

PUBLIC

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UA 144/09 Prisoners of conscience / fear of torture or ill-treatment

IRAN Jafar Azimzadeh, Chairperson, Board of the Union of Free Workers of Iran
Said Youzi, member of the Follow-up Committee for the Establishment of Free Workers Organizations
Kaveh Mozaffari, journalist and student
Gholamreza Khani, member of the Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company
Mehdi Farahani Shandiz, retired teacher

Four trade union activists and a journalist are at risk of ill-treatment after being arrested for attending a peaceful event marking International Workers' Day, on 1 May. They are prisoners of conscience and should be released immediately and without condition.

Jafar Azimzadeh and Said Youzi have not been brought before a court. Kaveh Mozaffari, Gholamreza Khani and Mehdi Farahani Shandiz have had their bail set at amounts their families cannot afford but it is not known whether they have been charged. All five are held in Evin Prison following their arrest in Laleh Park, central Tehran, on 1 May. Reports suggest that Kaveh Mozaffari was covering the demonstration as a journalist. None of those held are believed to have had access to lawyers.

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 over 200 people were arrested at the event, of which around 150 were subsequently taken to Evin Prison. Most 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 the four trade union activist and Kaveh Mozaffari, 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 ensure that trade union 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 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.