

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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World trade union body condemns Iran's latest escalation of harassment against union activists

Brussels 9 September 2005 (ICFTU OnLine): The world trade union body, the ICFTU, today urged the Iranian government to stop its harassment campaign of the officials and trade union activists from the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company - Vahed.

The union activists were arrested on September 7, following a protest against unpaid wages amounting to 40,000 Toman in Tehran. Their protest action took the form of bus drivers leaving their lights on while driving passengers around the city.

They were taken to court on September 8, charged with "disturbance of the public order" and subsequently released on bail.

The General Secretary of the ICFTU, Guy Ryder, in his letter to the new Iranian President, Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, expressed his concern that this latest incident comes on top of a number of recent events, amounting to an ongoing and persistent harassment campaign by the management of the state-owned bus company.

"When ever union representatives have meet with managers and brought up workers' grievances, they were met with lay offs and dismissals. Others were not proposed overtime, had their routes and bus lines changed, and were denied promotions or reprimanded on unjustifiable grounds," Mr Ryder wrote.

"The ICFTU has already protested to your predecessor about the dismissal of 17 leaders and members of the Syndicate, fired between April and June 2005. All 17 workers had been either involved in the creation of the union, the organizing of the first general assembly or had been elected to the board of directors at the general assembly on 3 June 2005," he continued.

Coupled with the fact that Borhan Divangar, a trade union activist who had been arrested in an unrelated incident, has still not been released, this latest development does not bode well for the new government's record of observing the core labour standards of the International Labour Organisation.

"This is not a good start to the challenge this new government faces of convincing the world that it intends to respect the rights of workers and abide by the international treaties . We will as always be monitoring the situation closely and will continue to apply pressure through any means we can to see these issues rectified," Mr Ryder said today.

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

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