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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Iran: Repression Escalates Against Trade Unionists

Brussels, 10 March 2009 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC strongly protests against the latest wave of repression that has targeted the Haft Tapeh union in Iran, which is a member of the Global Union Federation IUF. Several trade unionists have been subject to heavy-handed arrest, and subsequently released but Ali Nejati, the president of the union, arrested on 8 March, is still detained. This arrest follows a court proceeding against five trade union leaders from the Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Plantation.

The court case against the five unionists concluded on 1 March. They were all charged with "propaganda against the state", for actions related to legitimate trade union activities such as reclaiming wage arrears and defending basic workplace rights. The verdict will be known in the coming days. In June last year, five thousand workers at the Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Plantation and Industry Company in the Iranian city of Shush formed an independent trade union following a 46-day strike. Official organizations created by the government (Workers House and Islamic Labour Council) have for years utterly failed to protect the workers and their conditions.

The ITUC has already written to the President of Iran on several occasions to strongly condemn attacks by the Iranian authorities on independent trade unions in the country. All forms of psychological pressure, torture and the use of death penalty must be denounced. Farzad kamangar, the Iranian Kurdish teacher and social worker remains in Evin prison even though the case did not meet the standards of a fair trial, as do Mansour Ossanloo and Ebrahim Madadi from the of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Sherkat-e Vahed) which is still subject to severe repression.

"Imprisoned trade unionists must be freed and all other threats of imprisonment against independent trade unionists for their legitimate activities must be lifted" said Guy Ryder, ITUC general secretary. In a letter http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Haft_Tapeh_-_arrests_02-03-09.pdf sent on 4 March to the authorities, the ITUC urged the Iranian government to reconsider its policy of repression and to ensure that the police and the justice system, including the courts, are not used to punish workers for legitimate trade union activities. "The Government of Iran has to face up to its responsibilities without the need for continued pressure from others" added Ryder.

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 312 affiliated national organisations from 157 countries. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>
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