



Published by: Felezkâr-Mechanic

# Union Messenger

Monthly Bulletin of Iran's Trade Unions

Internet:

<http://sfelezkar.com>

<http://vahedsyndica.com>

International email:

[irunionmessenger@gmail.com](mailto:irunionmessenger@gmail.com)

Facebook :

[www.facebook.com/Metalworkers](http://www.facebook.com/Metalworkers)

March 2015

Issue No. 7

## EDITORIAL

From Felezkâr's Farsi bulletin *Payam Sandika*, No. 35, January 2015

**W**hat is vital and urgent for the working class of Iran today is to achieve two important principles: one, to have wages for a decent living, and two, to have labour trade unions to defend their labour-earned bread. After the agreements reached on Iran's nuclear file and the Iranian government commitment to execute the prescriptions of the IMF, all of the achievements of the workers during the last one hundred years in dealing with employers are being targeted by the employers to be taken back. It is for this purpose that we are witnessing that the Labour Law is being revised by some labour defectors in the parliament, and addendums are being added to it that the global capitalism has been asking for: **cheap and obedient labour!** This is in line with the lower price of the crude oil. Oil needed to be cheaper so that the Iranian government could oppose decent wages for a dignified livelihood for workers, because it has planned its budget on the basis of a \$70/barrel oil price, and will be short of budget when the oil price hits \$43/b; therefore, the working class bread has to be cut to be added to the table of capitalism. To prevent workers defend their rights, it has been some time that instead of arbitration boards of the Ministry of Labour, the security forces are showing up at the manufacturing plants, and the workers' representatives are labeled as rebellious and sentenced to lashes. In the remaining months to the new Iranian year we are witnessing the detention of labour activists who do not abide by the capitalists.

Our worker friends, according to Mr. Rouhani (the President), inflation will reduce to under 10% in March and this means that the minimum wage of the workers for the next year should be calculated and adjusted based on an inflation of less than 10%, and if anyone objects to that, must be silenced by the security forces.

Of course, Mr. Rouhani's advisors don't tell him that right now, with a 25% increase of the price of bread, increase of dollar exchange rate, and budget deficit for

the next year, the inflation will be more than 70% and neither Mr. Rouhani nor his advisors would be able to curb this inflation.

Here we present the way out for the budget deficit in a few proposals: first, the government must put a stop to the import of luxury goods that are not of vital necessity for the nation by imposing very high import tariffs; second, in order to increase its revenue, the government has to tax the earnings of "foundations" and all the financial institutes that make money through renting and lending money, and sack the people; third, by utilizing the full production capacity of the country, fight the import industry and brokers and advance the industrial potential of the country towards production so that the factories could work full power, and unemployed workers could go to work, hence reducing the unemployment rate; fourth, by utilizing the workers' cooperatives (EMKAN), public employee cooperatives (FARHANGIAN) and army cooperatives (ETKA) fight against the brokers and profiteers in order to spare part of the workers' wages and prevent it from being sacked.

There is no doubt that this is not an easy task, but this is the only way out. Clearly, the politicians who incline towards capitalism will not be able to advance such solutions. Our national interests hinges over trust on trade unions to eliminate poverty, corruption and to get rid of political and economic brokers.

Working people of Iran,

To have a human-deserved life and a future for our children, we have to do something today. Our power is in our unity. By organizing in trade unions we can boost this power to struggle. As long as Iran Khordro workers, Saipa workers, mineworkers, educational workers and teacher, each separately fight for their rights, the employers will take advantage of this separation to suppress us all and plunder our children's food.

Labour activists, trade unions,

Let's unite and through joint cooperation defeat this maneuver of the capitalism. **The choice is ours.**



# Union Messenger

Bulletin of Iran's Trade Unions

March 2015

Issue No. 7

## Greetings on the occasion of March 8<sup>th</sup>

### International Women's Day!

International Women's Day (March 8<sup>th</sup>) commemorates the lives of struggle of women, who shoulder to shoulder with men work to build a humane society, free of war and discrimination. We women from all over the world all challenging and difficult moments of our lives, side by side our partners, been oppressed and have campaigned for freedom from oppression and capitalist systems.

