing in Tehran, have both been sentenced to one year in prison following their trial. They were released from Bijar and Tehran prison in June and July 2023, respectively, and are now under electronic surveillance.

In addition, **Ateke RAJABI** of the Mashhad Teachers' Trade Association; **Mohammad Taghi FALAHI** of the Tehran Teachers' Trade Association; **Suleiman Abdi SAQEZ** of the Teachers' Trade Association; **Saywan SOLAYMANI** of the Marivan Teachers' Trade Association; **Abolfazk KHORAN** of the Arak Teachers' Trade Association, **Mohammad Ali ZAHMATKESH**, **Gholami KONDAZI**, **Iraj RAHNAMA**, **Zahra Esfandyari Moghan BAGHERI**, **Abdolrezagh AMIRI** and **Afshin RAZMJOO**, all from Fars Teachers' Trade Association, have been temporarily released on bail. They are currently awaiting the imposition of their sentences.

Systematic detention, sentencing and imprisonment of trade union leaders in the education sector reflects the Government of Iran's stranglehold on unionization and crackdown on labour rights activists which have left workers without a voice to influence government policy and working conditions.

Repression of workers in oil, gas, iron, steel and sugarcane industries

Assault and suppression of workers extends to a wide range of sectors, including oil, gas, iron, steel and sugarcane as well as other sectors. Protesting workers, most of them on precarious contracts, are being brutally attacked by anti-riot forces, threatened with dismissal and replacement, arrested and detained. Their leaders are jailed on security charges. Some illustrative cases are listed below.

Suppression of protests of oil and gas workers in April 2023 thousands of workers employed by sub-contractors in various projects in refineries and petrochemical complexes in the oil and gas fields of Southern Iran joined strike actions in April 2023, calling for a wage increase, better living conditions and an improved shift cycle. Both the Government and the employers immediately threatened workers with dismissals and replacements.⁵ Many activists involved in the strike were arrested, and accurate data about their fate is still not available.

Suppression of protests of iron and steel workers in November and December 2022 Hundreds of workers of the major iron and steel complex went on strike in November 2022, protesting their working conditions and in solidarity with the mass movement triggered by the state killing of Mahsa Amini in September 2022. The riot police immediately broke up the strike and arrested many workers. Reportedly, legal cases have been filed against them. However, it has been not possible to confirm information about the status of the arrested workers. Due to the fact that they were scattered across different departments, their exact numbers and names are not known.

Suppression of protests at the sugarcane agro-industrial complex Following the privatisation of a sugarcane agro-industrial complex in 2015, workers organised a number of strikes in Shush, Khuzestan south Iran, against the continuous unpaid wages. Many workers and their representatives have been arrested in relation to the protests over the years. On November 20, 2018, several workers who had participated in the protests and activists were arrested by security forces, including **E. B.**, one of the leading workers' representatives. Detained, E.B. was reportedly tortured and forced into making false "confessions." He was re-arrested in January 2019, in reprisal for talking publicly about his treatment in detention.

Persecution of labour activists and lawyers

Labour activists and lawyers assisting workers are increasingly subject to punishment and harassment for organizing and taking part in peaceful demonstrations and protests in Iran. Some illustrative cases are listed below:

Sepideh QOLIYAN, an independent labor journalist who was reporting on the protests at the sugarcane agro-industrial complex (case described above), was also detained and reportedly tortured. In December 2019 she was sentenced to 5 years in prison on security charges. She was released in March 2023, after spending over 4 years in prison. However, just a few hours after her release, she was re-arrested by security forces. She was subsequently sentenced to an additional 2 years in prison, banned from membership in political-social groups, prohibited from using a smartphone, and residing in Tehran and neighboring provinces for a definite period of 2 years. In September 2021 **Farzaneh ZILABI**, the defense lawyer representing the workers of the sugarcane agro-industrial complex, was charged with 'propaganda against the

⁵ <https://iranhumanrights.org/2023/05/activists-detained-workers-threatened-as-oil-industry-workers-strike-in-iran-2/>

regime' and sentenced to 1 year in prison and two years ban on leaving the country and 6 month ban from practicing law.⁶

Anisha ASADOLLAHI is a writer, translator, and labour activist. In April 2023, the security forces arrested her and transferred her to the Evin Prison. After a period of time, she was released from prison temporarily on bail. She was sentenced to serve a 5 year 6 month in prison, on charges of “assembly and collusion against national security” and “propaganda against the regime.” Despite an appeal, the sentence was upheld.

