

International Transport Workers Federation (New Zealand) media release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday 5 March 2008

New Zealand transport workers will be demonstrating outside the Iranian Embassy, 151 Te Anua Road, Hataitai, Wellington at 12 noon, Thursday 6 March 2008.

The protest is part of an international day of action by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) for the freedom of Iranian unionist and bus driver Mansour Osanloo.

ITF New Zealand convenor Wayne Butson says the protest is important given New Zealand's trading links with Iran which would have an impact.

He says Mansour Osanloo is currently detained in the notorious Evin prison in Teheran.

The bus driver helped to create 'Sherkat-e Vahed' an independent trade union, representing 17,000 bus workers in Iran's capital city, Tehran.

Osanloo and his fellow workers led protests that increased bus workers' pay by fifty dollars a month, persuaded employers to provide work clothes, and got casual workers signed to two-year contracts. They argued for forty-dollar childcare allowances to be paid to women workers. Mr Butson says Osanloo has been threatened, attacked and now imprisoned for five years for fighting for basic workers rights.

Article 26 of the Iranian constitution recognises the right of all citizens of the Islamic republic to participate in party politics, Union organisations and other types of associations. It is on this constitutional basis that Osanloo and others decided to revive their Union to defend the rights of the workers of Tehran's public transport system.

The Iranian Government is acting in defiance to the country's constitution, says Mr Butson.

"There are reports that workers who have refused to resign from the Union have not been paid overtime and have not had their years of service recognised."

New Zealand unions affiliated to the ITF include the Rail and Maritime Transport Union, the Maritime Union of New Zealand, the Aviation and Marine Engineers Association, the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union, the National Distribution Union, and the New Zealand Merchant Service Guild.

Other Council of Trade Union affiliated unions are supporting the action as well.

Solidarity actions, including demonstrations, will also be held at Iranian embassies, in cities, railway stations and at border crossings in Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivoire, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Spain, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand and Turkey. Other countries are planning activities.

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is made up of 681 unions representing 4,500,000 transport workers in 148 countries. It is one of several Global Union Federations allied with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

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