

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Khosrow B. Semnani

AFL-CIO and International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) strongly condemn violation of labor and human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

AFL-CIO and the ITUC call on Iranian authorities to drop charges and release detained trade unionists in line with the recommendations of the Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labor Organization.

Salt Lake City, August , 2019 — In a letter to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on July 23, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) representing 207 million workers in 163 territories has strongly condemned the continued harassment, detention and torture of labor activists and journalists in Iran, among them Ismail Bakshi and Sepideh Quliyan.

Shortly thereafter, Cathy Feingold, the International Director of the AFL-CIO and Deputy President of the ITUC, addressed a letter to Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador at the United Nations, wherein she denounced "the continued persecution of trade unionists and the systematic abuse of workers' and trade union rights in Iran."

The AFL-CIO and the ITUC note that many labor activists and journalists continue to be detained and tortured in Iran, among them Esmail Abdi, a teachers' union leader; Reza Shahabi, a director of the Tehran bus workers' union; Mahmoud Salehi, a baker's union leader and Ismail Bakshi and Sepideh Quliyan, Haft Tapeh sugar cane activists.

Khosrow B. Semnani, an Iranian-American philanthropist based in Utah, organized a campaign to help detained workers from the Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Company. Semnani supported and coordinated this effort with Jim Worthington, President of the AFL-CIO's Utah Chapter; Karen Mayne, Utah State Senate Minority Leader and Semnani's team of international labor lawyers.

"This is an important moment in the history of Iran's labor movement," Semnani said. "With their action, the ITUC and AFL-CIO are shedding light on the repression of union leaders whose only crime is defending the rights of their members to their wages, pensions and benefits. Instead of protecting workers and industries against the scourge of corruption and mismanagement that is destroying Iran's economy, Iran's regime condemns those who protest against injustice."

The unprecedented global action to protect Iran's workers, teachers, bakers and bus drivers comes on the heels of a complaint filed with the International Labor Organization in May 2019 by workers in Iran's sugar industry. In its defense of the Iranian workers, the AFL-CIO's Cathy Feingold notes that "workers are demanding full payment of wage and benefit arrears, recognition of the union as the workers' legal representative and reinstatement of all unjustly terminated workers, and return of the company's ownership to government."

Denouncing "attacks on workers by masked men as well as their arrest, beating and torture by police," the ITUC has called for the release of detained trade unionists in line with recommendations of the

Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labor Organization (ILO). ITUC's letter to Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was endorsed by eighty trade syndicates representing workers from Brazil to Sweden to Turkey to Indonesia—an unprecedented international declaration in support of Iranian labor unions and their leaders.

"We are proud of our work with the AFL-CIO's Utah Chapter and the International Trade Union Confederation," said Semnani. "Their actions give hope to millions of workers in Iran, including union leaders and journalists imprisoned for simply exercising their rights to freedom of association and assembly. As Iranian-Americans we too can take small steps to improve the economic future of the Iranian people."

The AFL-CIO is a democratic, voluntary federation of 55 national and international labor unions that strives to ensure that all working people are treated fairly, with decent paychecks and benefits, safe jobs, dignity and equal opportunities. afcio.org

International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) is the world's largest trade union federation. It was created in November 2006 out of the merger of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the World Confederation of Labour. The ITUC's primary mission is the promotion and defense of workers' rights and interests, through international cooperation between trade unions, global campaigning and advocacy within the major global institutions. www.ituc-csi.org

The Haft Tapeh Agro-Industrial Workers Syndicate (HTAIWS) was founded in 1974 and is one of the oldest trade unions in Iran. Representing more than 4,000 workers at the Haft Tapeh Agro-Industrial Complex, HTAIWS has been at the forefront of Iranian labor movement, publicizing the grievances of the Haft Tapeh workers and demanding accountability from the government. The Haft Tapeh complex in the City of Shush produces the majority of Iran's sugar.

