



BRIEFING NOTE ON THE REPRESSION OF TRADE UNIONISTS IN IRAN

Paris-Geneva, May 11, 2017

To:

- **The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Ms. Annalisa Ciampi**
- **The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mr. Michel Forst**
- **The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. David Kaye**
- **Members of the UN Working Group on arbitrary detention**
- **The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ms. Asma Jahangir**

The prohibition of independent peaceful gatherings in Iran during Labour Day this year - as in 2016¹ - was once again a clear example of the ongoing repression and harassment of trade unionists and workers in Iran. This repression is part of a systematic denial of the most basic rights of workers in Iran, who are subjected to discriminatory and politically motivated laws and a judicial system that is set to silence independent labour movements and other dissidents.

Despite the clear increase in trade and economic exchanges between the West and Iran following the implementation of the Iranian nuclear deal in 2015 and the subsequent lifting of some sanctions, little attention has been paid to the fact that the current legislation and practice in Iran are in violation of international labour standards and economic and social rights.

Independent trade unions remain prohibited under Iranian law, and the Government exercises strong control over all legal institutions supposed to represent workers. The right to strike has never been expressly recognised and in practice, strikes are brutally suppressed. Attempts in recent years to establish independent trade unions have been harshly repressed, and labour activists have been dismissed from their jobs, harassed and persecuted, and imprisoned on charges including “acting against national security” and “spreading propaganda against the State”.

The Iranian State as a whole has failed to raise the minimum wage adequately to provide for “a decent living for themselves and their families” as required under Article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights². The minimum wage determined for the solar year beginning March 21, 2017 is estimated to be around one-third to one-fourth of the poverty line. Several million workers do not receive even that minimum wage, as they are employed in small plants with fewer than 10 workers, where the Labour Code’s provisions - i.e. minimum wage, wage increase, and insurance benefits - do not apply.

Women workers face massive discrimination. They are mostly employed in small plants, and do not receive equal wages for equal work with men. Their chances of returning to work after maternity leave are slim and they are the first to be laid off at times of crisis. Women, as well as religious and ethnic minorities and political dissidents, are prohibited access to certain occupations.

Our organisations present below a few cases of labour activists who are currently facing arbitrary detention and judicial harassment for having peacefully exercised their rights to freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression.

We call on above-mentioned United Nations (UN) Special Procedures to publicly highlight the concerning situation of trade unionists and labour rights activists.

¹ See Observatory-LDDHI-DHRC Joint Briefing Note on Iran, May 10, 2016.

² The minimum wage determined for the solar year beginning March 21, 2017 is estimated to be around one-third to one-fourth of the poverty line.

Suppression of freedoms of peaceful assembly, association and expression ahead of and on Labour Day 2017

On May 1, 2017, the Iranian authorities allowed once again only the State-sanctioned ceremonies to take place in Tehran and a couple of other cities, including by the pro-regime organisation *Khaneh Kargar* (Labour House)³ that held Labour Day demonstrations in Rasht and elsewhere. Independent unionists were once more prevented from publicly commemorating Labour Day.

Some examples of independent unions and unionists whose freedoms of assembly and expression were violated on Labour Day or in the weeks before include:

In the week leading to May 1, 2017 and on May 1, as in previous years, independent labour activists and unions were harassed so as not to organise celebrations and marches separately from the State-sanctioned gatherings and assemblies.

In the capital Tehran, workers took part in a gathering outside the Parliament (*majlis*) building, which had been organised by the Free Union of Iranian Workers (FUIW). Police agents took action to confiscate banners and placards demanding the release of imprisoned unionists **Esmaeil Abdi** and **Behnam Ebrahimzadeh** and subsequently surrounded the marchers and confiscated smartphones. They later arrested **Valeh Zamani**, a founding member of the Syndicate of Painters and Construction Workers of Alborz Province. He was released a day later.

During the official ceremony in Tehran, which was addressed by President Rouhani and seemed to function also as a rally in support of his candidacy for a second term in the May 19, 2017 elections, a number of workers shouted slogans in protest against their living conditions. Some of the pro-Rouhani media branded the protestors as 'hecklers'. The hard-line conservative media tried to take advantage of the opportunity by pretending that the protests were not against the regime's policies but only against Rouhani's Government.

