

Persecutions persist

Yet another independent Iranian trade union leader, Reza Dehghan, member of the Founding Committee of Painters Union (Syndica Nagash) was arrested on 18 November 2007. He is now detained in Evin Prison. The ITUC suspects that the arrest was linked to his trade union activities and his vocal support for Mansour Osanloo.

In a worrying development, the lawyers of Mansour Osanloo and his fellow activists from the Syndicaye Sherkat-e Vahed resigned on 27 November. There are fears they may have been subjected to outside pressure. The ITUC and the ITF have asked the ILO to intervene to ensure that the men are given full rights to legal representation.

Judicial persecution of the Tehran bus activists continues.

On 30 October, the Revolutionary Court confirmed Osanloo's five-year sentence as well as Ebrahim Madadi's two-year sentence for "endangering national security and criticising the regime."

During his period of detention, Madadi's health has seriously deteriorated; he has also been transferred to Ghezal Hesar, a criminal prison, south of Tehran.

On 29th November the ITUC and the ITF submitted additional information to a longstanding complaint with the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association against the Iranian state, raising these issues.



Mansour Osanloo is the 47 year old head of the Syndicaye Sherkat-E Vahed (Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company Union) who was snatched from the street in July this year and incarcerated in Evin Prison. He is still there, receiving only the most minimal contact with his family and lawyers.

The Tehran Bus Union was founded two years ago by 17,000 bus drivers who were being dangerously overworked and badly underpaid. The union has found itself under constant attack by a government determined to prevent the growth of any independent unions. Osanloo's deputy, Ebrahim Madadi, is being held in another prison.

The authorities continue to refuse to recognise the union. A broad international campaign has been launched by the trade union movement, the aims of which are to free Osanloo and bring about full trade union rights in Iran.

ILO exerts pressure

An International Labour Organisation mission, led by Cleo Doumbia-Henry, visited Tehran from 26 October to investigate compliance with ILO Conventions covering discrimination and wages.

While in Tehran, Doumbia-Henry raised the issue of Osanloo's continued imprisonment as well as his state of health.

She spoke to ministers and requested permission to visit him. The judge concerned declined to allow a visit, citing Osanloo's health condition as the main reason.

The mission was however given assurances by the government that Osanloo was now receiving proper medical treatment.

In July, the ILO's Freedom of As-

sociation Committee called on Iran to release trade unionists and stop breaches of union rights.

Send your message

Amnesty's UK Section is highlighting the cases of Osanloo and of Mahmoud Salehi from the Saquez bakers' union with a greetings card appeal. Visit the Amnesty UK site for details of how to send a card and make sure Osanloo and Salehi receive an overwhelming message of solidarity: www.amnesty.org.uk



Madadi: A second story of struggle

Osanloo is not alone in the struggle for workers' rights in Iran. Alongside him is his deputy Ebrahim Madadi (pictured above left, with Osanloo), Vice-President of the board of the Tehran bus union.

Together Osanloo and Madadi are a strong team, which is why both men have been targeted by the authorities.

In June, Madadi was beaten by Abbas Mohammadi, a deputy director of Tehran Province Labour Department. He put in a complaint about this incident.

On 3 July, Madadi was arrested during one of his regular visits to the Labour Department. There he planned to discuss the dismissal of 40 bus workers. He was refused entry into the premises and was subsequently held by Bharestan station police for alleged "public disorder". Madadi was told that a summons had been sent to his home; however, he had never received it. He was detained overnight and released on 4 July after ITF protests.

Then, Madadi was detained on the 9th August action day, along with five other members of the bus union. They were taken to Evin prison. The others were later released, but Madadi remained in jail. On 8 September, Madadi was taken for interrogation but returned to Evin after questioning was over.

When both men's sentences were announced at the end of October (see main story), Madadi was given two years on charges which included that of acting against national security. He was transferred to a criminal prison, where conditions are very poor. Madadi is known to be in bad health and is suffering from diabetes.

Sugar workers arrested

Ghorban Alipour and Mohammad Heydari Mehr, workers' representatives of Haft Tapeh Sugar Factory, were arrested in November. Both men were later released on bail. The Vahed union has been supporting the sugar workers since they took industrial action in September.

Vahed workers in support of French strikers

Tehran bus union workers have expressed their support with Europe's workers in struggle.

French transport workers taking strike action recently in defence of their labour conditions received a letter of support from the Tehran-based union.

"In this struggle we are at your side" said the letter, dated 23 November.

"We are convinced that the only way to free ourselves is via the international solidarity of workers" the message concluded.

View the ITF film in more languages

The ITF film "Freedom will come, the story of Mansour Osanloo" is now available on the YouTube website in English, French, Japanese and will soon be ready in Arabic and Farsi. To view the film, please go to www.youtube.com and type "freedom will come" - or send an email requesting the DVD to: orders@itf.org.uk.

Campaign in action

ITF lobbying led to a robust European Parliament resolution on 25 October calling on the Iranian regime to put an end to harsh repression of unions. The document mentioned the cases of Osanloo and Madadi.

An early day motion was passed in the UK Parliament on 7th November, after it was raised by thirty-four MPs. The motion asked the UK Government to press the ILO to urgently raise the bus workers' cases with the Iranian government.

In October, representatives of the Teamsters' Canada local unions demonstrated their solidarity during a meeting at Parliament Hill, Ottawa.