

Workers *in* Iran

News & views from the labour movement in Iran



Special EI Issue - Friday, July 20 2007

Iranian Teachers Need International Support

To: International United of Teachers Conference

As you know, teachers in Iran have had a demonstration, which started in January 19 .2007The teachers demand an increase in their wages, which to bring their salaries up to par with the current inflation of the country. They demand an end to discrimination and want equality so that men and women are

treated equally and fairly. They want a total overhaul of the educational system to be based on modern standards of teaching and not on ideology. The teachers have announced in their demonstrations that they are unable to live in poverty any longer.

Currently, teachers and other educational employees have to make ends meet, by working two or three jobs. They are still unable to have comfort-

able lifestyles.

These teachers' urgent and important demand is to have the right to form unions, have strikes, and freedom of speech. The people of Iran have shown their solidarity with the teachers and have demonstrated their support for these demands by participating in the teacher's demonstrations and sending petitions and letters of complaint to the government.

These demands have caused the government to target teachers, and treat them severely and cruelly. On February 8th, The Islamic Regime attacked a teacher's demonstration, and arrested

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Iranian Teachers' Immediate Demands

A letter from a group of Iranian teachers

To: The World Congress of Education International

Dear Colleagues,

Please accept our congratulations on the event of this World Congress. Although our teachers will be deprived of the opportunity to attend due to the existing conditions, we still feel we are alongside you, and a member of the global educational community.

Teachers and academic workers of our country throughout the last few months of the past year participated in a nationwide protest movement to denounce the distressing work conditions and livelihoods in education. But the government, as usual, responded to these protests with threats, beatings, arrests, suspension, and dismissals of teachers. Presently dozens of teachers have been relieved of their duties because of their participation in these work-related protests. Several others are waiting

to receive their orders of dismissal. It is not the first time, nor will it be the last time, that this occurs.

Over the last few years, teachers have participated in protests regionally and nationally to show their displeasure at the terrible state of their livelihoods and educational system, but each time the ruling powers respond with arrest, repression, and dismissal of the protestors.

In a society where the astronomical class difference between the rich and the poor has alarmed even those within the government, teachers and most wage-earners can only see their lives by working a second and third job, with horrendous amounts of overtime. In spite of this, they are unable to provide for a decent living in the third millennium.

The educational content based on the prevalent ideology and despotic management of the educational system has stunted the growth and elevation of Iranian teachers and stu-

dents. This structure has severely curtailed the involvement of teachers and experts in the educational system's methods and management, and places obstacles against the rise of any type of creative and innovative knowledge.

The natural result of such a structure is that students turn their backs on their education, causing mounting social damage. The right to organize, which is one of the most

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Invitation to Education International

INVITATION TO EI'S FIFTH
WORLD CONGRESS
BERLIN, GERMANY, JULY 22-
26, 2007

Dear colleagues,

I am very pleased to invite a representative of Kanoone Senfiye Moallemane, either Superintendent, **Mr Ali Akbar Baghani** or the spokesperson **Mr Beheshti Langroodi**, to EI's Fifth World Congress, which will take place in Berlin on July 22-26, 2007.

The theme of the Congress is "Education –Joining Together for equality Education and Social Justice". You will find enclosed herewith the draft Congress agenda.

Education International has been following the Iranian teachers' movement

very closely and I would consider it an honour if one representative of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association could be present at the EI World Congress as guest.

EI will cover the travel and accommodation costs for one guest representing the Iran Teachers' Trade Association.

I would also like to bring to your attention that EI has been approached by **Mr Mohammad Khaksari**, editor in chief of the Iranian teacher magazine "teachers pen", who could also be a suitable representative of the Iranian teachers movement at the EI World Congress. Fluency in English would of course be a tremendous asset both for the Iranian teachers representative as for the EI audience of over 1500 delegates.