The working woman is the first person who sees the empty dining table of her family, lacking bread, and suffers. She is the one who has to feed the family with the meager salaries of herself and her partner and be witness the growing of the malnourished and deprived children and their frail physique. We women are not only standing side by side our striking partners, but we also in this difficult condition give hope about the prospect of better days and victory. Although achieving victory and better days is very difficult in the current unequal system, **but we think it is inevitable.**

What makes us to mount a resistance side by side of our toiling wives, sisters and brothers whether in Bafgh mines, petrochemical plants, bus companies, factories, car manufacturing plants, pharmaceutical companies, schools and hospitals, is we can is what, , working together with our partners and brothers, stand firm, is the desire to build a humane society for our children.

Every worker, both women and men should benefit from equal salaries and wages for equal work and these should provide for us a decent human life. Better pay for women means more income for the whole family.

If a job is dangerous for women, it is the same for men as well. A work environment free from harassment and intimidation is desirable for both male and female workers the same. More favorable working conditions in environments where women work means that working men could also ask for the same conditions.

In the conditions that male and female workers and employees are losing their jobs, in the most difficult situations and periods it is possible to organize and

progress an effective campaign with understanding and solidarity.

The participation of women in the social battles and in particular in the leadership of trade unions and accepting responsibility, is a reflection of the positive attitude of women towards trade unions and that means more members in trade unions and civil society organizations and this in turn means strengthening of these formations and trade unions and the labor movement and social movements. Discrimination and violence against women as a tool for further domination of the capitalist system is that all women are opposed.

Brothers! The girls and boys who are selling flowers in the streets while the flower of their lives is ruined are all children and the future of this country. Let's hand in hand fight for changing these inhumane conditions. Equality, freedom, justice, solidarity and peace have been always, and remain, the slogan of the women's movement. Without women no real all-embracing movement could exist. This is our belief and we'll strive for it.



We send our greetings on the occasion of IWD to all women, housewives, women heads of households, working women of the factories and workshops, women employees, teachers, nurses, women writers, artists, young women workers, carpet weaving girls, young girls running stalls in the metro station and pavement, the women who are forced by poverty into prostitution, and all those who have campaigned, suffered, tortured , imprisoned for improving the situation of women and a better society and on this path have paid with their lives, and commit ourselves to strive for a better tomorrow for women and men.

*Union of Metalworkers and Mechanics of Iran  
Union of Building Painting and Decoration Workers  
of Alborz Provincee  
7<sup>th</sup> March 2015*

# Union Messenger

Bulletin of Iran's Trade Unions

March 2015

Issue No. 7

## IRANIAN WORKERS FIGHT BACK



### Iranian Workers Call for Protests against Deregulation of the Labour Law

From Felezkar's Farsi bulletin *Payam Sandika*, No. 35, January 2015

The rushed exclusion of the Labour Law from some zones and many shops, and deregulation of the labour relations is going ahead full steam against the will of workers. By adopting models of anti-labour economy and American-friendly labour relations, i.e. the so-called structural adjustment and privatization which is to succumb to globalizing poverty, all the state administrations after the Iran-Iraq war have been practically serving the interests of the global capitalism. By excluding "special industrial-commercial zones" from the application of the Labour Law, they have marginalized the workers more than ever. Despite the exclusion from the Labour Law of the shops with less than ten employees, which was ratified in the reformist-dominated parliament, the anti-labour sentiments of the capital servants were not satisfied. Now they have Salafchegaan in the center of Iran to these "special zones" to maximize the plunder of the capital of the labour force. It appears that this process is going to deprive hundred percent of workers from their basic legal rights. Now that only about 3% of Iran's workers are benefiting from the minimum provisions of the ILO conventions, if the capital servants don't see any resistance in front of them, they will take back even this small benefit from the working people of this nation for ever.

