

## **News and Reports-Workers' Struggles in Iran- June 2008 Updates as of July 1, 2008**

- **Strike at the Iran Khodro Car Manufacturing Company**
- **Haft Tapeh Workers Ended Strike!**
- **Mohammad Jarahi Imprisoned Without Trial!**
- **Protests against unpaid wages and lay offs and news of workers' arrests!**
- **Mansour Osanloo back to the Evin Prison after surgery**
- **Vahed Syndicate: We Condemn the Violation of Rights and Detention of Gholamreza Gholamhoseini!**
- **Report on an Evening of Labor Solidarity with Imprisoned Workers in Iran- New York**
- **Speech by Houri Sahba at an Evening of Labor Solidarity with Imprisoned Workers in Iran- New York**
- **Watch worker to worker solidarity forum in Toronto: [Worker to Worker Solidarity Forum: Video 1](#)**

### **1- News:**

#### **A new wave of protest and strike action at the Iran Khodro Car Manufacturing Company**

Thousands of workers at the Iran Khodro Car Manufacturing Company have been on strike. The protest began in a form of hunger strike on June 28, 2008 and since then it expanded across the company and thousands of workers have jointed protests and strike actions since then. Workers demands include:

- Freedom of labour organizations and prohibition of entry by the security guards to the workstations.
- End to mandatory over-time
- Increases to the productivity benefits
- Wage increased according to the increases to the cost of living
- And end to temporary contracts and hiring of workers on a permanent basis
- Stop the expansion of subcontracting companies; all workers should be under the Iran Khodro
- Participation of workers' representatives in decision making committees on job classifications
- Participation of workers' representatives at the hard and hazardous work committee
- Reduce work pressures through hiring new employees.

The company has been imposing harsh working conditions on employees through the use of contractors and temp agencies and violation of basic rights such as the right to organize as well as forced overtime work. Many workers have been hired on temporary contracts for over 10 years. After workers went on strike, the company issued a statement in which they threatened workers that the strike was called following the agitation of “banned” leftist opposition groups, such as the Worker-communism Unity Party, and asked workers to report any activities to the company’s security. This way, the company and the government authorities will find excuses to use force and violence in order to intimidate workers and crush their strike. Despite all these threats, the strike still continues as of July 1, 2008. (Source: dastranj news agency)

### **Haft Tapeh Workers Ended Strike!**

June 29, 2008- Workers of Hafttapeh Sugar Cane Company ended their strike after more than 40 days. They agreed to stop their strike for 15 days after management promised to address their demands including the payment of their three months overdue wages.

Throughout the strike, workers along with their families had blocked the transit road of Ahvaz- Andimeshk to express their protest to the unpaid wages and other demands. Security forces surrounded them with the fire trucks to control them. Their demands were: Payment of three months unpaid wages, right to organize an independent syndicate, ending the legal proceedings against the workers, release of arrested workers and the dropping of all charges against them and other labour activists; the sacking of the general manager of the company, a mullah called Yaghoob Shafiee, and the whole management committee; the sacking company's security chief. The city of Shoosh Security Forces arrested four worker activists. Their names are: Nejat Dehli, Ahmad Raji, Iraj Abedini and Mohammad Leissi. (June 18)

### **Other news:**

- **Mohammad Jarahi**, who is a 48 year old labour activist and a resident of the city of Tabriz, was arrested and sentenced to 4 month imprisonment without a trial or being given the right to defend himself. Mr. Jarahi is a member of the Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Free Workers’ Organizations in Iran. Last year, he was arrested for his labour activities and after 4 days was released on bail. On June 19, 2008, he was summoned to the branch 11 of the Tabriz Revolutionary Court where he was taken to the prison without any trials.
- Taha Azadi and Javanmir Moradi, board of director members of Free Union of Workers in Iran, were released on a \$10,000 bail. They were arrested in Asalooyeh - Booshehr on May Day and were jailed for 47 days. (June 18)
- Kurdistan Human Rights Defense Organization reported:
  - June 02, 2008- 100 of workers of the Kermanshah Petrochemical Industries went on hunger strike protesting hard work condition, non-paid wages/benefits, long working hours, bad quality of services, etc. .
  - June 11, 1008- Bakhtyar Rahimi a member of “Coordinating Committee for Creation of Workers’ Organizations” and Karim Datoopar who were in prison

since last June, were released on a \$100,000 bail. They were charged for “conspiracy against national security”.

