



# Workers in Iran

News & views from the labour movement in Iran

No.1 - Friday, April 21, 2005

## Workers in Iran demand \$550 minimum wage

*“The following is the text of a petition issued by workers in Iran calling for a \$500 per month minimum wage, as the first step. So far it has been signed by at least four thousand workers.”*

### **Petition in Iran that demands a minimum wage of \$550: On the Minimum Wage for 2005**

At the present time, our wages are absolutely not sufficient for our livelihood. While every manager or higher ranking authority is getting paid wages over \$1,300 or \$2,500, and while they have other incomes and assets, our minimum wage has been set at \$130 per month. This is happening at a time when it is impossible to live with a pay of less than \$1,300. From our exploitation a few parasites are becoming millionaires, while we are unable even to send our children to elementary school. The current minimum wage is one third of the declared official poverty line. We demand a comfortable livelihood which would match today's human standard. No one deserves the life we have.

We as workers, teachers, nurses, contract or permanent, male or female, employed or unemployed, all over the country declare that a humane and better livelihood is our right. Proper food, proper clothing, decent housing, a high standard of healthcare, and time for relaxation and leisure is our right; we declare that to obtain this standard, wages must be at least \$1,300 per month. Nonetheless, while we are striving to obtain fair wages, we demand that, as the first step, the minimum wage should be at least \$550, which, according to official figures, is the level that must be reached for anyone to have a bare-minimum subsistence. We demand that wages of less than that be immediately declared illegal. This minimum wage should cover all wage-earners, be they in contract work or in a permanent position, including teachers and nurses.

We declare that we should not tolerate these inhumane living conditions, and to reach this fair and just demand, we call upon all fair-minded and honorable people in Iran and all workers' organizations all over the world to support our demand.  
March 2005

## **PETITION**

**To:**  
**Iranian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs**  
**World labour organisations**  
**International Labour Organization (ILO)**

About half of Iranian workers currently work under temporary or even so-called 'blank' contracts, without any rights. According to official estimates, in a few years' time the number of workers on temporary contracts will reach 90% of all employees. Furthermore, the legislators in Iran, having exempted workshops of less than 5 to 10 workers and carpet-weavers from the Labour Law (from 30 Articles of the Law), are now aiming to deprive all workers on temporary contracts from a minimum of social security.

In such conditions, the ILO by sending a delegation to Iran to oversee the signing of a memorandum of understanding regarding amendments to Chapter 6 of the existing Labour Law (on labour organisations), which unfortunately took place in the absence of workers' independent representatives, effectively recognised and put a stamp of approval on the rightlessness of workers in Iran.

Clearly, Iranian workers who, deprived of their independent organisations, have

## **New developments in the labour movement**

By **Shahla Daneshfar**

In the last 3 months workers in Iran have continued their protests. Issues such as the minimum wage, the right to organize, unpaid wages and downsizing of workforce, were the foci of workers' struggle and protests.

On the issue of government's decision to set the minimum wage as low as \$149 per month, workers have started a petition demanding a minimum wage of at least \$549 as the first step. They have declared that they should be getting over \$1,220 per month, but that today they are asking for a minimum wage of \$549 as the first step, and that a minimum wage less than that should be illegal. According to the reports we have received, this protest petition is being signed in cities such as Tehran, Karaj, Demavand, Kermanshah, Abadan and Isfahan. Only in Kashan, 3,000 workers so far have signed it.

Furthermore, in protest at the recognition by the ILO of the so-called 'House of Workers', which is a government agency, as the representative of Iranian workers, the 'Follow-up Committee for the Formation of Free Labour Organisations' has demanded that Iranian workers should have the right to freely organize and that their organizations should be recognized by international organizations



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To All Workers' Organisations and Trade Unions

## **Iran: Workers Protest Contract Work and Anti-Labour Legislation Thousands Sign Petition**

*February 8, 2005*

Dear Colleagues,

The following petition has been issued by a group of Iranian workers who are protesting against contract work, the ban on formation of workers' organisations and anti-labour legislation. So far, it has been signed by several thousand workers of different industrial centres from all over Iran and the number of signatures is growing daily. The petition is going round different factories and other workplaces. This is a broad movement that needs to receive huge support.