Also in Tehran, the Syndicate of Workers of United Bus Company of Tehran and Suburbs (known as '*Sandicaye Sherkat Vahed*') organised a celebration at the Azadi Bus Terminal on May 1, but the security forces surrounded the participants and harassed them by filming them as an attempt to keep record of the participants.

In Sanadaj, the provincial capital of Kurdistan province, labour activist and board member of FUIW, Mr. **Sheys Amani**, was summoned twice in the final week of April to the Police Department and was informed that the Union's application to organise a separate May 1 march would not be granted. He was also asked to give undertaking that the FUIW would take part in the official May 1 ceremony backed by the city's Labour Department and avoid organising a separate march. Mr. Amani refused. Similarly, Mr. **Fars Gui'lian**, another labour activist in Sanandaj, was summoned on April 27, and warned not to take part in "unofficial assemblies on May 1". Mr. **Khaled Hosseini**, a member of the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organisations (CCHFOW), was summoned on March 25 and interrogated for several hours including about the Union's plans for Labour Day. On May 1, police agents surrounded and harassed the participants of the Labour Day march in Sanadaj that FUIW, CCHFOW and the Bakers Association of Sanandaj had organised.

Moreover, on April 20, 2017 first in the morning, the authorities sealed off the Association for Defending Working and Street Children in Tehran after handing a notice to a non-staff cleaner late in the previous evening. The notice only referred in general terms to problems with the Association's licence, while its officials said they had fulfilled all the requirements. Established in 2003, the Association has been taking care of many children - mostly with migration background - who are forced to work on the streets and aims at abolishing child labour. On April 22, the authorities suspended without providing any reason the licence of the Friends of Child Rights Society, which had similar functions, in the city of Tabriz.

³ Labour House is affiliated to the Islamic Labour Party (ILP), one of whose leaders is a Member of Parliament and another is the Minister of Labour. The ILP and the Labour House have been instrumental in suppressing the independent labour movement ever since early 1980s.

Ongoing intimidation and arbitrary detention of labour activists

The ongoing repression of labour activists has not prevented grassroots protests of workers at factories and plants, and protests have kept growing across the country. More than 650 strikes, demonstrations and other forms of protest were reported during the previous solar year⁴ against layoffs, closures of plants, privatisations, planned amendments to the Labour Code and demanding to return to work, timely payment of wages and arrears, wage increases, and improvements in contracts and working conditions. This constituted around “27 per cent increase in labour protests” in comparison with 515 protests in the preceding year⁵.

To stem the protests, the authorities continue to frequently summon and threaten a number of labour activists, while arresting and prosecuting many others. Most of them have been released on bail after a month or two in detention and are likely to be tried in the coming months. In such cases, unionists are most often charged with offences such as “acting against national security”, “spreading propaganda against the State”, “insulting the Leader”, and other vaguely worded charges.

As of May 10, 2017, at least eight unionists remained in prison or internal exile after having faced unfair trials and been convicted of “crimes” related to their work defending labour rights⁶:

1. Mr. **Esmail Abdi**, Secretary General of the Teachers Association of Iran (TAI), was re-arrested on November 9, 2016 to serve a six-year prison term. In May 2015, the authorities threatened to enforce a 10-year suspended prison sentence he received in 2011 for “assembly and colluding against the State” and “participation in illegal trade union gatherings”, unless he resigned his post in the TAI and abstained from taking part in planned country-wide protests. He submitted his resignation to the TAI but the latter refused to accept it, so he was sent to prison in June 2015. Then, in February 2016, he was notified of another two-part prison sentence totalling six years on charges of “spreading propaganda against the State” (one year) and “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security” (five years), which he appealed. Mr. Abdi was released on bail on May 14, 2016. The sentence was upheld in July 2016. Mr. Abdi applied for retrial regarding the five-year prison sentence, which was rejected by the Supreme Court in February 2017. His lawyer is planning to apply for another retrial. On May 1, 2017, Mr. Abdi started a hunger strike to protest the security-related sentences of other unionists and to demand his case to be considered as a common case and not a security case.
2. Mr. **Mehdi Farahi-Shandiz**, a member of the Committee to Pursue the Establishment of Labour Unions in Iran (CPELU) and of the TAI, is serving a third three-year prison sentence, imposed after a trial on January 3, 2015 for allegedly “insulting the Leader” and “disrupting public order”. The authorities had refused to release him after he completed his previous three-year prison sentence for the same charges in late October 2013. Mr. Farahi-Shandiz was reportedly sentenced to one more three-year sentence in 2016 and another three years and a half prison sentence for repeating his “offence” and also chanting death to [the supreme leader] Khamanei in February 2017 and was exiled to a remote prison in the Qazvin province in March 2017.
3. Mr. **Ali-Akbar Baghani**, former TAI Vice-President, has been serving a sentence of 10 years in internal exile since May 1, 2016 in the remote city of Zabol in south-eastern Iran after completing a one-year prison sentence. He is also facing a previously imposed five-year suspended prison sentence in a case concerning protests of teachers in 2006, which the authorities may decide to enforce at any time.
4. Mr. **Saeed Shirzad**, a labour and child rights activist, remains arbitrarily detained since June 2, 2014 after being arrested in the north-western city of Tabriz. In 2015, he was sentenced to five years in prison for “assembly and colluding to commit crimes against national security”. The authorities have kept him in detention, although he has appealed the sentence. The appeal court considered his case on April 15, 2017, but has not issued a sentence yet.