- According to a report by the” Human Rights Activists in Iran”:
  - 34 workers were killed in explosion of the two chemical production factories, Kimiagaran Emrooz and Kimia Gostar. The Shazand Governor is the one who confirmed this number. According to Gholamreza Moradi, a worker activist in Arak, 30 workers are actually hospitalized in Qom, Arak, Isfahan, and Tehran. The incident happened in May 26. (June10)
  - Two workers were killed in a construction zone due to unsafe excavation and the fall of the concretes in Fatemi Square, Akbar Akbari the chief commander of Tehran fire fighters -Station108 declared.
  - Kaled Salehi, 35, a welder was killed after falling from forth floor of a building in Saqez -University Town. Lack of safety equipments is to blame. (22 May)
  - Rostami, a 53 years old worker was buried to death when a wall collapsed in subway construction zone in Isfahan. (Keyhan, June 16)
  - In Fars province, 18 workers were killed in accidents related to the lack of safety equipments and negligence from employer’s part in the first month of the New Year.
  - Mohsen, 32, was suffocated while working in a building due to power outage in ventilation system. He was a well digger.(June19)

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- Gelavizh Soltannia committed suicide by self-immolation and passed away after 18 hours in a hospital. She was originally from Mahabad. Her father and she were working in a brick kiln in Hamadan, where Ibrahim Elyasi, the factory owner assaulted her and she could not bear the emotional pressures of the assault. (Human Rights activists in Iran, June 4, 2008)

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- Ali Talebi executive Director of The government-sponsored Worker House in Qom announced that 300 workers of Iran Termeh and Tehran Patoo, have not been paid for eight months. (22 May)
- 330 workers of Golnar vegetable oil extraction factory were laid off.
- 180 workers of the “Arak Industries” factory walked 13 kilometers from factory to “Labour Office” protesting against the privatization of the factory. They have lost their work benefits due to privatization. (22 May)
- 38 workers of Tabas water purification plant were sacked and workers of Kerit Dam Builder Company have not received their wages for four months according to Golamreza Mohammadi, the executive director of Tabas Worker House. (22 May)
- Workers of Harir factory – Mazandaran, have not received their wages for five months. Also Mazandaran Chromium Chromical Factory has not paid workers for four months according to Nasrolah Daryabeigi, the executive director of Mazandaran Province Worker House. (22 May)

- More than 800 workers of Gharachak- Varamin Brick Kiln are in strike protesting to low wages since two weeks ago. (22 May)
- 53 workers of Taleghani Wood Industry have not been paid for 17 months. They have staged a sit-in at Ministry of Labour and Social Affair along with their families.
- More than 50 workers were sacked from Blourak and Pad Sanich - two factories in Ghazvin Province. (June 09)
- 150 workers of Rahsar- an excavation company- have not got paid for six months according to M. Hassan Ghavami, the executive director of Laristan Worker House. (June10)
- 50 workers of Shirin Taam factory were laid off according to M. Hassan Ghavami, the executive director of Laristan Worker House. (June10)
- More than 400 workers of the Farnakh & Mahnakh Company were in strike for six days. They demanded non-paid benefits, wages and working shoes and suit. (According to Eidali Karimi, the executive director of Ghazvin Worker House. (June10)
- 500 workers of Salman Ceramic factory have not received their wages for 3 months, according to Mohammad Goodarzi, the executive director of Borojerd Worker House. (June11)
- Workers of Khavar weaving factory have not received their wages for 12-17months. They blocked the road to Fooman City to protest he situation. (June11)
- More than 1000 workers of Alborz Tire have not received their New Year benefit for the year 2007. They went to strike again to express their protest. (June11)
- 50 mineworkers of Tabas Chirok went to strike in protest to lack of job classification, according to Golamreza Mohammadi, the executive director of Tabas Worker House. (16 June)
- More than 40workers of a beverage company in Saqez have not got paid for three months according to Mohammad Saleh Hosseini, a worker activist in Saqez. (16 June)
- Workers of Sangan Stone mine are faced with delay in wage payments and they gathered to protest the delay. Police forces has arrested a number of them. Also a worker was killed due to a collapse and another worker lost his hand during the work. (16 June)
- More than 3000 workers of brick kilns in Uromieh were in strike for 20 days to demand higher wages and better work conditions. On 20<sup>th</sup> day, the police force attacked them and arrested 24 workers. They were released later on a written promise.(June 17)
- 30 contract workers and 100 permanent workers of Kesht-o Sanat Khash haven't been paid for 12 and 8 months. Also, they haven't received their yearly benefits, New Year allowance and so on. According to Mir Balooch Zehi, the representative of Islamic council of the company, this unit is related to the Cooperative Industries of the prisons of the country. (June 17)
- 32 workers of Gostaresh Sazeh- a construction company haven't been paid for four months. Some yet have to receive their New Year benefits. ( June 19)

