

PUBLIC

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UA 146/09 Prisoners of conscience

IRAN **Hossein Akbari**] **All members of the Metal Workers and Mechanics Union**
 Abdollah Vatankhah,]
 Abol Hassan Dar ol-Shafa'ie]
 Aziz Yari]
 four other members of the Metal workers and Mechanics Union

Hossein Akbari, Abdollah Vatankhah, Abol Hassan Dar ol-Shafa'ie, and Aziz Yari, along with four other members of the Metal workers and Mechanics Union, were arrested on 1 May, at an International Workers' Day event held in Nematabad, south Tehran on 1 May. They are believed to be prisoners of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally if held solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

All are held in Evin Prison and are believed to be in general sections of the prison, though some, if not all are reported to have been held in solitary confinement in Section 240 of the prison.

The eight were part of a larger group arrested in the course of the commemorations marking International Workers' Day on 1 May. While others arrested were released in the days and weeks following the event, these eight remain in Evin prison and are prisoners of conscience. They should be released immediately and without condition.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Under Iranian labour legislation, workers are allowed to form Islamic Labour Councils (ILCs) in companies with more than 50 workers. The ILCs' objectives, under 2001 legislation, are mainly to "propagate and spread Islamic culture, and defend the achievements of the Islamic Revolution"; "set up Friday prayers; recite and pay tribute to religious slogans"; "establish meetings for sermons, religious discourse and lectures, on various occasions"; and "endeavour to enrich the times of rest for the workers and their families". Those permitted to stand for leadership positions in the ILCs are vetted and approved by an official selection body. Although the formation of independent trade union bodies remains prohibited in Iran and those who attempt to form such bodies risk detention and prosecution, a growing awareness of workers' rights has resulted in the creation of a number of independent unions and workers' support organizations. While some have been tolerated, members of others have faced arrest and other acts of repression.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Persian, English or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all eight members of the Metal workers and Mechanics Union, if they have been arrested for taking part in peaceful events marking International Workers' Day, as they would prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression, assembly and association in connection with their support of workers' rights and trade unions;
- urging the authorities to ensure that workers detained on International Workers' Day are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that trade union activists no longer face arrest for exercising their internationally recognized right to form and join trade unions and that peaceful gatherings of workers' rights activists are permitted to take place.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh (Office of the Head of the Judiciary)
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhouri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: shahroudi@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: **FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi**)
Salutation: **Your Excellency**

Minister of Labour and Social Affairs

Mohammad Jahromi
Ministry of Labour, Azadi Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: pasokhgoo@irimlsa.ir, support@irimlsa.ir
Salutation: **Your Excellency**

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
via website: <http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter> (English)
<http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=letter> (Persian)
Salutation: **Your Excellency**

COPIES TO:

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
The Presidency
Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: **+ 98 21 6 649 5880**
Email: **via website:** <http://www.president.ir/email/>

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 July 2009.