Please let us know as soon as possible by whom the Iranian teachers movement will be represented. I wait for your decision. EI can assist with the issuance of visas but information (name of guest, details for visa request) need to be processed by you before July 29. You will find more detailed information about the EI World Congress at www.ei-ie.org/congress5/en

EI now represents over 30 million teachers and education workers through 390 member organisations in 170 countries.

I look forward to seeing you in Berlin.

With best wishes,



Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary

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basic rights of a learned society, is not officially recognized by the government, and any efforts to form independent trade unions is answered with arrests and dismissal of activists. Despite all of the pressure against organizing, the teachers have been able to impose their organizations upon the government.

Teachers will not surrender to these conditions and will continue our struggle to improve our living conditions and obtain our various rights.

We the undersigned of this petition, request of all teachers and workers organizations, all related international organizations, and all civilized individuals around the globe, to assist us in obtaining the rights expounded below; to generate the foundation for a decent living for Iranian teachers, and to support and defend our protest movement by writing your own letters of protest:

1. Waive the orders of suspension and dismissals, stop the threats against



teachers, and reinstate the 39 teachers banned from teaching

2. Close the 286 security files of teachers arrested in the protests of the past few months, who were temporarily released on high bail or liens, etc., and whose files are still open, and who will be summoned to court.

3. Provide a reasonable increase in pay for teachers who are worthy of a decent living. Undoubtedly around ten times more than the currently government-declared \$180 monthly salary which is well under the poverty line that is declared by the government itself.

4. Recognize the right to organize and

to strike

5. Provide job security and permanently hire temporary/contract teachers

6. Provide non-ideological and scientific curriculum in accordance to the current advances in knowledge.

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The process of recent protests of Iranian teachers

In the last decade, Iranian teachers have protested the low wages, educational systems and their work conditions in several ways and several times. But each and every time their protests have been violently oppressed by the Islamic government through threat, jailing and sacking.

The latest course of teacher's struggles for their rights started at 3rd of February with a protest gathering in front of Islamic parliament. In this gathering, teachers called for an increase in wages and declared that they will strike, if their demands are not fulfilled. Two weeks after this, teachers did strike and consequently 5000 teachers gathered in front of the parliament to protest the un-responsiveness of the government to their demands.

3rd of March

A big demonstration with more than 20 thousand people from Tehran and other cities was organized in front of Islamic parliament. In these demonstrations, Teachers protested the discrimination and low wages and demanded for a raise in their wages.

8th of March

The strike and gathering in front of the Parliament also continued in other days. The MPs of Islamic Parliament talked with Teachers' representatives and promised to negotiate with them. It was supposed that on the 13th of March, a group consisted of MPs and the government representatives to negotiate with teachers to hear their demands. Teachers declared, in the end of this gathering, that their demands were not reached in these negotiations, and they choose to strike and demonstrate to fulfill their demands.

In side of oppression of gatherings, arrests, threats and call of teachers, the government also promised to negotiate and fulfill Teacher's demands to postpone the protests and thus make them disappointed to continue with the protest.

13th of March

The supposed negotiations didn't take place. Instead of MPs and government people, a number of military and secu-

rity forces and one MP were present. This agitated against teachers and their association and they declared that there could be no negotiation with Teachers' representatives.



At this time the strikes and demonstrations of teachers were happening in various cities in Iran including Khoram Abad, Kermanshah, Khomeini Shahr, Rasht, Saghez and Sanandaj.

14th of March

Teachers again gathered in front of the Parliament. The oppressor forces put their full force on teachers and attacked them with batons, punching and kicking. They beat them and arrested several hundred. Some were transported to the hospital. This year, 183 teachers were arrested. Some of the association members were among arrested that they weren't released until the end of March.

1st of April

The coordinator council of trade associations declared a communiqué and stated the demands and the agenda of Teacher's protests.