- June 19<sup>th</sup>: The long distance Telecommunication Industries Company has not paid its workers for four months. They came together before the Governor's Office.

### **Mansour Osanloo back to the Evin Prison**

June 30, 2008- Mansour Osanloo, the president of the Executive Board of the Syndicate of Workers of the Tehran and Suburban Bus Vahed Company, who had an eye surgery on May 26, 2008 at the Labafinejad Hospital, and was later transferred from the Coronary Care Unit (CCU) of Labafinejad hospital to the health clinic at Evin prison was transferred to the Evin prison section 350, on June 30, 2008, despite doctors' advice to keep him in the clinic. Osanloo is serving five year jail term because of his labour organizing efforts. (Source: dastranj news agency and Vahed syndicate).

**Dastranj- June 28, 2008, 2:00pm local time:** Gholamhoseini, is in Evin prison in the sever charge with acting against national security, is an afflicted worker who just wanted to talk to the General Director of Vahed Company and Tehran Mayor about returning him to the job. Following the detention of Gholamreza Gholamhoseini, a member of the Syndicate of the Workers of Vahed Company, in last week, his attorney criticized his detention and the ill treatment by the judiciary officials.

As reported by Dastranj, Parviz Khorshid in reaction to the charges against him with the action against national security through rioting and chaos, said, "How my client could act against national security by himself in such a high secured place. Khorshid added, "Gholamhoseini, is in Evin prison in the sever charges with acting against national security, as an afflicted worker, just wanted to talk to the General Director of Vahed Company and Tehran Mayor about returning him to the job."

Gholamreza Gholamhoseini, a member of the Syndicate of the Workers of Vahed Company, was arrested last week in Women Day celebration in Azadi 12 thousands seats Stadium where Tehran Mayor and the General Director of Vahed Company was scheduled to be attended.

According to Ebrahim Madadi, a member of the Syndicate of the Workers of Vahed Company, Gholamhoseini was one of those few members of the Syndicate whose dismissal order was broken by the Dispute Board at the Department of Labor, but the employer still refuses to return him to the job. As Khorshid, the attorney of Gholamhoseini, said, "Judiciary officials have been taking hard on Gholamhoseini by the order of detaining which is as hard as the charges have been brought to him, because detention order should be the judiciary's decision for those who have been accused to murder." Taking hard on Gholamhoseini has been continued while, today, his family went to the security prosecutor office without getting any results. Source:

<http://www.syndicavahed.org/engl65.htm>

### **Vahed Syndicate: We Condemn the Violation of Rights and Detention of Gholamreza Gholamhoseini (<http://www.syndicavahed.org/engl64.htm>)**

While the authorities of the judiciary in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the head of the judiciary, are talking about the ruling laws, respecting civil rights, justice and

human dignity and announcing that the judiciary system is ready to revive public civil rights on the occasion of the Judiciary Week , practically, unpleasant incidents have been taken place which emotionally affect everyone. Mr. Gholamreza Ghomalhoseini, a hard working driver and member of the Syndicate of the Workers of Vahed Company, who had received the definite order to be returned to the job by the legal institutions, has not been returned to his position because the management and the intelligence office at the Vahed Company refused to comply with the order.

Following the management refusal to meet him, Mr. Gholamhoseini went to the Azadi Stadium, where the National Women Day had been celebrating by Vahed Company and Mr. Ghalibaf was the speaker, to meet the manager of the Vahed Company at 8:00 pm on June 24, 2008. Unfortunately, in the coordinated action between the intelligence office at Vahed Company and Najafzadeh, officer of the Security Police, he was insulted and arrested and taken to the second base of the Security Police at Jalal Alahmad street where he spent the night while he was beaten by the commanders of the night shift. He was ordered to be transferred to the solitary confinement in Evin prison by Judge Hadad in charge of “acting against security’ at 4:00 pm on June 25, 2008.