⁴ Year ended March 20, 2017.

⁵ See *Labour News & Reports* bulletin, at: <http://etehadbinalmelali.com/ak/10-02-96-2/>. Meanwhile, the Deputy Interior Minister for Security reported a “69 per cent increase” in social, labour and trade union-related protests during the past three years; see also *Tasnim News Agency*, December 11, 2016, at: <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1395/09/21/1264210/>

⁶ For more information and cases of other unionists, see Observatory Urgent Appeal IRN 004 / 0714 / OBS 061.2, January 23, 2015; Observatory Press Release, April 30, 2014; Observatory and LDDHI Joint Press Release, April 30, 2015, and Observatory-LDDHI-DHRC Joint Briefing Note, May 10, 2016.

5. Messrs. **Shahab Karim-Aghaei, Jafar Pajuheshpur and Hossein Esmaeili**, three labour activists, who had been involved in protests and strikes at the Iran Telecommunication Industries Company, were detained in Shiraz, provincial capital of Fars province, on February 8, 2017. As of May 10, it was not possible to verify their fate.
6. Mr. **Davood Rafi'ei**, a worker expelled from Pars Khodro car manufacturing company in 2014 for "involvement in organising strikes", and two other workers, were arrested on November 8, 2016. While the latter two were released later, as of May 10, it was not possible to verify Mr. Rafi'ei's fate.

At least 42 other unionists are currently free while they await possible trials or the outcome of their trials or appeals:

1. Mr. **Jafar Azimzadeh**, Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Free Union of Iranian Workers (FUIW), is currently free on bail, although the Prosecutor's Office asked him to return to prison on October 25, 2016. He had been summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence on April 29, 2015 in advance of the May-1 Labour Day demonstrations and was detained for 46 days, after which he was released, tried and sentenced, and taken back to prison in November 2015 to serve a six-year prison term, five years for "assembly and collusion to commit crimes against national security" and one year for "disrupting public order". He also received a two-year ban on membership of political parties and groups, and any online, press and media activities. He began a hunger strike on Labour Day 2016 that lasted 63 days to protest his prison conditions and in solidarity with workers demanding their rights. The authorities released him on bail on June 30, 2016 and promised him a retrial. Mr. Azimzadeh was tried again jointly with Mr. **Shapour Ehsanirad**, another board member of FUIW, in the central city of Saveh and sentenced in October 2016 to a total of 11 years in prison, 10 years for "establishing, membership and managing the illegal group namely FUIW" and one year for "spreading propaganda activities against the State". On May 9, 2017, the Appeal Court considered their sentences and should deliver its verdict in the coming weeks. Mr. Azimzadeh and Mr. Ehsanirad were also tried in a separate case in Saveh on March 11, 2017, but the court has not issued its verdict yet.
2. Mr. **Reza Shahabi-Zakaria**, Treasurer of the Syndicate of Workers of United Bus Company of Tehran and Suburbs, remains free on bail. He had been arbitrarily detained since June 2010 and was sentenced to six years in prison in April 2012 for "conspiracy against the national security" and "spreading propaganda against the State". He was also banned from union and civil activities for five years. In December 2015, an additional year of imprisonment was added to his sentence for participating in prisoners' protests in April 2014. He was given leave from prison for medical reasons after two operations on his neck and lower back in October 2014. Nevertheless, he was summoned by the authorities on February 7, 2016 and was notified of yet new charges against him including "disrupting public order" and "disturbing public opinion", prompted by his resumption of some of his union-related activities. His prison sentence has in the meantime ended, but he has been under pressure by the authorities to return to prison, although the Iranian Government has already notified the International Labour Organisation of his return to work.
3. Mr. **Mahmood Beheshti-Langaroudi**, former Spokesperson of TAI, was released temporarily on May 11, 2016 after 22 days of hunger strike demanding a retrial. He had been arrested on September 6, 2015 to serve a total of nine years in prison, after being convicted in two separate cases. He is facing a third five-year prison sentence, which he has appealed. The appeal court considered his case on March 15, 2017, but has not issued a verdict yet. Mr. Beheshti was first arrested in March 2007, spent around one month in detention, and was sentenced later in 2007 to a four-year suspended prison term. He was detained again in May 2010 for two months and then tried and sentenced in June 2010 to another five-year imprisonment. In October 2013, he was summoned to serve his prison sentences, but the Head of Tehran's Justice Department accepted his request for a renewed examination of his case. In January 2016, he was tried for a third time and sentenced to yet another five-year prison term, which is pending appeal. In all three cases, he faced similar charges of "collusion to crimes against national security" and "spreading propaganda against the State".
4. Mr. **Mahmood Salehi**, a founding member of the Bakers Association in the city of Saqqez, in Kurdistan province, remains free pending an appeal against his conviction. He was arrested on

