
Solidarity with Iranian trade unionists
Release of Mahmoud Salehi
6 April 2008

TUC welcomes release of Iranian bakery workers' leader Mahmoud Salehi

The TUC has welcomed the news today (Sunday 6 April) that Iranian bakery workers' leader Mahmoud Salehi was released from the City of Sanandaj's central prison at 3pm. He had completed a one-year jail sentence for trade union activities nearly two weeks ago, but the authorities had refused to release him.

Mahmoud Salehi's release has come after demonstrations outside the Sanandaj prison by bakery and other workers, and a worldwide campaign for his release including a global day of action in solidarity with all jailed Iranian trade unionists a month ago, and a last burst in the past few days with a mass email-sending campaign.

The TUC reiterated its call for the Iranian Government to release bus workers' leader Mansour Osanloo from the notorious Evin prison in Tehran, to free all jailed Iranian trade unionists, and to abide by international labour laws.

Background

Mahmoud Salehi, leader of a bakery workers' organisation in Saez has long suffered persecution by the Iranian authorities, spending several periods in prison because of their legitimate and peaceful activities as trade union activists and human rights defenders. Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience and is concerned for his health.

He began his current sentence on 9 April 2007, and it was due to end on 23 March 2008. He was summoned to appear for questioning by Branch 4 of the Sanandaj Courts on 17 March 2008 when, after a prolonged wait, new charges were issued against him. He has reportedly been accused of 'communicating with those outside prison for the purposes of issuing messages of solidarity' for other individual prisoners on hunger strike and students facing arrest. The new charges appeared intended to justify Mahmoud Salehi's continued detention beyond his scheduled release date.

Mahmoud Salehi has long-term medical concerns. He was reportedly transferred briefly to hospital, unconscious, on 11 December 2007, after repeatedly collapsing

in prison between 4-10 December. During an earlier hospitalisation, on or around 4 December, the authorities placed restraints on his bed. He may not be receiving adequate medical care. A May 2007 request by his doctor that he be accorded specialist treatment outside the prison has been ignored. He suffers from chronic kidney disease, as a result of which he requires dialysis. He is also said to suffer from a heart disorder and has been returned to prison where he remains.

Further action

The TUC is urging trade unionists in Britain to redouble their efforts on behalf of Mansour Osanloo and other jailed Iranian trade unionists.

Please visit the International Transport Workers' Federation Free Osanloo campaign webpage at <http://www.itfglobal.org/campaigns/freeosanloo.cfm>