

Workers in Iran

News & views from the labour movement in Iran



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Iranian delegation should not have been admitted to the ILO conference

To all world labour organisations

The 95th annual conference of the ILO was held in Geneva; once again with the Iranian regime's delegation present at it. We in the International Labour Solidarity Committee of the Worker-Communist Party of Iran (ILSC-WPI), together with the workers in Iran, have every year protested against the presence of this anti-worker and anti-human regime at the conference. This year, too, we demanded the expulsion from the ILO of the Islamic Republic in a number of letters to the ILO and to workers' organisations across the world. Also, Tehran Bus Workers' Syndicate, Iran Khodro auto workers, a group of workers from East Tehran and the Trade Association of Electrical and Metal Workers in the city of Kermanshah sent their own protest letters to the ILO with regard to the presence of the representatives of Islamic Labour Councils and the so-called Workers' House as representatives of Iranian

workers. However, the ILO only shrugged its shoulders at all such protests and, once again, approved the credentials of the Iranian regime's delegation.

As against this, we, in collaboration with the International Federation of Iranian Refugees, organised a protest action on June 9 in front of the conference centre in Geneva to protest at this policy of the ILO towards the workers in Iran and to bring this to the attention of delegates from around the world. A group representing our action then succeeded in gaining admission to the conference. They could successfully expose the true character of the Iranian delegation and, thereby, enlighten the audience with regard to the purpose of our action. They distributed copies of *Workers in Iran*, the paper of our committee, containing letters of protest by workers in Iran, as well as our letter to the ILO. The literature met with sympathy and drew the close attention of many delegates.



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Bahram Soroush's speech at the ILO Conference 12 June 2006

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted for the opportunity that I have to address this conference about the situation of workers in Iran.

Unfortunately Iranian workers are not represented at this conference. So I am honoured to be bringing their voice to this conference. As you may know, various sections of Iranian workers have written to the Director-General of the ILO,



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To International Labour Organization

With Greeting,

As you know, Iranian workers have no right to have their own independent organization. They have no right to elect their own real representatives. So, those representatives from "Worker House" and "Islamic Councils" attending the annual ILO meeting have been appointed out of workers' will by Islamic government.

The Electrical and Hardware Workers' Trade Association in Kermanshah is

asking you to let workers' elected representatives attend your meeting instead of "Workers' House" and "Islamic Councils" representatives!

Tanks!

The Electrical & Hardware Workers' Trade Association in Kermanshah.

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Bahram Soroush's ...

Mr Juan Somavia, to say that the so-called "workers' delegation" from Iran does not represent Iranian workers; that these people are members of the Iranian government's Islamic Labour Councils and Workers' House, which are state-



sponsored bodies, charged with workers' surveillance and repression.

One of the delegates at this conference, namely Mr Ali Akbar Eivazi, personally led a vicious attack last year on the office of Tehran's bus workers' union, inflicting serious injuries on Mr Ossanolou, the president of that union, and many other unionists.

Mr Ossanolou is still in prison, after nearly six months, for trying to build a union.

In January, nearly 1,000 bus drivers and workers in Tehran were arrested and jailed for going on strike. In Iran you are arrested for trying to form labour organisations and for going on strike.

Just a couple of months ago,

over 50 workers of Iran Khodro car-manufacturing company were fired for going on strike.

Over a million workers have been without pay, from several months to 2 or 3 years, due to non-payment of their wages. The textile workers of Kashan, Ghazvin and hundreds of other factories around the country

have not been paid for months.

The minimum wage in Iran is around 1/3 of the official poverty line.

A few years ago, the security forces fired on the workers at Khatoon Abad copper mine, killing four.

The list is endless...

The Islamic Republic regime of Iran and its Islamic Labour Councils and Workers' House should be expelled from the ILO for their brutal repression of workers; for denying them internationally recognised rights to organise and strike and to collective bargaining; for denying them the basic right to a decent pay; for denying them a human existence...

Ladies and gentlemen! Hon-

ourable trade union representatives and workers' delegates! Please use your rights and powers as members of the ILO to urge the immediate expulsion of the Iranian regime and its Islamic Councils and Workers' House from the ILO.

No ILO legitimacy should be given to these persecutors of workers. Genuine representatives of Iranian workers should be allowed to take part at ILO conferences.

Iran and its Islamic Councils out of ILO!

Long live international labour solidarity!

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Iranian delegation should ...

On June 12, the second day of the action, Bahram Soroush and three other members of our delegation appeared on the conference stage, holding placards demanding the expulsion of the regime's delegation and the immediate release from prison of Mansoor Ossanlou (President of Tehran Bus Workers' Syndicate). Bahram Soroush then went to the podium to give voice to the protest of millions of workers in Iran. In his speech, which lasted for a few minutes, he said that since the delegation from Iran did not represent the workers in Iran, he was honoured to be bringing their voice to the conference. He reiterated the call for the expulsion of the Islamic Republic regime from the ILO. He said that Mr Ali Akbar Eivazi, who was being hosted by the ILO right there and then with full credentials and voting rights, as part of the so-called "workers' delegation", was the individual who, together with Mr Mahjoob, the Secretary of "Workers' House", had personally directed the missionary thugs in their barbaric raid last year on the office of Tehran Bus Workers' Syndicate. He went on to expose the Workers' House and the Islamic Labour Councils as persecutors of workers. In his short speech, Soroush successfully held up a small part of the regime's bloody record for the delegates to see. Our colleagues also handed out a leaflet, exposing a small fraction of the Iranian regime's criminal record, its brutal violation of the workers' basic rights and demanding its expulsion from the ILO, as well as from all international institutions.

