

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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World trade union body calls on new Iranian government to release detained unionist and break with repressive tradition

Brussels, August 23, 2005 (ICFTU OnLine): The ICFTU today wrote to the new President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad , expressing its concerns at the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of an independent trade union activist, Borhan Divangar, a member of the Saqez Bakery Workers' Union.

Mr Divangar is still in jail after being arrested on the 8th of August. He is believed to have been beaten to the point of not being able to speak, after he was detained during a demonstration in Saqez.

Mahmoud Salehi, the President of the Saqez Bakery Workers' Union was also arrested on the same day but released shortly thereafter. Before his release he was warned against participating in any demonstrations and strikes in Saqez.

"We were hoping that with the election of the new government, the situation for Iranian workers would take a turn for the better. Instead, the situation has escalated with yet another flagrant breach of ILO Conventions, even though Iran is a member of the ILO," said ICFTU Director of Trade Union Rights Janek Kuczakiewicz.

The latest arrests follow a long standing trend of persecution by the Iranian Government of Mr. Divangar and Mr. Salehi, both of whom were among seven activists charged and arrested following independent May Day demonstrations in 2004. During Mr. Salehi's subsequent trial, the Government prosecutor included in his indictments a charge of contacting an ICFTU delegation which visited Iran in April 2004.

"No Iranian worker should be made to stand trial for meeting with an internationally respected body, nor should they be arrested for participating in a demonstration. We urge the Iranian Government to immediately release Mr. Divangar and drop all the charges against him, including the ones from May Day 2004," continued Mr. Kuczakiewicz.

The Iranian security forces raided the home of Mr Divangar, arrested him and seized his computer and other belongings. Later that day he was charged among other things with membership of the "Committee to Follow up the Establishment of Free Labour Organisations", membership of a newly formed unemployed workers' organisation, managing a labour web site in Iran called "Tashakol" (www.tashakol.com), and with participating in the recent demonstrations in Saqez.

The ICFTU has for a number of years been following very closely the plight of Iranian workers trying to organise in defence of their rights and is greatly concerned at this latest escalation.

Letter from the ICFTU to Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iranian President:
<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991222117&Language=EN>

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 234 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. The ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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