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Dear Ambassador

Reza Shahabi

On behalf of the Trades Union Congress, the national trade union centre of Great Britain, with 6 million members in 54 trade unions, I urge you to convey to your government our concern about the position of Iranian trade unionist Reza Shahabi (also known as Reza Shahabi Zakaria), who started a hunger strike on 1 June to protest his transfer from Evin Prison in Tehran to Raja’i Shahr Prison in Karaj.

We urge your government to:

* release Reza Shahabi without delay and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for his peaceful trade union activities;
* ensure that Reza Shahabi is given urgent access to the medical treatment he needs for his condition, outside prison.

Reza Shahabi was arrested in June 2010, initially held incommunicado, tortured and otherwise ill-treated. He was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment, fined 70 million Rial and banned from all trade union activities by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran in April 2012.

Although the sentence was imposed for “gathering and colluding against state security” and “spreading propaganda against the system”, it is clear that he has been punished for his trade union activities as Treasurer of the Union of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Sherkat-e Vahed), and Amnesty International has declared him to be a prisoner of conscience.

This – along with the incarceration of numerous trade unionists across Iran - is clearly a breach of your government’s international obligations, including Convention 87 of the International Labour Organisation on freedom of association.

Reza Shahabi has been on hunger strikes before to seek medical treatment for his condition, and doctors have regularly requested proper medical assistance for him, out of prison, including surgery on his spine. Despite being promised proper treatment on several occasions, those promises have regularly been broken. I would also remind you that the UN standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners require that the different categories of prisoners be kept in separate institutions, which is another reason for Mr Shahabi’s protest at being transferred to a prison where political prisoners and violent criminals are held together.

I would be grateful if you could confirm that you have conveyed the TUC’s concerns to your government, and let us know the response to our call for Reza Shahabi’s release.

Yours sincerely

**FRANCES O’GRADY**

General Secretary