The Union of Project Workforce of Iran call on all the workers and labour activists and working people of Iran to join in protesting this anti-human trend that has targeted all the achievement of the working people in the past few decades, and particularly the accomplishments of the workforce in the 1979 revolution, by collecting signatures to show our will to those in power.

**The Union of Project Workforce of Iran**

**The Union of Metalworkers and Mechanics of Iran** supports and joins this call, and declares that:

Deregulating the workplaces, revising the Labour Law in the parliament in favor of employers, robbing the savings of the workers in the Social Security Fund and eliminating the insurance benefit of workers, and in particular the construction workers, and the talks about an insignificant 14% minimum wage increase (relative to high inflation rates) to clear the tables of the workers, are anti-labour plans.

December 2014

**The Union of Building Painting and Decoration Workers of Tehran** supports the call by project workers and joins this campaign.

December 2014

Understanding the positive impacts of the call by project workers, the **Union of Building Painting and Decoration Workers of Alborz Province** supports the call and joins this campaign.

January 2015

***Towards broad union of all workers of Iran against the temporary contracts, elimination of the Labour Law, elimination of workers' insurance plans, wages below the actual inflation rate, privatization of the Social Security Fund and designation of "special commercial and industrial zones" to wreck the lives of the working families.***

### Appeal for Supporting Workers' Rights and Specifically Project Workers

In a situation when the ordinary wages in the big cities and particularly in the large cities partially cover the living expenditure, and when the labourers and other workers having rely on a second job in order to maintain their families - then how can we the project workers which have to spend all our time onsite, would be able to sustain the mammoth task of our family's costs of living.

In a situation that the workers have no means to organise themselves against the organised capitalists and the bosses that have a stake in [political] power - then how and by what means can we rise up and defend against the bosses' onslaught attacking our rights. Therefore we are addressing the workers and

# Union Messenger

Bulletin of Iran's Trade Unions

March 2015

Issue No. 7

all those that are mindful of other parameters in considering the future prospect of this land – we declare that the productive hands of those working within our country's foundation industries are being stretched towards you to seek your help. Unfortunately even after many years of relentless effort by the labour activists to establish the rights of the project workers, we have not even been able to convey to the authorities in the ministry of labour the rationale behind the [project workers] rights.

Therefore, we find it necessary to organise an appeal highlighting the authority's ignorance towards the rights of the project workers – here we have compiled the details of the project work pattern and its variance against the other sections of the wage earning workers. We are hoping this appeal would get the attention of those seeking or claiming to pursue the [workers] 'rights' - those in the position of influence to legislate laws in assisting us gaining our rights.

One month of project worker time, given that the worker is barred from taking official public holidays consists of: 6 hours work on Fridays (weekend in Iran), 24 days [full day work] per month, and only 6 days of leave per annum to visit family, while the rest of the time the worker lives in dormitories.

- 24 days per month with 12 hours working day, less of 3 Fridays each with 6 hours work:  $24 \times 12 - 18 = 270$  working hours per month.
- In normal conditions a wage earner works 176 hours per month, excluding official public holidays.
- Total annual hours worked by the project workers, excluding benefits during official public holidays, is calculated as  $12 \times 270 = 3240$ .
- In normal conditions a wage earner's nominal working hours is  $12 \times 176 = 2112$ , without accounting for public holidays.
- In a time span of 20 years, the project worker without accounting for public holidays will work  $20 \times 3240 = 64800$  hours.
- In a time span of 30 years in normal conditions a wage earner's nominal working hours is  $30 \times 2112 = 63360$ , excluding public holidays.
- Variance: the project worker with 20 years of work, would have worked extra 1440 hours more compared to a ordinary wage earner having

worked for 30 years, this over 8 months of additional work.