The Syndicate of the Workers of Tehran and Suburban Bus Company strongly condemns the ill treatment by the officers of the security police and the detention of Mr. Gholamreza Gholamhoseini, a hard working worker with 3 children and tenant in Ghalehasan khan [*an area far from Tehran*], and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

The Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburban Bus Company urges the country’s high level authorities, especially at the Ministry of Labor who claim that the labor organizations are free, as well as country and international trade unions, especially ITF and ITUC and the related committees at ILO, and all the organizations and individuals who are seeking democracy and justice, to launch a wide efforts for Mr. Gholamhoseini’s immediate and unconditional release.

**The Syndicate of the Workers of Tehran and Suburban Bus Company, Vahed- June 26, 08**

## **2- Reports:**

### **Report on an Evening of Labor Solidarity with Imprisoned Workers in Iran**

**New York, USA.**

On June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008 an evening of solidarity with imprisoned workers and worker activists in Iran was held at Brecht Forum- New York, at 7:00 pm. *Bhairavi Desi*- the Executive Director of NY Taxi Workers Alliance and *Houri Sahba* a representative from International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI) were the speakers and Mimi Rosenberg was the moderator.

First, Mimi Rosenberg welcomed participants, announced the program and introduced the speaker. Mr. Bhairavi Desi’s father passed away prior to the event and he had to travel

back to India for the funeral. The meeting expressed sympathy and condolences. Then, Brian Jones declaimed poems from Ahmad Shamloo. Houri Sahba was the next who spoke about "Building Workers' Solidarity: Brick by Brick!"

Brian Jones recited poems from Nazim Hikmet. The question and answer period took more time, as there were many concerns and interests from the floor. The audience made many supportive comments and positive feedbacks. Then, Brian Jones performed a poem from Dennis Brutus and the meeting concluded.

This event was organized by Ad-Hoc Committee in Support of Imprisoned Bus Drivers in Tehran and was Co-Sponsored by: IASWI, Labor Notes and Campaign for Peace and Democracy.

### **Speech by Houri Sahba, from the IASWI, at an Evening of Labor Solidarity with Imprisoned Workers in Iran**

#### **Rebuilding Workers Solidarity; Brick by brick**

In 1980, I was working in a textile factory in Tehran. We were around 350 workers. I was working in the weaving sector with women and working children of 12 to 17 years of age. The workers were split to work in three shifts to maintain the factory's 24 hour function.

Following the 1979 revolution, we had built a Labour Council with five elected members who were the most popular, militant and progressive worker activists in the factory. Prior to the election of the Labour Council, the factory had an appointed representative who was doing everything but representing workers!

The Labour Council took the first step in reimbursement of unpaid benefits. It managed to call for a general assembly on a regular basis which soon became the ultimate decision making body. At the shift change, we would take fifteen minutes to gather with the next shift at the loading area to discuss workers' concerns. The speakers would use the bales of cotton as the "stand"! In the next six months, we got lunch time and a warm meal, work suits, proper air filtration, and much more. A sense of class-consciousness was developing little by little.

When the war between Iran and Iraq began, the golden days were over. Production, production and production for the fronts became the sole line on the agenda. Three members of the Labour Council were sacked for conspiracy against production and calling of general assembly, which was a routine practice and never interfered with production. Any protest was considered as "Serving the Enemy" and "Anti Islamic Revolution", and was suppressed harshly. Our achievements were taken back one by one, workers movement was beheaded, their organizations were abolished, and class struggle became a matter of life and death.

The nationwide picture was more or less the same. War demolished a good part of working-class achievements. Labour councils, syndicates and unions were attacked brutally and for the next two years, a wave of arrest, persecution, imprisonment and

prosecution swept away the union activists, progressive workers. Neo liberalism imposed the “restructuring of the local state” to establish its hegemony. Privatization, large number of layoffs, job insecurity, and changes in class stratification were the characteristics of the neo liberal policy in Iran. Part time and migrant workers (Afghans) were added to the “reserve army”. This function has stayed the same worldwide saving a few more characteristics for advanced industrial countries such as Canada, US and European countries, such as outsourcing, longer working hours, new consumption patterns and the increase of debts that will result in the same misery in long term. Despite all, Iranian workers are still one of the most militant parts of the world’s working class. They had no other options left.