Khosrow Semnani, an Iranian-American philanthropist based in Salt Lake City, Utah is the author of **Where Is My Oil?** a report on systemic corruption in Iran's economy, and its impact on the economic future and well-being of workers, teachers and pensioners. See WherelsMyOil.org for more information. www.whereismyoil.org

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Date: June 5, 2019

Complaint to the International Labor Organization about the Violations of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and their Assaults on the Workers of Haft Tapeh Agro-Industrial Company

To: The International Labor Organization (ILO)

Re: The Official Condemnation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its Violations of the Rights of Workers, Activists and Supporters of the Haft Tapeh Workers

Copies:

- The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
- The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)
- Media & Workers' Syndicates

We hereby submit a brief report and register our official complaint for your consideration to investigate and condemn the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its blatant violations of workers' inalienable rights in forming independent labor organizations as well as for the suppression of labor activists and their supporters for exercising their right to freedom of association and the election of representatives, in particular at the Haft Tapeh Agro-Industrial Company.

In recent months, tens of Haft Tapeh workers have been arrested, summoned or threatened simply for holding rallies to express their syndicate-related complaints. Some of them have been temporarily released on bail. The list includes the names of more than 50 workers. We hereby only point to several particular cases of the suppression, harm and torture of the workers of Haft Tapeh and the oppressive actions of the Islamic Republic of Iran in violation of workers' rights.

Our representative, **Esmail Bakhshi**, who is one of sincere and committed advocates, was arrested by the security forces on 18 November 2018 (27 Aban 1397) and put under intense torture. When he was freed on a hefty bail, he published his account of the torture for the attention of the workers and public opinion. He said the torture brought him close to death. He then formally filed a complaint against the security agents who had tortured him with the judiciary. But shockingly, the same security establishment [Intelligence Ministry] that tortured him shamelessly fabricated charges against him and arrested and imprisoned him again on 20 January 2019 (30 Dey 1397) for revealing the truth. Esmail Bakhshi, who is in a grave physical condition, has been transferred from prison to prison and is currently being held in limbo and under cruel and harsh conditions in Evin prison.

Ms. Sepideh Qoliyan, a social activist and defender of Iran's workers movement who was present among the workers' families on 18 November 2018 (27 Aban 1397) and at the

gathering of several thousand of us workers, has been arrested and tortured. After being temporarily released on a hefty bail of over 500 million tomans, she testified about her own torture and that of Mr. Bakhshi and her testimony received wide coverage on social media. On 30 Dey 1397, security forces raided her house, beating and assaulting her and her family members. Ms. Qoliyan and her brother were both arrested. Ms. Qoliyan was transferred from the security prison to Ahvaz prison and then to Evin prison and eventually to Varamin prison. The authorities have stated that their intention in arresting her and subjecting her to cruel and harmful treatment and transfers from prison to prison is to punish her.

Mr. Ali Nejati, one of our retired colleagues, who was at his home in another city during our peaceful protests, was arrested on 30 November 2018 (9 Azar 1397) following a raid by the security forces and was arrested for the umpteenth time for his membership in the independent workers' union. The security services assaulted and arrested his child as well as his guests. Mr. Nejati who is a member of the governing body of the Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Workers Union, an entity that is independent of the government and the employer suffers from serious heart ailments. In the period in which he has been held by the Ministry of Information, he has been subject to cruelty and relentless interrogations. More recently, he was summoned to appear in Evin prison's prosecutor's office so that they can complete the process of fabricating a false judicial case against him.

While Esmail Bakhshi, Ali Nejati and Sepideh Qoliyan were subjected to physical and psychological torture during their detention in the Intelligence Ministry's detention center in Ahvaz [capital of Khuzestan Province], they were forced to make false and coerced confessions in front of the camera. Then the security authorities dreamed up a false scenario and made a ridiculous film [aired on state-run TV] with a montage of bits and pieces of their so-called confessions and tried to portray them as dangerous elements to society.

Other people who have been arrested, interrogated, tortured and harmed for supporting the Haft Tapeh workers in recent months are **Ms. Asal Mohammadi**, **Ms. Sanaz Elahyari**, **Mr. Amir Hossein Mohammadifar**, **Mr. Amir Amir Gholi**, among others. Three of these beloved friends remain under arrest and subject to pressure.