April 28, 2015 prior to Labour Day protests, and was later released on bail. On September 16, 2015, he was notified that he had been sentenced to nine years' imprisonment for "acting against the national security", "establishing an illegal workers' syndicate", "membership in an illegal group" and "spreading propaganda against the State".

5. Mr. **Osman Esmaeili**, Spokesperson of the Committee for Defending Imprisoned Labour Activists in the western city of Mahabad, remains free pending an appeal against his conviction. He was arrested on April 28, 2015 and was later released on bail. On February 6, 2016, he was notified that he had been sentenced to one-year imprisonment for "spreading propaganda against the State" and "affiliation to political parties".
6. Mr. **Davood Razavi**, Board member of the Syndicate of Workers of United Bus Company of Tehran and Suburbs, remains free pending an appeal against his conviction. He was arrested in Tehran on April 29, 2015 and released on bail after 22 days. He was tried on February 17, 2016 and sentenced to five years in prison for "assembly and collusion to act against national security" and "disrupting public order".
7. Mr. **Ebrahim Madadi**, Deputy President of the Syndicate of Workers of United Bus Company of Tehran and Suburbs, remains free pending an appeal against his conviction. He was arrested on April 29, 2015 and released on bail after 22 days. He was tried on April 16, 2016 and sentenced to five years and three months in prison for "assembly and collusion against national security" and "disrupting public order".
8. Mr. **Ali Nejati**, a founding Board member of the Syndicate of Workers of Haft-Tappeh Cane Sugar Company, and six other activists, namely Ms. **Ashraf Rahimkhani**, Ms. **Zaynab Keshvari**, and Messrs **Ezzat Jafari**, **Shapour Rashno**, **Ali-Mohammad Jahangri** and **Abdolreza Shakeri**, have been notified to appear before the Islamic Revolution Court in the southern city of Dezful for "spreading propaganda against the State" on May 14, 2017. Mr. Nejati was arrested on September 15, 2015 and released after 29 days. He appeared before a judge of the Islamic Revolution Court in the city of Andimeshk on December 13, 2015 for charges of "spreading propaganda against State" and "association with opposition groups", and is still awaiting a verdict.
9. Mr. **Pedram Nasrollahi**, a member of CCHFOW, remains free pending his trial. He was arrested on April 29, 2015 and released on bail 34 days later⁷.
10. Mr. **Mohammadreza Ahangar**, a member of the Construction Workers Association of Kamyaran, was detained on March 13, 2017 for unknown reasons or charges, and was released on bail on April 19.
11. Six labour activists from the city of Kamyaran in Kurdistan province were convicted by the Islamic Revolution Court of Sanandaj and sentenced on October 15, 2016 for "spreading propaganda against the State and involvement in the May-1 ceremonies". Ms. **Rojin Ebrahimi**, Ms. **Delnia Sabouri**, as well as Messrs. **Omid Ahmadi** and **Mehrdad Sabouri**, were each sentenced to one year in prison, and Messrs. **Shahou Sadeghi** and **Aram Mohammadi**, each to three months and one day in prison. The four men had been arrested on May 19 before being released on bail on May 25, 2016.
12. Mr. **Mostafa Gholamnejad**, labour activist, was detained in the north-western city of Tabriz on May 25 for unknown reasons or charges and released on bail on June 16, 2016.
13. Mr. **Jamil Mohammadi**, Board member of FUIW, remains free pending an appeal against his conviction. In February 2015, he had been sentenced to three years and six months' imprisonment and a fine on charges of "assembly and acting against national security".
14. Mr. **Jalil Mohammadi**, a labour activist in Sanandaj, was arrested on Women's Day, March 8, 2016 for unknown reasons or charges, and was released on March 30 on bail. He is likely to be tried in the coming months or even years.

