
Solidarity with Iranian trade unionists
TUC supports global union statement
1 May 2009

TUC says no to repression of May Day protests in Iran

The TUC has joined with trade unionists from around the world to call on the Iranian Government not to prevent independent Iranian trade unionists from demonstrating this May Day.

Supporting a statement from the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and global union federations covering teachers (EI), food workers (IUF) and transport workers (ITF), and backed by chemical and energy workers (ICEM), TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber wrote to the Iranian Ambassador in the UK, His Excellency Mr Rasoul Movahedian, saying:

“freedom of expression and freedom of association are basic human and trade union rights. They should apply in Iran as they should apply everywhere, and a country which denies those rights in practice is not free.”

The union statement in defence of workers’ rights in Iran, which the TUC helped to draw up, is at www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Iran_May_Day_Statement_ITUC-EI-ITF-IUF_.pdf An ITUC press release is at www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article3428

The global union protest comes as Iranian workers prepare for the Iranian Presidential Elections in the summer. An Iranian workers’ May Day statement from trade unions and trade union friendly groups appears below:

Iranian Workers' May Day Resolution

May first is the international day of solidarity among the working class and a day of workers' struggle around the world against the oppressive rule of capitalism and the expression of their desire for a world free of oppression and exploitation.

This year the working class is celebrating May Day while the world capitalist system is mired in an increasingly destructive economic crisis and is struggling to free itself from this quagmire by any means possible.

The present economic crisis has demonstrated the inability of the capitalist system to deal with its problems, having found no alternative but to transfer the brunt of the crisis onto the shoulders of the working class around the world. This bears

witness to the fact that in the post Eastern Block era and the declaration of the end of history by the decadent capitalist world, there remains no other alternative for the working class and the civilized world but to free itself from the inhumane capitalist relations of production.

The present financial crisis and its destructive consequences for the working class around the world is yet to spread its ominous specter on the everyday life of the Iranian workers; But the injustices they suffer is nothing but the outcome of the rule of the Iranian capitalist class.

The injustices imposed on the Iranian working class, such as:

- Wages that keep workers under the poverty line,
- Widespread layoffs,
- Withholding of workers' wages for months,
- Imposition of temporary and blank contracts on workers by companies,
- Imprisonment and flogging of workers in order to inhibit disobedience and resistance,
- The absence of fair and legal contracts,

are not problems which have emerged in Iran with the new wave of economic crisis. Such injustices have existed in Iran for many years and the crisis is increasingly deepening every year. We shall not keep quiet in the face of such abhorring and inhumane practices, and will not allow them to infringe upon our rights any more than they already have. We are the principal producers of wealth in the society, and we deem it our lawful right to live according to the highest standards of living.

We deserve a decent lifestyle and we will make sure we alleviate these problems by forming unions, which are independent of Government and company influence, and by our ongoing solidarity.

Therefore, our workers demand the following as their minimum program to take effect immediately:

1-Job security for all workers and the abolition of temporary, blank and newly-formulated contracts.

2-We consider the minimum wage set by the high council of labour as the imposition of gradual death on millions of working class families, and we insist on the immediate increase of the minimum wage on the basis of workers' legitimate demands, conveyed by workers' real representatives and their independent unions.

3-Formation of independent workers' unions, the right to strike, protest, free gatherings and free speech are our legitimate rights, and these demands must be granted unconditionally and as the inalienable rights of all workers.

4-Workers' unpaid wages must be reimbursed immediately and from now on, this exercise must be deemed a criminal act, prosecutable in the courts of law and the consequences enforced.

5-Firing of workers by using various excuses must stop and all of those sacked, or newly entering the job market, should benefit from employment insurance suitable to a decent living standard.

6-We demand equal rights for men and women in all aspects of economic and social life and we demand the abolition of all existing discriminatory laws.

7-We demand a decent pension plan for all retirees and we condemn any discriminatory practices in the payment of these pensions.

8-We firmly support all the demands put forth by teachers, nurses and all other hard-working white collar workers, and we consider ourselves their ally in their struggle. We also demand revocation of Farzad Kamangar's death sentence.

9-As seasonal and construction workers are deprived of the necessary social insurance rights, we support their struggle to achieve their humanitarian rights and a decent living.

10-Capitalism is the driving force behind child labour. We demand that all children, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity and religion, be able to benefit from equal educational and health and hygiene opportunities.

11-We demand the release of all incarcerated workers from prison, including Mansour Osanloo and Ebrahim Madadi, and the revocation of all judgments rendered against them, and put a stop to the arrests and harassments of workers.

12-We hereby pronounce our support for all freedom-loving and equity seeking movements, such as the student movement and women's movement, and we strongly condemn the arrest and imprisonment of their activists.

13-We are part of the international working class movement, and as such, we condemn the random sacking and the double exploitation and harassment of Afghan and other migrant workers in Iran.

14-While we are grateful for the international working class support for our struggles in Iran, we are their allies in solidarity with their struggles against the hardships imposed by the capitalist system.

15-May first must be declared a civic holiday in the Iranian calendar and any ban on May Day celebrations must be revoked and prohibited.

Long live May Day!

Long live the international solidarity of the working class

May 1, 2009

The May first committee

The Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company

The Syndicate of Workers of the Haft Tapeh Sugar Plantations

The Free Union of Workers in Iran

The Founding Committee of the Syndicate of Buildings, Painters and Decoration's Workers

The Collaborative Council of Labour Organizations and Activists

The Coordinating Committee to Form Workers' Organizations

The Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Free Workers' Organizations

The Women's Council

A Group of Worker Activists

The Center for Workers' Rights in Iran