
TUC protest against Iranian regime
Trade unionists sentenced to the lash
August 2008

Iranians sentence trade unionists to the lash: TUC joins worldwide protest

The TUC has joined a worldwide campaign, launched by LabourStart, against the sadistic and savage sentences handed out against Iranian trade unionists for the 'crime' of having participated in a May Day demonstration this year, and two women in particular, Sousan Razani and Shiva Kheirabadi. Sousan was sentenced to 9 months imprisonment and 70 lashes; Shiva to 4 months imprisonment and 15 lashes.

In addition Mr. Abdullah Khani was sentenced to 91 days prison and 40 lashes and Mr. Seyed Qaleb Hosseini to 6 months imprisonment and 50 lashes. Separately, Mr. Khaled Hosseini, a worker activist, was sentenced to 91 days suspended jail and 30 lashes because of his efforts in support of Mahmoud Salehi who was imprisoned at the time.

See the faces, and then protest

In the last few days we have received photographs of Sousan and Shiva. You can see them at www.labourstart.org/iran, where you can also send an immediate message of protest to the Iranian regime.

The TUC has written to the President of the Iranian Republic, and our letter has been copied to the Foreign Secretary.

This is the TUC protest letter

Dear President Ahmadinejad

Recent sentences against trade union activist in Iran

The General Council of the Trades Union Congress, which represents some 6.5 million trade unionists in Great Britain, wish to express to you our deep concern and outrage at the recent whipping sentences and jail terms which are to be imposed against labour activists in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the death sentence against Farzad Kamangar.

We understand that, only because of their participation in 2008 May Day celebration in Sanandaj, the Criminal Court of Sanandaj – branch 101 has sentenced Ms. Sousan Razani to 9 months imprisonment and 70 lashes; Ms. Shiva Kheirabadi to 4 months imprisonment and 15 lashes; Mr. Abdullah Khani to 91 days prison and 40 lashes and Mr. Seyed Qaleb Hosseini to 6 months imprisonment and 50 lashes. In addition, Mr. Khaled Hosseini, a worker activist, was sentenced to 91 days suspended jail and 30 lashes because of his efforts in support of Mahmoud Salehi who was imprisoned at the time.

These are outrageous sentences to pass on any individual for exercising fundamental human rights to participate in what are legitimate trade union activities. The flogging sentences represent cruel and degrading punishment and as such are a further violation of the human rights of those condemned and an affront to international humanitarian law

Another activist, Mr. Afshin Shams, was arrested in July 2008. Mr. Shams is a labour activist, a member of "Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations", a member of the "Committee in Defence of Mahmoud Salehi" and a member of "Caricaturists Society". There have been other arrests and charges against labour and social activists in Iran as well as dismissal of labour activists, including the recent dismissal verdict against nine members of the bus workers syndicate.

Even more shocking, we have been informed that on July 12 2008, the Supreme Court upheld the death sentence passed against Mr. Farzad Kamangar, a Kurdish former teacher - who had been condemned after a trial lasting only seven minutes. It is impossible to believe that a trial of such brevity could be undertaken with anything approaching internationally accepted standards of due process. Moreover, Farzad Kamangar, who had been accused of affiliation to the PKK, has been gravely tortured while in detention and denied medical attention. Your government has disregarded protests and pleas from Iran and abroad. A Support Committee of Teacher Trade Associations, including Nobel Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, was established in July to seek to support Mr Kamangar and to seek the commutation of the death sentence. Following its first meeting, three teachers were arrested and taken to the Intelligence Detention centre in Sanandaj. Hassan Ghorbani and Kaveh Rostami are still detained while Ahmad Ghorbani was released on bail only after two weeks. We hear reports that Mr Kamangar's family and supporters are regularly intimidated by telephone calls from the Ministry of Intelligence and National Security.

We appeal to your government to:

- review the case of Farzad Kamangar and provide further clarification about the charges against him and other trade unionist currently detained;
- commute Mr Kamangar's death sentence;

- end immediately the use of torture and bring to justice those who order and exact it;
- allow Mr Kamangar immediate and unimpeded contact with his family and his lawyer;
- stop the intimidation of his relatives and supporters, including members of the Committee to Stop Farzad Kamangar's Death Sentence; and
- ensure the unconditional and immediate release of all imprisoned labour activists, including Mansour Osanloo, President of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company.

The TUC believes firmly that the rule of international law is of benefit to all nations and to all peoples. These recent arrests and repressive measures indicate an intensified attack on the independent labour movement in Iran, in flagrant violation of Iran's obligations as a member state of the International Labour Organisation to respect, uphold and realise in good faith the principles of freedom of association and the right to organise. We appeal to you fulfil your obligations arising from membership of the ILO and the UN with regard to fundamental human rights at work and be open to genuine discussion about the concerns of trade unionists, including teachers, in Iran.

Yours sincerely

Kay Carberry

Assistant General Secretary

cc: HE Rasoul Movahedian, Iran Ambassador, UK