⁷ Messrs. Salehi, Razavi, Madadi, Nejati and Nasrollahi have already been detained or served prison terms in the past (see e.g. Urgent Appeals IRN 003/0805/OBS 074.3 of December 21, 2007 and IRN 003/0712/OBS 066 of July 6, 2012; Press Release of December 2, 2011; and Observatory and LDDHI Joint Press Release, April 30, 2015).

15. Mr. **Hamed Mahmoodnejad**, a member of the CCHFOW in Sanandaj, was arrested on April 18, 2015 and released on bail 24 days later. In July 2015, he was tried on charges of “spreading propaganda against the State” and “acting against national security”, and sentenced to 91 days’ imprisonment. He has appealed this sentence, but the outcome of the appeal is not known.
16. Messrs. **Yadollah Samadi** and **Eghbal Shabani**, members of CCHFOW and Board members of the Bakers Association of Sanandaj and Suburbs, were sentenced in late March 2015 to 30 lashes and a five-month suspended prison sentence for “disrupting public order.” They appealed these sentences and the appeal court sentenced them to five years in prison, which was suspended⁸.
17. Mr. **Mohammadreza Niknejad** and Mr. **Mehdi Bohluli**, both Board members of TAI, remain free pending an appeal against their conviction. They were arrested on August 31, 2015 and released on bail almost a month later. In March 2016, they were sentenced to five years in prison. Details of the charges against them are not publicly available, but given the sentence it is likely that they were convicted of “assembly and collusion against national security”.
18. Mr. **Taher Ghaderzadeh**, a member of the Teachers’ Association in Kurdistan province, remains free as of today. He was sentenced to 91 days’ imprisonment in April 2016 on charge of “spreading propaganda against the State” for “participating in assemblies of teachers”. The outcome of his appeal is not known. He was not arrested.
19. Mr. **Valeh Zamani**, a founding member of the Syndicate of Painters and Construction Workers of Alborz Province, remains free as of today. Having been arrested on September 20, 2015 after participating in protests about the highly dubious death in prison of his cousin and fellow unionist, Mr. **Shahrokh Zamani**⁹, he was released on bail a week later. He was also arrested on May 1, 2017 during the Labour Day ceremonies and released a day later.
20. Messrs. **Lotfollah Ahmadi**, **Nader Rezagholi** and **Hossein Hassanabadi**, all labour activists, remain free pending possible trial for unknown charges. They were arrested outside the Sanandaj branch of Labour House during the Labour Day ceremony on April 30, 2016 and were released on bail the next day.
21. Mr. **Rassoul Bodaghi**, TAI Board member, was released from detention on April 28, 2016 without explanation. He had begun serving a six-year prison sentence in 2009 on charges of “assembly and collusion for acting against national security” and “spreading propaganda against the State”. He was also sentenced to a ban on all “social activities” for five years after completing his prison sentence. He was due to complete his prison sentence and be released in July 2015, but was summoned to Court on April 25 and April 26, 2015, where he was informed of new charges filed against him by the Prosecutor’s Office and the Ministry of Intelligence. He was warned that those charges could be retracted “if he announced in an interview his withdrawal from the activities of teachers”. He was nevertheless tried in September 2015 for “acting against national security” and it was reported later that he had been sentenced to three more years in prison, which he appealed, but the appeal court upheld his sentence. On May 8, 2016, he was visiting a fellow labour activist in the hospital along with his brother in law, when they were both suddenly beaten by security agents, and then handcuffed and taken to Evin prison. They were released on bail on May 9. Mr. Bodaghi was summoned to appear in court on July 23, 2016 and answer to the charge of “insulting the Leader” during the hospital visit. On August 13, 2016, the court dismissed the charges for lack of evidence.

Moreover, at least five members of CCHFOW remain at risk of arrest since their prison sentences were upheld in appeal in May or June 2014. They were arrested during a “general meeting” of the CCHFOW on June 16, 2012, later released and arrested again in December 2012 and spent two months in arbitrary detention. They were sentenced in April 2014 to following prison sentences:

- Messrs. **Jamal Minashiri** and **Hadi Tanoumand**, sentenced to three and a half years in prison each.

⁸ A suspended sentence would be enforced if the convicted person repeats the same “offence” in addition to any sentence that may be issued for the repeated offence.

⁹ Mr. Shahrokh Zamani, a member of the CPELU and founding member of the Painters and Decorators Union, was serving a prison sentence of 11.5 years for “acting against national security by establishing or being a member of groups opposed to the system” and “spreading propaganda against the system”. He died under very suspicious conditions in Rajai-Shahr prison on September 13, 2015. The Spokesperson of the Judiciary said at the time that the authorities would investigate his death, but to this date they have not published any information in this regard.

- Messrs. **Ghassem Mostafapour**, **Ebrahim Mostafapour** and **Mohammad Karimi**, sentenced to two years in prison each.

At least 10 other unionists have been released from prison after serving their arbitrary prison sentences, or after being interrogated or tried¹⁰:

1. Mr. **Behnam (Assad) Ebrahimzadeh**, a member of CPELU, on May 1, 2017.
2. Mr. **Saeed Yuzi**, a central council member of the CPELU and a member of the Construction Workers Association of Kamyaran, and Mr. **Saleh Amani**, another labour activist, were arrested in the city of Kamyaran on March 16, 2017 and released on bail after 38 days. They were tried on April 27, 2017 and both were acquitted.
3. Mr. **Mohammad Jarrahi**, a member of CPELU and founding member of the Painters and Decorators Union, on August 9, 2016.
4. Mr. **Sharif Sa'edpanah**, a board member of FUIW, was summoned by the security forces and interrogated on July 20, 2016. He had taken part in activities in support of FUIW's Secretary Mr. Jafar Azimzadeh.
5. Messrs. **Mozafar Salehnia**, a board member of FUIW, and **Hashem Rostami**, a labour activist in the city of Sanandaj, who had been detained about 20 days in July 2016, were tried on October 8, 2016 and acquitted. They had taken part in activities in support of FUIW's Secretary Mr. Jafar Azimzadeh.
6. Mr. **Zahed Moradi**, a labour activist in Sanandaj, was summoned and interrogated on June 11, 2016.
7. Ms. **Najibeh Salehzadeh**, activist and wife of unionist Mr. Mahmood Salehi, was summoned to the court in the city of Saqqez and interrogated on June 1, 2016. She was detained on June 6 and released on bail on the same day. She was charged with "spreading propaganda against the State" and "insulting the Supreme Leader." Ms. Salehzadeh was tried on August 15 and acquitted.
8. Mr. **Alireza Hashemi**, Secretary General of the Iranian Teachers Organisation, on May 29, 2016.

Scores of workers, in addition to activists, who protested and demanded their rights have been subjected to judicial harassment:

Some were detained and sentenced to prison terms or suspended prison terms, or even to flogging, while others are likely to face trial in the coming months. The following are only **a few examples of these cases:**

1. **17 workers from the Aq-Darreh Gold Mining Company**, in Tekab, in Western Azerbaijan province, were tried in early 2016 and at least nine of them were flogged from 30 to 50 times each in May 2016 for organising a protest assembly against layoffs in January 2015 and demanding to return to work. They were charged with "rioting" and later with "insulting the guards and destruction of the company's sign board", and initially sentenced to imprisonment, flogging and cash fine. The prison sentences were subsequently forgiven by the Supreme Leader.
2. **Nine workers from the Bafq Iron Ore Mine** were sentenced to suspended prison terms and flogging on June 5, 2016 for participating in protests against their work conditions. They had been detained after a 39-day sit-in by nearly 5,000 workers in May 2014 in protest against the privatisation of the company. While the employers eventually withdrew their complaint, the Government continued to press charges against them, including "disrupting public order" and "causing damages and insecurity". Prison sentences were quashed on appeal, and the flogging sentences were substituted with cash fines, except for one person, Mr. Mohammad-Hassan Tashakori, who was sentenced to 30 lashes (suspended for two years) and cash fine.

¹⁰ For background information on cases No. 1 and No. 8, see Observatory-LDDHI-DHRC Joint Briefing Note, May 10, 2016.

3. At least **10 protesting workers at the Midoke Copper Complex** were detained on March 25, 2016 and released two days later.
4. **24 workers of the municipality of the southern city of Ahvaz** were detained on June 13, 2016 for protesting against low wages. They were released on bail after four days and may face trial.
5. **17 members of Pars Khodro Company's housing cooperative** were arrested on November 29, 2016 for protesting illegal confiscation of the cooperative's land. 15 were released on the same day and two others a day later.

Security forces have also assaulted workers who were protesting in many companies and beaten them up. The following are only a few examples:

1. Parsylon Company in the city of Khorramabad on July 17, 2016; a number of workers were injured.
2. Haft-Tappeh Cane Sugar Complex, Khuzestan province, September 24, 2016.
3. Haft-Tappeh Cane Sugar Complex, Khuzestan province, October 9, 2016.
4. Pardis Petrochemical Company, Asaluyeh in Bushehr province, October 18, 2016.
5. Avangan and Hepco Companies, central city of Arak, October 24, 2016.
6. Syndicate of the Workers of United Bus Company of Tehran's workers, Tehran, December 4, 2016.
7. Polyacryl Company, Isfahan, December 6, 2016.

Demands of workers to the authorities

On Labour Day 2017, two coalitions of independent unions issued separate resolutions to underline their demands¹¹. The principal demands in both resolutions were similar, albeit with different wording, and included:

- The unconditional release of all imprisoned labour activists including teachers and others;
- An end to security-related charges against, and judicial harassment of, all activists;
- Freedom to establish independent organisations; respect of the right to strike, protest, demonstrate, and assemble, as well as freedom of thought, expression and the press, and freedom to establish political parties;
- A rise in the government-set minimum wage for the current year by more than four times to cover the costs of living and to match the poverty line; Immediate payment of arrears; Payment of adequate unemployment benefits;
- An end to layoffs and the establishment of employment security;
- The abolition of discriminatory laws against women and the establishment of full equality of men and women;
- The abolition of child labour;
- An end to discrimination and injustice against migrant workers, in particular Afghan workers; &
- Designating May 1 as a public holiday and lifting all restrictions on its celebration.

Some of the demands that appeared in one or the other resolution, included:

- The abolition of the death penalty;
- An end to austerity policies;
- The compliance with labour rights, in particular with International Labour Organisation's Conventions 87 and 98 on the establishment of independent organisations and collective contracts.

¹¹ The first resolution was co-signed by the Syndicate of the Workers of United Bus Company of Tehran and Suburbs, Syndicate of Workers of Haft-Tappeh Cane Sugar Company and CCHFOW. The second resolution was co-signed by FUIW, Construction Workers and Masters Association in Marivan and Sarvabad, Kermanshah Electrical and Metal Workers Association, Syndicate of Painters and Construction Workers of Alborz Province, CPELUI, and Defenders of Workers Rights Centre.

Recommendations:

In light of the gravity and urgency of the above-mentioned situation, above, the Observatory and LDDHI respectfully request you to echo our calls to the Iranian authorities to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release all imprisoned trade unionists as their detention is arbitrary since it appears only aimed at sanctioning their legitimate human rights activities;
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of all trade unionists and other human rights defenders in Iran;
- Put an end to any kind of harassment - including at the judicial level - against all unionists and other human rights defenders in Iran so that they are able to carry out their work without hindrance;
- Lift restrictions on establishment of independent unions;
- Ratify and implement key fundamental ILO Conventions as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW);
- Comply with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other international human rights instruments signed or ratified by Iran.

The League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (LDDHI) was established in France in 1983 by several exiled Iranians seeking to promote human rights in Iran. LDDHI has been forced to operate in exile since it was founded.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (the Observatory) was created in 1997 by FIDH and OMCT. The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders. FIDH and OMCT are both members of ProtectDefenders.eu, the European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism implemented by international civil society.