According to a recent report on violation of workers’ social and labour rights in Iran, in the first six months of the year 2006, the officially reported number of job loss reached more than 120,000 (announced by the Ministry of Labour). 20,549 workers were sacked from 91 factories. 26,000 workers are waiting for their unpaid wages in 108 factories and workplaces. Yet, the real numbers are well over hundreds of thousands.

Historically, the workers of “The National Oil Company of Iran” have been the dominant leading body for the whole working class in Iran. With the global capitalist system, the oil workers have been shredded into temporary contract workers for various contractors who would hire them for 89 days at the time and renew their contracts constantly. Today, a large number of workers are temporary contract workers in Iran.

Eventually, the public service workers became the most homogenized part of our working class. In 2004, 17000 workers of Tehran Suburb Bus Company- Sherkate Vahed- created their independent syndicate and received an immediate backlash from Islamic regime. Still, the leaders of the syndicate are repeatedly arrested, beaten up, jailed. However, the struggles continued up until now. Mansour Osanloo has been in prison since June 2007 and he is not alone.

Mahmoud Salehi was in prison for more than a year charged for organizing workers. Taha Azadi and Javanmir Moradi from Asalouyeh, Shies Amani, Saeed Hazrati and many others are still in jail. Cases against Jalil Ahmadi, fereydoon Nikoofard, Ahmad Nejati, Ghorban Alipoor, and Mohammad HeydariMehr and Abolfazl Abedini from HaftTapeh Sugar Cane Company, workers of Alborz Tire, Shahoo Sannandaj and other companies have still not been dropped

The global capitalist system is highly organized and equipped. As Leo Panitch stated, we need to rebuild a “transnational solidarity” and “use our diversity as a source of strength”. In order to do so in North America, we need to change the centralized bureaucratic structure and the function of the existing unions. We have to promote a radically democratic and radically socialist structure. The top-down model must be changed to a bottom-up model.

As an example, The CUPE International Solidarity Committee has developed a “worker-to-worker model”. They have opened the committee meetings to the activist groups, grass root organizations, campaigns, etc. The international solidarity in this context is no longer limited to writing support letters or being a funding agent. It is basically about organizing socialist caucuses, conferences and committees that are extremely inclusive as well as educating union members to engage in the existing class struggles and demonstrations; educating them about the “linkages between local, national and international solidarity struggles” and finally sustaining this consciousness and mobilizations.



Evidently, Neo liberalism has its own agenda and promotes its own solutions through organizations like American Center for International Labour Solidarity, aka the Solidarity Center.

We have to be aware that the neo liberal ideology has already made its way in some of worker organizations in Iran and it needs to be constantly challenged both theoretically and practically. Every single effort in rebuilding workers' solidarity must be independent from any government or government founded organizations.

I want to make another point here. Opposing neo liberalist agenda and Islamic regime in Iran must not be interpreted pro intervention. We clearly oppose a military intervention in any scale by US and allies. We have already experienced eight years of war that abolished Iranian working class struggles for years. That was enough!

Finally, in a world with rapid pace of change, the gradual development of international solidarity is not enough. Food price is rising! Starvation of the masses is rising! The inflation rate is unleashed! Corporations make record-breaking benefits. With the upcoming recession, it is mandatory to rebuild an international solidarity. Thousands of Alborz Tire workers, HaftTapeh Sugar Cane Company, Sherkate Vahed transit workers are fighting! The imprisoned worker activists are fighting! They need our support! They have to be released immediately and unconditionally. A militant worker-to-worker solidarity must be rebuilt: brick by brick!

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**Watch worker to worker solidarity forum in Toronto: [Worker to Worker Solidarity Forum: Video 1](#)**

**Or click: [http://www.etehadbinalmelali.com/VIDEOS/CUP\\_1.wmv](http://www.etehadbinalmelali.com/VIDEOS/CUP_1.wmv)**

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Background Information: [www.workers-iran.org](http://www.workers-iran.org)