15th and 16th of April

Despite the arrest, prosecution and promises that the Regime gave to the teachers, the Strike became a phenomenal one. According to estimates more than 80 percent teachers all over the Iran participated in the Strike. According to the news and reports, the strike took place even in the most isolated

cities and villages. The huge participation of teachers in the Strike proved that none of the Regime tactics to counter their protests had been effective and they were determined to continue the fight. The Regime mobilized all its forces to counter the teachers protest. The Education Ministry had its share in countering the strike. They sent letters to several cities to the directors of schools, asking them to give a list of Striking teachers so they would be attended. In some cities, the authorities of the Ministry and Security forces went to schools or called for teachers and directors, threatening them not to take part in the Strike.

29th of April

This was the date of the Strike, according to the agenda. Once again, despite all the pressures and threats, Teachers, all over the country, participated in the Strike.

The consolidated efforts of the Islamic Republic, of threats and arrests of the authorities of trade association of teachers, didn't prevent the general strike. The Strike happened in most of the cities.

2nd of May

Once again teachers acted according to the announced agenda and gathered in front of the Education Ministry building in several cities. They demanded the release of jailed teachers, nullification of sacking commands, and fulfillment of their demands.

The Regime, countered the teacher's protests, had dismissed teachers in Tehran and Hamedan but even this, like all its other attempts, couldn't force teachers to backdown but made them more determined in their fight.

8th of May

On this day according to the decision of trade association of the teachers in a meeting in late March, Teachers planned to organize a protest gathering in front of the Islamic Parliament, if their demands were not fulfilled.

The release of jailed teachers, an end to threats and dismissal of the activists, nullification of sacking commands for some of the teachers, dismissal of the

Iranian teacher need ... from page 1
 many of the participants. Recently, more than 39 teachers were fired, and 286 others were arrested. These teachers were later released after paying a high bail, but their court cases are still pending. Fellow teachers have had to start a bail fund for their fellow teach-

teachers and their demonstration leaders,

.4Having the right to form unions and engage in collective bargaining.

.5An increase in the salary of the teachers. According to the government statistic, the teacher's salary is below of the poverty line.

rested.

We wish success and prosperity for you and we hope you support the Iranian teachers because they desperately need international support. We expect that in this conference the wishes of the teachers will be granted. A group of Iranian teachers situated throughout the world.



ers so they could bail many of their coworkers out. Iranian teachers are in need of international support for their demands that include:

.1End to the expulsion order of the 39 teachers currently unemployed,

.2Immediate termination of charges against 286 teachers that were arrested during the recent demonstrations,

.3To prevent the threats against the

We appreciate your support towards the teachers struggle; we expect that in this conference special attention will be given to this situation.

We urge you to condemn the suppression to the Iranian teachers by the Islamic Regime and support their claims especially in regards to their job security and to dismiss the cases of those teachers that have been recently ar-

A group of Iranian Teachers abroad,

Habib Biktash

Shahla Daneshfar

Mohsen Ebrahimi

Kamyar Karimi

Eqball Nezerghahi

Reza Paydar

Babak Yazdi

Bahman Zakernejad

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 Minister of Education, implementation of harmonic system of wages and a high increase in wages were among the important and immediate demands of teachers.

The Regime established martial law conditions and used lots of its forces and arrested some of the teachers to prevent the teachers' gatherings. The police forces didn't let teachers and supporters to stay there, and, those who showed resistance were attacked. But

teachers gathered in small groups shouting the slogan "Jailed teacher should be freed!"

In Tehran gates, teachers who came from other cities to gather in front of the Parliament were barred and the buses carrying them were stopped.

Until now 40 teachers have been dismissed and the case of 286 teachers, that were arrested in the process of recent protests were freed by bail, is still in process. The Regime, in order to prevent further Teachers protest ac-

tions, continues its oppressing acts against teachers.

Despite the pressures from regime, the struggle and efforts of teachers to meet their demands, still continues.

We demand from all freedom-loving people and international organizations and bodies to back the Teachers protests so they could meet their rightful demands.

Bahman Zakernejad

www.socialismnow.org