The families of the detainees have all been pressured and harassed to keep them from speaking to the media about the difficult circumstances of their incarcerated loved ones. Security and judicial authorities have explicitly told the families that the more they publicize information about their prisoners' difficult conditions, the longer they would be kept behind bars and the harsher the sentences meted to them.

With this instrument, we, a group of Haft Tapeh workers, hereby express our deep animus for the violent suppression of our representatives and supporters, all of whom have sought to secure our legitimate rights as workers in a peaceful framework. We request that our complaint be officially registered and investigated at the International Labor Organization, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. Recognizing that the Islamic Republic of Iran is an official member of the International Labor Organization and sends representatives to the ILO's annual gatherings, we request that they be interrogated and questioned and held accountable for their repressions (of workers). Although we have only recounted a small fraction of these violations, have taken place in other parts of Iran in other forms. The represent but a fragment of the flagrant violation of the fundamental rights of workers concerning freedom of association, gatherings, peaceful protest and free publication in defense of workers' demands.

The Iranian government's flimsy, old and rotten attempts to link workers and activists to opposition political forces and to even shamelessly accuse them of terrorist actions have no credibility in the eyes of the workers, the majority of the Iranian people and labor organizations inside and outside the country. We must emphasize that these workers, acting within the rubric of their trade union activities or as members of independent workers associations were only defending the rights and demands of the Haft Tapeh workers. We hope to receive your official response and pass it on to all the workers of Haft Tapeh and Iran.

With thanks,

A Group of Haft Tapeh Workers

Wednesday, 5 June 2019 (15 Khordad 98)
Contact info: kargare7tape@gmail.com

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whereismyoil.org



AFL-CIO

AMERICA'S UNIONS

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July 29, 2019

The Honorable Majid Takht Ravanchi
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor
New York N.Y. 10017 USA

Dear Ambassador:

I am writing on behalf of the over 12.5 million working women and men of the AFL-CIO to denounce the continued persecution of trade unionists and the systematic abuse of workers' and trade union rights in Iran. We highlight the following cases that demonstrate the breadth of these violations of labor and human rights.

Numerous trade unionists have been detained in retribution for their defense of workers. Tehran teachers' union leader Esmail Abdi was taken back to the Evin prison on January 20, 2018 after being released on furlough on January 9th. Abdi is being targeted for his union activism and campaign for teachers' rights and free public education. He was convicted of national security offenses in February 2016 after organizing peaceful protests. On April 30th 2017, Abdi started a hunger strike to protest against the continued, unlawful repression of teachers and human rights defenders. After a 38-day hunger strike, he was hospitalized for two days. Reports indicate that Abdi suffers harsh detention conditions.

Reza Shahabi, a director of the Tehran bus workers' union (Vahed Syndicate), was imprisoned in June 2010 over trumped-up charges of '*propaganda against the regime*'. He completed a six-year sentence. During that time, he underwent serious neck and spinal surgery following physical abuse during interrogation. After spending four years in jail, Shahabi was released on medical leave on October 6th 2014. However, in August 2017 he was forced to return to prison to 'end his term'. To protest against this decision, Shahabi went on hunger strike for 49 days, losing 13kg.

Davood Razavi, another leader of the same Tehran bus workers' union, was detained on April 29th 2015 while preparing for a May Day gathering. He was released on bail on September 1, 2015 and in January 2016 convicted to five years in prison for '*collusion and assembly against national security*'. He, was summoned to court on January 24 2018 for his appeal case, but the trial was postponed, leaving him in limbo.

Bakers' union leader Mahmoud Salehi, a well-known labor activist from Saghez in Kurdistan, was arrested by Intelligence Ministry agents on October 29th on the pretext of having to serve a one-year prison term. As his heart condition deteriorated, he was transferred to the prison infirmary and then admitted to the intensive care unit of Imam Khomeini Hospital in Saghez.