You may know that workers in Iran are deprived of the right to organise, strike or elect their own representatives to represent them in negotiations. Furthermore, the Government and employers are increasingly contracting out services and converting permanent contracts into temporary ones or merely signed agreements without any rights or terms of employment specified (so-called 'blank' contracts). This has obliterated any kind of job security and has imposed a condition, which could only be compared to slavery. Thus the right to organise and to have organisations independent of the state has never been more pressing. Notwithstanding the Islamic dictatorship, workers have started a massive struggle for humane working conditions against the employers' and Government's attacks. This petition is one of their collective initiatives.

I request that you sign this petition, take it to your membership to sign and post it in your union's websites and other publications. This will give the workers in Iran huge encouragement. Today more than ever, international solidarity has a profound impact on the climate of the workers' movement in Iran. I hope this call for support by Iranian workers will meet with a positive response from all workers.

This is the link for signing the petition. Please put this link on your site: [http://www.kargaran.org/feb05\\_wrk\\_petition.asp](http://www.kargaran.org/feb05_wrk_petition.asp)

Yours sincerely,

Kazem Nik-Khah  
Secretary, Worker-communist Party of Iran –  
Committee Abroad

### **A few words from the Editor:**

I am not aware of any English newsletter dealing with workers' issues in Iran. *Workers in Iran* will try to fill part of this gap. The media in the West portrays Iran as an Islamic society. We would like to show that this is a false picture. The class struggle is very intense in that society; and it has not subsided even for a brief second in the last 26 years. Of course, it has gone through its ebbs and flows, but it has never let the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is the biggest capitalist of that land, to have a moment of ease.

This first issue of *WI* will be distributed at this year's May Day rallies and celebrations. We, at the International Labour Solidarity Committee of the Worker-communist Party of Iran would like to congratulate this most important workers holiday to all of our readers.

*WI* values and welcomes any comments and/or criticisms to improve the newsletter.

Nasser Asgary

**New Devl** ... continued from p.1  
as Iranian workers' representatives.

These latest struggles, focusing on the minimum wage and the right to organize, have given the labour movement a nationwide character.

Furthermore, in the last three months we have witnessed long strikes such as the two-month long strike in West Alborz coal mine in northern Iran; the strike and control of factory by workers in Filoor, a factory near Tehran, which forced managers to give in to workers' demands; and rallies and picket lines such as at Pars Textile factory in northern Iran. In Iran-Khodroo car plant, with their solidarity and unity, the workers were able to bring back to work their expelled co-workers. Also, on the anniversary of Khatoun Abad massacre in the city of Babak, in a show of solidarity, the workers of a number of factories climbed Klone Bestack heights.

**Petition** ... continued from P 1  
always witnessed the imposition of anti-labour laws in breach of ILO Conventions, will not recognise a memorandum in whose drawing up and signing their representatives have not taken part.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call for the recognition of the right to form independent labour organisations. Towards this end, while calling on the Iranian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for the removal of impediments to the creation of workers' organisations and recognising the participation of independent workers' representatives in all meetings relevant to the drafting of labour laws, request labour organisations around the world to support the just demands of Iranian workers.

Furthermore, we ask our colleagues in these organisations to call on the ILO to make the recognition and signing of any agreements relating to labour laws subject to the participation of independent workers' representatives (chosen through workers' collective vote in supervised elections).

**Follow-up Committee for the Formation  
of Free Labour Organisations in Iran**  
31 January 2005

Visit the following websites:  
[www.wpiran.org](http://www.wpiran.org)  
[www.kargaran.org](http://www.kargaran.org)  
[www.m-hekmat.com](http://www.m-hekmat.com)  
[www.socialismnow.org](http://www.socialismnow.org)