

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (ICFTU)

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Iran: Trials behind closed doors - Saez seven

BRUSSELS, 24 January 2005, ICFTU Online: The ICFTU has protested against the second trial behind closed doors in the prosecution of seven independent labour leaders for "organizing an illegal gathering", a May Day event 2004 in Saez (Kurdistan Province) in Iran.

It was no coincidence that the first trial against Mr. Borhan Divangar took place on 25 December at the Saez Revolutionary Court and that the hearings, initially to be held on the same date, are being held on separate dates, says the ICFTU. This makes it more difficult for international observers to attend all the trials. Mr. Mohsen Hakimi, was put on trial on 16 January and trials against Mahmoud Salehi, Mohammad Abdipour and Jalal Hosseini have been scheduled for 1, 6 and 14 February. The case against Mr. Esmaeel Khodkam scheduled for 11 January was postponed.

The ICFTU has repeatedly tried to obtain entry visas for international observers to attend the trials, but to no avail. Instead the government of Iran has allowed the first two trials to take place, and according to information reaching the ICFTU, without regard for due process.

According to ICFTU sources Borhan Divangar was not even given the opportunity to provide a final defence statement during his trial. Moreover, the defendants claim that evidence used against them has been fabricated by the authorities.

In his letter to the Iranian President Khatami Guy Ryder renewed his call from 29 December 2004 for the government to stop the trials or at least ensure fair trials and allow international observers to monitor the proceedings. He wrote that the ICFTU was also closely monitoring other cases involving trade union rights violations in Iran. Only three weeks ago The ICFTU protested against the harassment and intimidation of elected workers representatives during a strike at the Kurdistan Textile Factory in Sanandaj. Workers managed to force the employer to a satisfactory agreement. The ICFTU has later learned that the negotiations were conducted in the presence of agents from the Intelligence Ministry.

In support of the ICFTU's actions, John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, raised the situation of workers in Iran with the European Commission as it resumed negotiations with Iran on a Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) on 12 January. He urged that the respect by Iran of relevant labour standards be taken into account in the negotiations and expressed encouragement at the Commission's statement dated 11 January that a deepening of economic and commercial relations with Iran should be conducted in parallel with a political dialogue. The Commission was also asked to intervene with the Iranian Government in order to facilitate the issuing of entry visas to international observers for the Saez trials.

The ICFTU said that it was concerned by the many reported incidents of labour unrest and repression in Iran, and pointed out that it was now 1 year ago since workers were killed during a strike in the Kerman Province in the village of Khatoonabad. The ICFTU has lodged a complaint against the government of Iran concerning violation of trade union rights with the Committee on Freedom of Association of the United Nations' International Labour Organisation.

The ICFTU represents 148 million workers in 231 affiliated organisations in 150 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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