

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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Iran: Union day of action this Wednesday, 15 February

Brussels, 13 February 2006 (ICFTU online) Following the continuing repression against the Trade Union of the Greater Teheran United Bus Company (Sherkate-Vahed), a n international day of action has been organised in numerous countries on Wednesday 15 February with support from Global Unions (the ICFTU, the Global Union Federations and TUAC-OECD) and, notably, the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF).

The Iranian union had called a strike at the end of January in protest at the detention of its leader, Mansour Osanloo, and in support of its negotiation of a collective agreement for the bus company. That action was harshly punished, with hundreds of trade unionists and their families being arrested, and some beaten. Others were pressured into continuing to work. In addition, 8 members of the union executive were imprisoned on the eve of the strike after a meeting with the company's management.

Although many of the arrested trade unionists have been released, the repression has continued. The workers concerned have not been able to go back to their jobs and have to turn up at the Labour Ministry instead. As we write, it appears that over 80 trade unionists, including Mansour Osanloo and all the members of the executive, are still being held at Evin prison in Tehran, which is overflowing with trade union members and activists. Some of them have apparently started a hunger strike. It also seems that the Iranian government, Teheran city council and the management of Sherkate-Vahed are doing all they can to ensure that news of the trade union's actions is not passed on.

The mobilisation has been organised in response to this series of events. Many trade union organisations from all regions of the world have already protested strongly to the country's authorities. Demonstrations including many trade union participants have been held outside the embassies of Iran in Canada and the United Kingdom. The climax of the mobilisation will be on Wednesday, 15 February, when hundreds of trade union organisations will be protesting at the Iranian embassies and, where appropriate, the Foreign ministries, in their countries. The protesters will include the European Transport Workers Federation (ETF), the Railway Workers' Union in the Philippines, the Malaysian Trade Union Congress, the British TUC, the AFL-CIO and the Solidarity Center from the USA, and the Washington metro workers union.

This international mobilisation is sure to highlight the non-respect of trade union rights within the bus company. But Iran itself has obligations as a member of the International Labour Organisation, particularly with respect to freedom of association and the right to engage in collective bargaining. What is more, the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association is currently examining a complaint against Iran.

The ICFTU represents 155 million workers through its 236 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. The ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions:

<http://www.global-unions.org>

For more information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476621018.