Workers also suffer from systematic non-payment of wages. Workers at the Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Company in Shush have not been paid since July. Retired workers have not received their pensions. Many workers face criminal charges in connection with their earlier protests over non-payment of wages. The workers are demanding full payment of wage and benefit arrears; recognition of the union as the workers' legal representative; reinstatement of all unjustly terminated workers; and the company's return to government ownership. When Haft Tapeh worker Aube Aghaabi recently took the company to court after a serious workplace accident, management retaliated by firing him along with 50 relatives or workers with a similar last name. On January 15th, a known union activist denounced the company in front of the factory office. After leaving to return home, he was attacked and severely beaten by masked men, severing an artery in one of his shoulders. The following day, he was arrested by police, beaten and tortured.

We urge the Iranian authorities to drop charges and release the detained trade unionists in line with the recommendations of the Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labor Organisation. In addition, we call on your government to ensure full payment of wages and benefits to all current and retired Haft Tapeh workers; recognition of the union as the workers' legal representative; reinstatement of all unjustly terminated workers; and the company's return to government ownership.

Sincerely,



Cathy Feingold
International Director

CF/BF/jp

Unions that endorsed the International Federation of Labor Organizations' (ITUC) July 23, 2019 letter to Ayatollah Khamenei*

- Central Sindical e Popular Conlutas (CSP-Conlutas) – Brésil.
- Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT) – Etat espagnol.
- Union syndicale Solidaires (Solidaires) – France.
- Confédération Générale du Travail du Burkina (CGT-B)–Burkina.
- Confederation of Indonesia People's Movement (KPRI) –Indonésie.
- Confederación Intersindical (Intersindical) – Etat espagnol.
- Syndicat National Autonome des Personnels de l'Administration Publique (SNAPAP) – Algérie.
- Batay Ouvrière – Haïti.
- Unione Sindacale Italiana (USI) – Italie.
- Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs – Solidarité Ouvrière (CNT SO) – France.
- Sindicato de Comisiones de Base (CO.BAS) – Etat espagnol.
- Organisation Générale Indépendante des Travailleurs et Travailleuses d'Haïti (OGTHI) – Haïti.
- Sindacato Intercategoriale Cobas (SI COBAS) – Italie.
- Confédération Nationale du Travail (CNT-f) – France.
- Intersindical Alternativa de Catalunya (IAC) – Catalogne.
- Union Générale des Travailleurs Sahraouis (UGTSARIO) – Sahara occidental.
- Ezker Sindikalaren Konbergentzia (ESK) – Pays basque.
- Confédération Nationale de Travailleurs du Sénégal Forces du < Changement (CNTS/FC) – Sénégal.
- Independent Trade Unions for Egyptian Federation (EFITU) – Egypte.
- Sindicato Autorganizzato Lavoratori COBAS (SIAL-COBAS) – Italie.
- General Federation of Independent Unions (GFIU) – Palestine.
- Confederación de la Clase Trabajadora (CCT) – Paraguay.
- Red Solidaria de Trabajadores – Pérou
- Union Syndicale Progressiste des Travailleurs du Niger (USPT) – Niger.
- Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes du Sénégal (UNSAS) – Sénégal.
- Unión Nacional para la Defensa de la Clase Trabajadora (UNT) – El Salvador.
- Solidaridad Obrera (SO) – Etat espagnol.
- National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT/TUC) – Grande-Bretagne.
- Centrale Nationale des Employés – Confédération Syndicale Chrétienne (CNE/CSC) – Belgique.
- Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores del Sistema Agroalimentario (SINALTRAINAL/CUT) – Colombie.
- Fédération Générale des Postes, Telecom et Centres d'appel – Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (FGPTT/UGTT) – Tunisie.

