

URGENT ACTION

TRADE UNIONIST GIVEN SIX-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE

Iranian trade unionist Reza Shahabi has been sentenced to six years' imprisonment on vaguely worded charges. He is in poor health, and it is not clear whether he is receiving all necessary medical treatment. Another trade unionist is missing after being arrested.

Reza Shahabi (also known as Reza Shahabi Zakaria), the Treasurer of the Union of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (*Sherkat-e Vahed*), has been detained in Evin Prison in the Iranian capital, Tehran, since June 2010. He is in poor health after numerous hunger strikes in protest at the conditions in which he is held. Since around February 2012, he has complained that one side of his body was numb. However, it was not until 30 April that the prison authorities took him to hospital. It is not clear whether he is receiving adequate medical treatment.

Reza Shahabi was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for "gathering and colluding against state security" and one year for "spreading propaganda against the system" by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran. He has also been fined 70 million rial (US\$5,700) and banned from all trade unionist activities for five years. According to his lawyer, the prosecution is seeking to bring a fresh charge of "enmity against God" for alleged contact with the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), a banned opposition group. Amnesty International believes that Reza Shahabi has been convicted solely for his peaceful trade union work, and is a prisoner of conscience.

On or about 24 April 2012, trade unionist **Zabihollah Bagheri** was arrested on his way out of the Moharakeh Steel Plant in Esfahan, central Iran, by three plain-clothed officials. His current whereabouts are unknown.

The deputy head of the Tehran Bus Drivers' Union, **Ebrahim Madadi (or Maddadi)**, was released from Evin Prison on 18 April after completing a three-and-a-half-year sentence for his alleged activities "against national security".

Please write immediately in Persian, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Reza Shahabi as he is held solely for his peaceful trade union activities and to clarify Zabihollah Bagheri's whereabouts and current legal status;
- Calling for Zabihollah Bagheri to be allowed immediate access to his family and lawyer;
- Urging the Iranian authorities to protect Reza Shahabi and Zabihollah Bagheri from torture or other ill-treatment and to provide them with all necessary medical care.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 JUNE 2012 TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street – End of Shahid
Keshvar Doust Street,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info_leader@leader.ir
Twitter: "Call on #Iran leader
@khamenei_ir to release all trade
unionists held solely for peaceful TU
activities"

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
[Care of] Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com (Subject
Line: FAO Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani)

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Secretary General High Council for
Human Rights
Mohammed Javad Larijani
c/o Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave
South of Serah-e Jomhuri
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir
(Subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad
Larijani)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the fourth update of UA 130/10. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/053/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Union (or Syndicate) of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (*Sherkat-e Vahed*) was banned after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Workers resumed the union's activities in 2004, although it is not legally recognized. On 22 December 2005, police arrested 12 of the union's leaders at their homes, but quickly released four of them. Other members were arrested on 25 December 2005 after they went on strike to call for the release of their colleagues. Hundreds more were arrested during a further strike in January 2006 (see <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/002/2006/en> and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/008/2006/en>).

Reza Shahabi was arrested in June 2010, three days after the arrest of Saeed Torabian, the union's spokesperson. Held in incommunicado detention for some weeks, he later contacted his family and told them he was being held in Tehran's Evin Prison. In September 2010, after the authorities announced Reza Shahabi could be released on bail, his family paid the required 600 million rials (US\$50,000) only to have the authorities demand a further sum equivalent to US\$100,000. He began a hunger strike on 4 December 2010 in protest at his continued detention. Seven days after starting his hunger strike, Reza Shahabi was hospitalized as his health deteriorated. Due to his continued poor health, Reza Shahabi ended his hunger strike on 19 December 2010. On 22 November 2011 Reza Shahabi began another hunger strike which lasted 30 days. Following hospitalization and requests from supporters and fellow trade unionists, Reza Shahabi ended his hunger strike.

Saeed Torabian and Reza Shahabi were suspended from work, without pay, for approximately four years following the strikes in 2005. They were eventually reinstated after the Court of Administrative Justice investigated their case. This Court is empowered to investigate complaints against government employees.

Other trade unionists have been arrested or harassed recently, including members of the Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Company (HTSCC) Trade Union, which is also not recognized by the government. In late May or early June 2011, Reza Rakhshan, the union's leader, was released from Fajr Prison, in the city of Dezful, eastern Iran, after serving a six-month prison sentence. Ali Nejati, a former leader of the HTSCC Trade Union, was arrested on 12 November 2011 and taken to Dezfoul Prison to begin serving a one-year prison sentence related to his peaceful trade union activities. In poor health after heart surgery following a heart attack, he began a ten-day medical furlough on 7 March 2012. Amnesty International is not aware whether he has since returned to prison. Ali Nejati's wife, Shahnaz Nejati, who is also a member of the HTSCC Trade Union board, was arrested on 27 November 2011 by members of the Ministry of Intelligence during a raid on her home in the city of Shush, Khuzestan Province. She was released 24 hours later. The reasons for her arrest are unclear to Amnesty International.

Rasoul Bodaghi, a member of the Tehran Teachers' Trade Association, was arrested in September 2009. A teacher for 20 years, he was sentenced to six years in prison for "spreading propaganda against the system" and "gathering and colluding against national security". In January 2011, an Appeal Court confirmed Rasoul Bodaghi's sentence and banned him from taking part in any civil society activities for five years. According to reports, he was severely beaten by two prison officers in May 2010.

Iranian trade unionists were denied permits to hold 2012 May Day rallies in public in several cities across Iran. In Tehran, workers held an event in a gymnasium. In Sanandaj, Kordestan Province, north-west Iran, scores of workers—men and women—gathered on 1 May chanting, "We are workers; we are hungry." Security forces, arriving shortly after the rally began, dispersed the crowd. Plain-clothed officials arrested at least eight individuals, whose whereabouts were reported on 7 May to remain unknown.

Name: Reza Shahabi (Zakaria), Zabihollah Bagheri, Ebrahim Madadi (Maddadi)
Gender m/f: all male

Further information on UA 130/10 Index: MDE 13/027/2012 Issue Date: 9 May 2012