



ITUC INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION CSI CONFÉDÉRATION SYNDICALE INTERNATIONALE
CSI CONFEDERACIÓN SINDICAL INTERNACIONAL IGB INTERNATIONALER GEWERKSCHAFTSBUND

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GUY RYDER

GENERAL SECRETARY
SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL
GENERALSEKRETÄR
SECRETARIO GENERAL

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad,
President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection
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HTUR/JS

11 February 2009

Court proceedings against five leaders of the Haft Tapeh sugar workers union

Dear President,

I am writing to you on behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation, which represents 170 million workers across the world, including in many Islamic countries, to protest against the court proceedings against trade union leaders: Ali Nejati, Feridoun Nikoufard, Mohammad Heydari Mehr, Gohrban Alipour and Jalil Ahmadi.

The ITUC has been informed that the five leaders of the Haft Tapeh union will appear before the Islamic Revolutionary Court on February 17th to receive a verdict.

The five leaders have all been charged in connection with legitimate trade union activities such as reclaiming wage arrears and defending basic workplace rights.

The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) has already protested to the Iranian Supreme Leader when the first hearing took place on 20 December 2008.

The ITUC is writing to you to emphasize that any verdict short of a full rejection of the charges would be contrary to the principle of freedom of association. The Iranian government is under an obligation to respect this principle through its membership of the International Labour Organisation.

The ITUC is concerned what whilst the government of Iran sends letters to the ITUC concerning the plight of workers in other countries; it ignores the basic right of Iranian workers to claim better lives for themselves and continue to prosecute them for daring to demand wages, which they have already earned though hard labour.

The ITUC has just written to the Ministry of Labour that it is committed to continue its campaign of solidarity with Iranian workers fighting for fundamental workers rights and social justice. A copy of the letter is enclosed. This commitment also extends to the Haft Tapeh sugar workers union, and the trade union movement will watch the outcome of the court case very closely.

The Islamic Republic of Iran would be able to talk with more authority about workers in other countries if it would choose to respect its own workers.

I trust that you will pay attention to this important matter and ensure that the courts are not used to condemn workers for legitimate trade union activities.

Yours sincerely,



General Secretary

Cc.: Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
Ministry of Justice Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Sharoudi
Ministry of Labour
Ministry of Justice
Leader of the Iranian Parliament
Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN, Geneva
ILO
IUF



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HTUR/JS

2 February 2009

Workers' rights in Gaza and Iran

Dear Mr. Nouri

With reference to your letter of 27 January 2009, I would like to reassure you that the ITUC continues its efforts to improve the plight of all workers and their families all around the world and to strengthen social justice and peace for all.

True to its mandate, the ITUC is trying to advance the rights and living conditions of all working men and women, including in Iran and in Gaza. A fundamental precondition for advancing these rights is the existence of free and independent trade unions.

In your letter you express the view that ITUC and its affiliates are not sufficiently concerned about the sufferings of the Palestinian people in Gaza. I can assure you that the trade union movement has been and continues to be very concerned. None more than the ITUC affiliate in Palestine, the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU).

Far from turning a blind-eye to developments in Gaza, the ITUC has issued repeated public statements calling for an end to violence and addressing a number of the tragic events to which you refer specifically. In line with the policy positions of our founding Congress and instructions of our General Council to whom we are fully accountable, the ITUC stands on the side of peace, reconciliation and justice. That is not always easy, nor comfortable, particularly when confronted by those who through words or material action continue to incite and support hatred, violence, and intolerance.

The international trade union movement extends its full solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters. And as mentioned in your letter, the ITUC and its partners, including the ITF have appealed to its affiliates to assist our Palestinian friends. Many affiliates from all corners of the world have generously responded to this call, which has enabled us to send humanitarian assistance. International solidarity has also led many of our affiliates to organise or participate in demonstrations denouncing the violence in Gaza and calling for peace.

The ITUC commends our Palestinian brothers and sisters, who despite their hardships still have managed to organise and fight for workers rights and for peace and security.

Workers in Iran on the contrary, in a country which is not in a situation of conflict, are not even allowed to defend their most fundamental rights. The brave Iranian brothers and sisters, who are trying to fight to improve salaries for better working and living conditions, and the right to organise, are systematically repressed.

State repression and violence against Iranian workers are not comparable to the situation in Gaza. Violence and injustice elsewhere are no excuse for the systematic state repression in Iran against its own workers trying to fight for social justice, fair living conditions and a better life for themselves and their families.

The ITUC will continue its campaign in support of our Iranian brothers and sisters until they are allowed the same freedom won by Palestinian workers, namely the right to organise freely and to bargain collectively in order to promote social justice. In particular it will continue to press for the immediate release from imprisonment of Mansour Osanloo, President of the Vahed Tehran Bus Workers Union and all other trade unionists currently held in prison in Iran. Their immediate release would give greater weight to your Government's concerns over the tragedy in Gaza.

As you rightly point out in your letter, justice delayed is justice denied. It is time that the Islamic Republic of Iran lives up to this principle and release without further delay all trade unionists and allows them to strive for social justice to the benefit of all in the Iranian society.

Yours sincerely,



General Secretary

Cc.: ILO Director General, Juan Somavia
ILO Executive Director, Kari Tapiola
ILO Director of the International Labour Standards Department,
Ms Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry
International Transport Workers' Federation
Education International