- Not including the religious public holidays, on average annually there are 20 days public holidays which the project workers cannot take - this is equivalent to  $12 \times 20 = 240$  working hours.

The 240 working hours per annum after 20 years would amount to 4800 hours, in other words the total is  $4800 + 1440 = 6240$  hours which is equivalent to 3 working years of an ordinary wage earner. Calculating this extra work inclusive of the 40% allowable overtime in the labour law, then we get to 8736 working hours which is 4 years of work by ordinary wage earner. This means that a project worker in a timescale of 20 years would be working equivalent to 34 years of an ordinary worker.

A project worker while having to do 4 hours of overtime against the labour law in strenuous occupation - would be working outside the cities, lacking safety. Due to the nature of the projects the worker will be at least away from his family for 24 days while living in the workers dormitories without the cyclical benefits that are available worldwide (2 weeks on the job followed by 2 weeks rest time) – this is now in operation across the oil industry and the Applied Drilling companies. But the ministry of the labour and social welfare does not support the case of the project worker and in effect with deregulation [labour law] it looks down on them as slaves. Unfortunately to date those in power not only have ignored our appeal but in fact by legislating laws such as those governing the Free Trade-Economic Areas have reduced the minimum protection offered by the labour law for the project workers.

The Union of Project Workforce of Iran (UPWI) has inevitably submitted this appeal along with supporting documents and signed petition by the workers to the only member of the parliament [Alireza] Mahjoub who claims to defend workers' right - so he can pursue the trampled rights of the workers and prove his claims to the workers.

A petition with 5000 signature is provided as appendix.

**The Union of Project Workforce of Iran (UPWI)**

10<sup>th</sup> February 2015

## Workers and Trade Unions

By: *Reza Karshenasan*

A year and a half since the Presidential elections of 2013 and taking office of the 11<sup>th</sup> government (after the revolution), and despite the promises of the Mr. Rouhani for improvements of the livelihood of the people, the lives of the working people of Iran is still facing numerous problems and hardships.

The discussion about how to best defend the trade interests and utilizing the existing possibilities and windows of opportunity in the nation such that it causes the least harm to the labour movement, has been going on seriously among the workers and labour activists.

Under such circumstances, the trusted labour activists who are well aware of the tricks and manoeuvres of the so-called job-creators (i.e. grand capitalists) and their theoreticians have been making an admirable effort to confront this invasion in order to defend the interest of the workers by organizing trade unions.

From this point of view, it could be said that the trade unions, which are formed and operating solely through union dues and the participation of their members- and not by the will and intervention of the government and hiring individuals as its employees- are places for the workers to gather and exchange ideas, become candidates as representatives, and elect the real representatives of workers, offer guidance and advice to workers in areas such as contracts with employers, renewing and writing collective agreements, wage increase proportional to inflation, checking the pay stub of worker in cases of disputes with the employers and defending the workers and their representatives against the employers' complaints by using the right to have legal representation.

Independence of unions guarantees the progressive role of union and acting to defend the interests of the workers and improving the quality of their lives. The independence and autonomy of the union and protecting this independence is an important factor in purposeful and class-oriented action of unions. That is why the workers ask their real representatives to

defend the achievements of the working class, such as the Social Security Fund, against those who rob the savings of the workers, and to voice their demands on their behalf, instead of compromising and making deals with grand capitalists and their agents over the interests of the working people.

Amid the report of financial corruption in the Social Security Fund by Saeed Mortazavi and his circle of friends and robbing the rights of workers in other areas, it is expected that workers strengthen their real position in independent and non-state-affiliated unions, with unified ranks. The more the number of independent unions, the more legitimate demands could be won.

Another important point is to study and utilize the experiences of the previous generations of labour activists in Iran and in the world. One of these experiences is to fight the divisive policies amongst the workers and having enlightening dialogues with the working people to raise their awareness and knowledge about state-made organizations that looks as if they defend the interests of the workers.