In their two-day presence inside and outside the ILO con-

ference, the delegates representing ILSC-WPI, composed of Bahram Soroush, Farshad Hosseini, Mahmoud Aghayari Moghadam, Behzad Sediqzade, Omid Aslani and Peyman Najafi Hafshjani, could thus echo the Iranian workers' voice for the delegates from across the world to hear. Our delegation distributed the letters sent by the above-mentioned workers in Iran objecting to the presence of the state-made delegation at the conference, as well as the protest letters and leaflets of our committee. They were the true voice of protest of over a million workers in Iran grappling with the predicament of unpaid wages; the voice of over fifty Iran Khodro auto workers sacked for going on strike; the voice of Tehran bus workers whose January 2006 strike was savagely suppressed, with over a thousand being thrown into jail and 180 of them being fired after their release; the voice of Mansoor Ossanlou, the President of Tehran Bus Workers' Syndicate, who has been in prison for nearly six months, with his health rapidly deteriorating as a result; the voice of workers all over Iran objecting to their unsafe working conditions that have turned work places into slaughter houses...

Now, in the wake of the protest letters and our unprecedented action, the ILO has requested the Islamic Republic itself to set up an independent enquiry to investigate the accusations, threats and assaults committed by the agents of its Ministry of Intelligence against union activists in Iran, and inform the ILO of the committee's findings; while it is definitely not unknown to anyone in the least familiar with the situation in Iran that all such acts are the official policy of the state in Iran. It is a shame for an or-

ganisation which apparently considers itself a defender of workers' rights across the world to close its eyes on all such well-known realities and host such a regime's delegation at its annual conference.

We, once again, declare that the Iranian delegation should not have been admitted to the conference. In fact, those delegates deserve only to be put on trial as the representatives of a regime that for the past 28 years has done nothing but commit crimes against the people of Iran. We, therefore, hereby once more register our vehement protest to the ILO for its patent opposition to the demands and the objections of millions of workers in Iran.

Moreover, we request all workers' organisations around the world to join forces with the workers in Iran to strongly demand the expulsion from the ILO of the Islamic Republic and representatives of its Islamic Labour Councils and Workers' House, to condemn all acts of persecution against labour activists in Iran, to demand the immediate and unconditional release of the jailed President of Tehran Bus Workers' Syndicate, Mansoor Ossanlou, to demand that all labour activists be cleared of all trumped-up charges, and to support Iranian workers' demands for such fundamental rights as the right to organisation, strike and collective bargaining.

Shahla Daneshfar

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June 19, 2006

Iran's Islamic Councils and “Workers' House” out of ILO!

- January 2006: around 1,000 bus workers of Tehran and Suburbs bus company were arrested during their strike. Some were tortured. Many were sacked. Even the partners and children of some of the workers were not spared.
- Mansoor Ossanlou, president of the bus workers' union, is still in prison, after nearly six months, for trying to build a union.
- Over 50 workers of Iran Khodro car-manufacturing company were sacked for going on strike on 3 March 2006.
- Seven labour activists detained and put on trial for organising a May Day rally in 2004 in the city of Saqez have again been summoned to court. Also the May Day activists this year in the city of Sanandaj have been constantly threatened, detained and even kidnapped by the security forces.
- Over one million workers have been without pay from several months to 2 years due to so called “wage arrears” (non-payment of wages). For example, textile workers in the city of Kashan, who have been without pay for 14 months, several textile companies in Ghazvin and hundreds of other factories around the country. The minimum wage - if paid at all and on time - is around 1/3 of the official poverty line.
- The protest of workers at Khatoon Abad copper mine over jobs around three years ago was

crushed. The security forces fired at the workers, killing four.

- September 2005: 11 miners at Bab Nizoo mine perished because the management had tried to save money by turning off the ventilators. The authorities have not accepted any responsibility towards the families of the deceased.

The list is endless...

Any protest against these atrocities is answered with bullets, prison, torture and firing. The Iranian government's Islamic Labour Councils and “Workers' House”, who attend the ILO conference as “workers' representatives”, are ideological and state-sponsored organisations which work with the government in its attacks on workers. One example was the attack on the office of the bus workers' union on 9 May 2005, when leading members of the Islamic Councils and Workers' House tried to cut Mr Ossanlou's tongue. Also during the crushing of the bus workers' strike this year, these organisations worked hand in hand with the security forces in identifying strike activists.

Mr Ali Akbar Eivazi, who is an invited delegate to this conference, with full credentials and voting rights, as part of the so-called “workers' delegation” from Iran, led the attack on the bus workers' union on 9 May 2005 together with the head of Workers' House, Mr Mahjoob. He was personally involved in the attack on Mr Ossanlou by grabbing Ossanlou's neck while

another Islamic Council member, Hasan Sadeghi (incidentally, a delegate at last year's ILO conference!) attempted to cut Mr Ossanlou's tongue, inflicting serious injuries on him.

Iran's Workers' House and Islamic Labour Councils are not Iranian workers' representatives, but their persecutors. Workers from a number of sectors in Iran, namely, the Syndicate of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, Iran Khodro auto workers, and a group of workers from East Tehran have written to the ILO this year in protest at the presence of members of Islamic Councils and Workers' House at this conference. Instead of being invited to ILO conferences, such people should stand trial for 27 years of crime against workers.

We request all workers' delegates and trade unions to press for the expulsion of the representatives of Iran's Islamic Councils and Workers' House from the ILO, in support of the fundamental rights of workers in Iran - the right to organise, the right to strike and the right to collective bargaining.

**International Labour Solidarity
Committee of the Worker-
communist Party of Iran**
12 June 2006