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TUR/JS

30 November 2006

Continued detention of Mansour Osanloo

Dear President,

On behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), representing 307 affiliated member organisations, with a total membership of 168 million workers in 154 countries and territories, I strongly condemn the continued detention of Mansour Osanloo, the President of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Sherkat-e Vahed) (the Vahed Syndicate).

The ITUC recalls you have already received a joint letter by the International Transport Federation (ITF) and the ITUC on 20 November 2006, expressing our concerns about his safety. The ITUC wished to take this opportunity to stress that his arrest was illegal, as he was arrested by plain clothes agents who did not identify themselves and did not present an arrest warrant. The ITUC also vehemently protests at the violence of the arrest and that shots were reportedly fired in the air.

To the ITUC's knowledge he has not had access to a lawyer. A judge has informed Mr. Osanloo's wife that he is incarcerated in section 209 of Evin Prison. On 26 November his wife was allowed to see him shortly. According to ILNA (Iranian Labour News Agency) Mansour Osanloo was taken from Evin Prison to Branch 14 of the Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Tehran on 26 November for investigation for failing to appear in court. The ITUC strongly rejects these charges, given that his case was scheduled for 20 November 2006 and he was arrested the day before. Furthermore, members of Mr. Osanloo's family had put up their houses for security in order to secure his release on 9 August 2006, making it very unlikely that he would refuse to cooperate with the prosecutor.

The ITUC considers his renewed arrest to be directly linked to his trade union activities, especially in view of the long history of repression he has already been subject to.

During his time in prison he was held in solitary confinement for three months and 23 days. He was under severe psychological pressure throughout his prison stay. He was blindfolded and handcuffed at times, and during interrogations he was harassed and threatened that he would be staying in prison as long as the police wanted to keep him. At times his visiting rights, use of telephone and access to the courtyard were suspended. Interrogation teams changed all the time and the questions were not all connected to the charges against him. He was forced to share details about his private life, his work, and his relationship with friends and colleagues under threat of being kept in prison for 15 years. The interrogations created an atmosphere which made him fear for his own life and that of members of his family. He was told that if he were to leave the country his family would be annihilated.

Even after he was released from prison, the harassment continued. He was repeatedly asked to report to the police, and police even called his son and his wife at the workplace. He complained to the U.N. office in Tehran about his situation and it was shortly after that that he was summoned to the Revolutionary Court and threatened with imprisonment. He and his wife were asked to sign a statement saying they would cut ties with friends and colleagues.

Despite this Mr. Osanloo has continued to participate in meetings of the Vahed Syndicate and kept up his contacts with the international trade union movement. These are legitimate trade union activities.

The Vahed Syndicate had been invited by the ILO to attend a workshop on “Globalisation and Privatisation” organised by the ILO’s Subregional Office for South Asia on 8 November 2006. On their way there Osanloo and nine Executive Board Members of the Vahed Syndicate were arrested, in the city of Tabriz (North-East of Tehran). Other participants in the workshop included representatives of the Islamic Labour Councils, but they do not seem to have been arrested.

The ITUC believes that his continued activities and his contact with international organisations such as the ILO, the UN, the ITF and the ITUC are the key reasons behind his arrest. In these circumstances, the ITUC has no other choice than to ask the ILO to review its collaboration with the government of Iran.

The right to participate in trade union activities and take part in international trade union work, such as attending ILO workshops are protected under the internationally recognised principle of Freedoms of Association. The latest arrest of Mansour Osanloo is a blatant violation of this principle, which the government of Iran must respect by virtue of its membership of the ILO. Moreover, your government, notably the Ministry of Labour has repeatedly reassured the ITUC (then-ICFTU) and the ITF that it is committed to workers’ rights and dialogue with the international trade union movement. However, as long as Mansour Osanloo remains in prison, neither organisation can consider as genuine and sincere the offers of open and constructive dialogue they have repeatedly received.

The ITUC urges you, Mr. President, to order his immediate and unconditional release.

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary

Cc.: His Eminence Ayatollah Khamenei, the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran