

Imprisoned trade unionist on hunger strike

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Imprisoned trade union leader, Reza Shahabi, has been on hunger strike since 4 December in protest at his continuing detention. We are calling on the authorities in Iran to release him immediately.

Reza Shahabi is the treasurer of the independent and unrecognised trade union, Sherkat-e Vahed. He was arrested on 12 June 2010, three days after the arrest of Saeed Torabian, the unions spokesperson.

Saeed Torabian has since been release but there are six other members of Sherkat-e Vahed (the Union of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company) in prison. Gholamreza Gholamhosseini, Morteza Komsari and Ali Akbar Nazari have all been arrested since the beginning of November and we believe they are all prisoners of conscience, held solely on account of their peaceful trade union activities.

Mansour Ossanlu, the head of the union and his deputy, Ebrahim Maddadi, are already serving prison sentences. They must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Sherkat-e Vahed was banned after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, but workers resumed the union's activities in 2004, although it is not legally recognised.

History of harassment

On 22 December 2005, police arrested 12 of the unions leaders at their homes but quickly released four of them. Other members were arrested three days later after they went on strike to call for the release of their colleagues. Saeed Torabian was among those arrested and spent a month in custody. Hundreds more were arrested during a further strike in January 2006.

Along with Reza Shahabi, Saeed Torabian was suspended from work, without pay, for approximately four years following the strikes. They were eventually reinstated only after the Court of Administrative Justice investigated their case.

Leadership imprisoned

Mansour Ossanlu was already serving a five year sentence in Rejai Shahr Prison, in Karaj near Tehran, when he was convicted on fresh charges in August 2010 and given an extra year behind bars.

Ebrahim Madadi is currently serving a three-and-a-half-year sentence and has been held in Evin prison since 2008.

Trade unionists targeted

Other trade unionists have also been arrested or harassed recently, including members of the Haft

Tapeh Sugar Cane Company Trade Union. The unions Leader, Reza Rakhshan, was recently sentenced to six months in prison for spreading lies, apparently in connection with an article he wrote entitle We are One Family, condemning arrests and harassment of his fellow workers.

Please call on the Iranian authorities to release Reza Shahabi and all the other jailed trade unionists in Iran

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