



Att: Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Islamic Republic of Iran

Your ref.

Our ref.
2019000191-1/870/FASA

Date:
Oslo, 02.05.2019

LO-Norway demands immediate release of trade union activists and leaders

The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO-Norway), representing more than 930.000 workers in Norway, is writing to you to protest the violation of trade union rights in your country. There are several members of the independent labour movement in Iran who are harassed and in prison, while they have only been engaging in fully legitimate trade union work.

LO-Norway has in recent years closely followed the workers' struggle for the formation of free and unbound unions and confederations of trade unions and their protests against unpaid wages as well as breaches of fundamental trade union and human rights in Iran. LO-Norway has on many occasions criticised and condemned the government of Iran for persecution, harassment, imprisonment and torture of trade unionists.

We have again received information about nightly arrests and searches of the workers' activists at the Haft Tape factory and the steelworks "National Steel Industrial Group" in the province of Khuzestan. We have also been informed that these workers activists were brutally tortured during the arrest.

In November 2018, the workers at the Haft Tape Sugarcane Factory organised a peaceful protest outside the office of the local authorities. Several thousand workers at the sugar refinery had not been paid for several months. They wanted dialogue with the management. Although it was a peaceful protest, several were arrested - among them Esmail Bakhshi and Ali Nejati as well as the student Sepideh Ghalian. In retrospect, Esmail and Sepideh have told that torture started already while they were driven to questioning at the security police.

The arrests and the alleged use of torture against Haft Tape sugar cane workers Esmail Bakhshi and Ali Nejati as well as the student Sepideh Ghalian have raised major protests both in Iran and internationally. It should be noted that both the Sugarcane activist Esmail Bakhshi and Sepideh Ghalian have, after their temporary release, publicly reported how they were subjected to brutal torture and demanded answers on who is responsible for these brutal treatments they were subjected to.

On January 20, Esmail and Sepideh were arrested again, probably as a result of having photographed the torture they have been exposed to. The day before the last-mentioned arrest, a video was shown on state television where both "confess" to have "conspired with Marxist and Communist groups outside Iran to overthrow the Iranian state by organising strikes and

demonstrations". Esmail and Sepideh have reported that these so-called "confessions" were made during torture and other abuse during the first imprisonment.

LO-Norway was also informed on 1st of May 2019 that there have been violent arrests of dozens of members of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran Bus Company (Vahed Sydicate) and student groups during a May Day rally. Members of Vahed Syndicate, Reza Shahabi, Hassan Saeedi, Vahid Fereydouni, Naser Moharamzadeh, Seyed Rasoul Taleb Moghaddam, Mohammad Ali Aslaghi and Asadollah Soleimani, and Ms. Farahnaz Shiri, are reported to be among the detainees.

Kayvan Samimi, from the Iranian Writers' Association, and Kamyar Farkour, Mardas Taheri, Soleimani Nejad, Abbas Shams, Hadi Soleimani, Seyed Mehdi Azimi, Mahan Salehi, Ghasim Khaloui, Davoud Rafiei, Asadullah Soleimani are also reported to be among the detainees.

Workers have every right to gather on the occasion of the International Workers' Day and other causes in order to have their voices and demands publicly heard. The right to organize and the freedom of expression and association are our internationally recognized rights. The continued repression of workers in Iran and members of the Vahed Syndicate must stop.

We, LO-Norway, believes that Iran is using so-called 'national security' laws to justify an escalating repression of legitimate union activity, and to deprive proper legal representation to victims of the repression. This has devastating consequences for those imprisoned and for their families, and it is also highly detrimental to Iran's society and economy."

LO-Norway strongly condemns the violent crackdown of unionist's protesters and the May Day protesters by the security forces and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all detainees. Stop repressions of workers and trade unionists and respect freedom of association and collective bargaining (ILO Convention 87 and 98).

LO-Norway urges you to order the immediate release of all detained trade union activists and leaders.

Yours sincerely

THE NORWEGIAN CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS



Hans-Christian Gabrielsen
President