- Trade Union in Ethnodata – Trade Union of Employees in the Outsourcing Companies in the financial sector – Grèce.
- Syndicat national des travailleurs des services de la santé humaine (SYNTRASEH) – Bénin Sindicat dos Trabalhadores da Fiocruz (ASFOP-SN) – Brésil.
- Organizzazione Sindacati Autonomi e di Base Ferrovie (ORSA Ferrovie) – Italie.
- Union Nationale des Normaliens d’Haïti (UNNOH) – Haïti.
- Confederazione Unitaria di Base Scuola Università Ricerca (CUB SUR) – Italie.
- Confederazione Unitaria di Base Immigrazione (CUB Immigrazione) – Italie.
- Coordinamento Autorganizzato Trasporti (CAT) – Italie.
- Confederazione Unitaria di Base Credito e Assicurazioni (CUB SALLCA) – Italie.
- Syndicat des travailleurs du rail – Union Nationale des Travailleurs du Mali (SYTRAIL/UNTM) – Mali.
- Gıda Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası – Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (GIDA-İŞ/DISK) – Turquie.
- Syndicat National des Travailleurs du Petit Train Bleu/SA (SNTPTB) – Sénégal.
- Asociación Nacional de Funcionarios Administrativos de la Caja de Seguro Social (ANFACSS) – Panama.
- Conseil des Lycées d’Algérie (CLA) – Algérie.
- Confederazione Unitaria di Base Trasporti (CUB Trasporti) – Italie.
- Syndicat de l’Enseignement Supérieur Solidaire (SESS) – Algérie.
- Palestinian Postal Service Workers Union (PPSWU) – Palestine.
- Union Syndicale Etudiante (USE) – Belgique.
- Sindicato dos Trabalhadores de Call Center (STCC) – Portugal.
- Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores Petroleros (Sinutapetrolgas) – Venezuela.
- Alianza de Trabajadores de la Salud y Empleados Publicos – Mexique.
- Canadian Union of Postal Workers /Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes (CUPW-STTP) – Canada.
- Syndicat Autonome des Postiers (SAP) – Suisse.
- Federación nacional de trabajadores de la educación (SUTEChili) – Chili.
- Plateforme Nationale des organisations professionnelles du secteur public – Côte d’Ivoire
- Trades Union Congress, Liverpool (TUC Liverpool) – Angleterre.
- Sindacato Territoriale Autorganizzato, Brescia (ORMA Brescia) – Italie.
- Fédération syndicale SUD Service public, canton de Vaud (SUD Vaud) – Suisse
- Sindicato Unitario de Catalunya (SU Metro) – Catalogne.
- Türkiye DERİ-İŞ Sendikası, Tuzla et Izmir (DERİ-İŞ Tuzla et Izmir) – Turquie.
- L’autre syndicat, canton de Vaud (L’autre syndicat) – Suisse
- Centrale Générale des Services Publics FGTB, Ville de Bruxelles (CGSP/FGTB Bruxelles) – Belgique
- Arbeitskreis Internationalismus IG Metall, Berlin (IG Metall Berlin) – Allemagne
- Sindicato Unificado de Trabajadores de la Educación de Buenos Aires, Bahia Blanca - (SUTEBA/CTA de los trabajadores Bahia Blanca) – Argentine
- Sindicato del Petróleo y Gas Privado del Chubut/CGT – Argentine.
- UCU University and College Union, University of Liverpool (UCU Liverpool) – Angleterre.

- Industrial Workers of the World – International Solidarity Commission (IWW)
- Transnationals Information Exchange Germany (TIE Germany) – Allemagne.
- Emancipation tendance intersyndicale (Emancipation) – France
- Globalization Monitor (Gmo) – Hong Kong.
- Courant Syndicaliste Révolutionnaire (CSR) – France.
- No Austerity – Coordinamento delle lotte – Italie.
- Solidarité Socialiste avec les Travailleurs en Iran (SSTI) – France
- Basis Initiative Solidarität (BASO) – Allemagne. LabourNet Germany – Allemagne.
- Resistenza Operaia – operai Fiat-Irisbus – Italie

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* The ITUC letter is mentioned in the press release, but a full English translation is not yet available. The content of the letter, however, is similar to the AFL-CIO letter from Cathy Feingold.

The listing above is extracted from that letter, which contained this list of unions in French.