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19 June 2009

Further Information on UA 144/09 (MDE 13/054/2009, 10 June 2009) Prisoners of conscience/fear of torture or ill-treatment

IRAN Said Youzi (m), trade unionist

Jafar Azim Zadeh (m), trade unionist

Release: Gholamreza Khani (m), trade unionist

Kaveh Mozzaffari (m), journalist

Mehdi Farahandi Shandiz (m), trade unionist

Two trade unionists and a journalist arrested for attending a peaceful event marking International Workers' Day on 1 May were released on bail on the evening of 15 June. Gholamreza Khani and journalist Kaveh Mozzaffari were released on bail of 50 million toumans each (approximately US \$50,000), while Mehdi Farahandi Shandiz was released on bail of 100 million toumans (approximately US \$100,000). Jafar Azim Zadeh and Said Youzi, the other two trade unionists arrested for attending the same event, are still in prison and have been reportedly moved to a general section of Evin prison. It is not known whether they have been brought before a court.

Up to 2000 workers' rights activists and trade unionists, along with their families had gathered in Laleh Park, central Tehran, on 1 May to take part in a peaceful rally marking International Workers' Day. The 2009 May Day Organizing Committee' were denied permission to hold the rally and after participants started to gather, they were forcibly dispersed by security forces, which are said to have used tear-gas and baton charges in the course of their attempts to disperse or arrest participants. Smaller groups of workers, were reportedly isolated from the main gathering then kicked, punched and beaten. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has stated that at least 150 people were arrested at the event, many of whom were subsequently taken to Evin Prison. The majority of these people were released in the following days and weeks.

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 Jafar Azim Zadeh and Said Youzi for having taken part in peaceful events marking International Workers' Day, as they are 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 May Day are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- calling on the authorities to drop all charges against all of these individuals (Gholamreza Khani, Mehdi Farahandi Shandiz, Kaveh Mozzaffari, Jafar Azim Zadeh and Said Youzi) as they have been 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;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that trade unionists and workers' rights activists no longer face arrest for peacefully 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 death of 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: <u>pasokhgoo@irimlsa.ir</u>, <u>support@irimlsa.ir</u>

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 31 July 2009.