Arrest and detention of 2 French trade unionists

Repressions by the Government of Iran have reached trade unionists from other countries. **Cécile KOHLER** and **Jacques PARIS**, two teacher unionists, members of Force Ouvrière France, were detained while on a private tourist trip to Iran in May 2022. They travelled to Iran on April 28, 2022. They got arrested on the night of May 7, 2022, in a taxi that was taking them to the airport to leave the country and charged with “assembly and collusion with the intention of committing crime against national security“ for having met with Iranian trade unionists and labour activists. For 7 months, and despite efforts of their families and of the French government, Ms. Kohler’s and Mr. Paris’ whereabouts remained unknown and no information on their conditions of detention, including their health and wellbeing, could be obtained. On 23 November 2022, the Iranian government finally granted a very brief consular visit in the Evin prison where both trade unionists were detained. The French ambassador to Iran was able to meet briefly (10 minutes) each of them. Only on 18 December 2022, after 8 months, the detained trade unionists were granted a 4 minute call with their respective families. These brief contacts with the French embassy and their families confirmed that both Cécile Kohler and Jacques Paris are maintained in very bad detention conditions and their mental and physical health has been severely impacted and deteriorating. No judgment has yet been delivered in their case.

VIOLATIONS IN LAW

Freedom of association and assembly is severely restricted in law. Workers cannot freely exercise their right to form and join organizations of their own choosing, and their organizations are not able to freely organize their administration, adopt their rules and elect freely the leaders. Strikes are prohibited. The right to freedom from anti-union discrimination is not specifically protected in law.

The law restrict workers’ right to form and join organizations of their own choosing by imposing a single system of representation The only authorised national workers’ organisation is the Workers’ House, which is a tripartite entity set up and backed by the authorities and employers. The 1990 Labour Law stipulates that an Islamic Labour Council (Shoraya Eslami) or a guild society can be established at any workplace, or alternatively a workers’ representative can be appointed (Art. 131 Labour Law). These councils are tripartite bodies, they cannot be therefore considered trade unions.

The law restricts trade unions’ right to organize their administration Contrary to the principle conveyed in Article 3 of the ILO Convention No. 87 that protect workers’ organisations’ right to freely formulate their statutes, constitutions and rules, it is the Government-led Supreme Labour

⁶ <https://www.en-hrana.org/revolutionary-court-sentences-farzaneh-zilabi-defense-lawyer-for-the-haft-tappeh-workers-case-to-one-year-in-prison/>

Council that decides on rules of the organizations representing workers, upon approval by the Council of Ministers (Art. 131 Labour Law, 1990 (Note 5). Accordingly, the Government authorities control the selection and appointment of the representatives to the assemblies, councils and high centres of the organizations representing workers (Art. 136 Labour Law, 1990 (Note 2), contrary to the right of trade unions to elect their representatives and self-administer in full freedom, contained in Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 87.

We deplore the absence of willingness on the part of the Government to address these legislative shortcomings in an expeditious manner. The Government of Iran must engage in full and meaningful consultation with the social partners with a view to swiftly adopting the required changes to the legislation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Iran has failed to take the necessary steps in order to bring its laws and practices into compliance with international human rights norms contained in the ICCPR. Therefore, we request that during the consideration of its 4th periodic report the Government of Iran is called upon to take the following actions:

- Release immediately and unconditionally anyone held solely for the peaceful exercise of the freedom of association and of assembly, including national and international trade union members and leaders and labour activists;
- Guarantee access to legal counsel and due process for all individuals detained or arrested, and ensure that detainees are treated in accordance with international human rights standards, including access to medical care and protection from torture or ill-treatment;
- Immediately stop the use of criminal provisions against peaceful protestors, such as national security charges;
- Immediately stop the excessive use of force against and arbitrary arrest and detention of protestors, including workers and their representatives;
- Adopt immediate measures to permit the registration and unhindered activity of the independent trade unions;
- Revise, in consultation with social partners, the provisions of labour law legislation – in particular to ensure in law the right of workers to form, join and register organizations of their own choosing and the right of their organizations to freely formulate their statutes, constitutions, and activities – to make laws and their implementation compatible with the ICCPR as well as other relevant international human and labour rights standards.

The acute decline of respect for civil and political liberties in Iran raises extremely serious concerns. The wide-spread application of oppressive laws contravene the rights contained in the ICCPR, such as the right to peaceful assembly and the right of association. International action is therefore needed to urge the Government of Iran to take effective measures to respect, protect and fulfill its obligations under international human rights law.