Membership and participation in the activities of independent unions in order to defend the interests of the working people, with all the difficulties it poses in our country, is closely linked to the destiny and future of our children and their families. Let's strive for the growth, unity and strengthening of independent unions.

From Felezkar's Farsi bulletin *Payam Sandika*, No. 35, January 2015

## Work Accidents in Construction Industry

By: *Houssain Omid*, Member of the Committee for Re-opening of Tehran's Painters and Decorators Union

The death of 6 workers at Asaloyeh Project [major oil - gas field in Southern Iran] has made me to write this article about work related accidents.

As a construction worker I have witnessed a number of unfortunate accidents that forces any consciousness person to seek ways of changing the status quo. These [accidents] range from severed fingers, a 100 kg basket falling from the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of construction site on an old man while earning his living from in a

# Union Messenger

Bulletin of Iran's Trade Unions

March 2015

Issue No. 7

construction site, a young security guard falling from 2<sup>nd</sup> floor that led to his permanent disability, falling of a young welder that broke his pelvis that left him unable to work. With this short introduction I would point my friends' attentions to a number of incidents in construction work places. Recently in the media a report by a member of the Construction Engineering Organization stated that on average 5 workers lose their lives due to accidents in the construction workplaces which it is a tragedy. These statistics do not include the workers that have become temporarily/permanently disabled due to incidents in the construction industry. As you know the construction workers are contracted on casual day wage basis and therefore their disabilities (permanent or temporary) means loss of bread-winner for the families that belong to the vulnerable social classes – given the absence of an effective occupational social insurance scheme, the current malformed arrangement is progressively leading to wider scale poverty. The family difficulties and complications for individuals can lead to wrong social behaviors such as addictions and prostitutions.

The occupational social insurance scheme has become operational for some times via the payments made by the builders [construction companies] but there are many defects that in short terms cause difficulties in covering the workers' needs. I emphasize that implementation of the laws must be in such a way that prevents accidents at workplace and this requires the management accepting responsibility. Otherwise the increasing death and permanent disabilities will only lead to financial overloading of the occupational social insurance. Additionally why legislating parallel laws [specifically for construction workers] creating contradictions, legal complexity and discrimination when the existing national labour law could broadly adequately serve the construction workers' needs too. For example the article 10 of the labour law explicitly states the need for an employment contract between the workers and managements and referring to details such as: type of work and expertise provided by the worker, salary or wage and relevant clauses, along with hours of work, holidays and etc.

Clearly an employment contract is the fundamental and the obvious instrument to define the worker and management relationship but the construction

industry's workers are deprived of it. Recently in the media it was announced that: "90% of the [employment] contracts are temporary", sadly the construction workers are even deprived of these temporary contracts.

According to article 148 of the labour law the management is obliged to insure their worker in the manufacturing units. Unfortunately I cannot ever remember any construction site worker who benefited from insurance.

Unfortunately in Iran where most managers are unprofessional and for other justifications such as seasonal nature of construction work, the labour law governing other industries and services never been implemented in the building sites – this has led to a number of difficulties such as poor building work and lack of supervision due to unprofessionalism of the managers and owners. This has resulted in an unfitting situation for the construction workers.

February 2015

## UMMI New Site Launched

We are glad to inform workers, trade unions and friends of the labour movement in Iran and around the world that the bi-lingual (Farsi and English) web site of UMMI has been launched. As before, when our Facebook page and weblog was made available to those trade unions that did not have their own site or weblog, the new site is also available to all labour unions. We will translate and publish the materials and statements of labour unions in English in the new web site for fraternal unions outside of Iran to access. This new website is the fruit of labour of the workers whose heart beats for the unity in the labour movement and belongs to all Iranian labour unions.

**UMMI New website:**

<http://sfelezkar.com>

**UMMI weblog:**

<http://felezkar.com>

**UMMI Facebook:**

[www.facebook.com/Metalworkers](http://www.facebook.com/Metalworkers)

