

“Capitalism is incapable of solving these problems”

The fifth general assembly of the ‘Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers’ Organisations’ took place in April 2011. This very important organisation unites a large number of trade unions and political groups. The need for unity on a high political level is extremely important in order to fight back against the forced atomisation of the Iranian working class, which has been violently and thoroughly imposed by the theocratic regime since the 1979 revolution. We are publishing extracts from the executive committee’s report to the assembly:

“The capitalist system has been facing a severe economic, political and social crisis. Today, unemployment, poverty, addiction, corruption, terrorism, war, injustice, and more disasters have been extended around the world. Clearly, capitalism is incapable of solving these problems.” The report also declares its support for “the oppressed

people of the North Africa and the Middle East. We defend the struggles and uprisings of the working class and the oppressed of the region.”

The report describes how the Iranian workers’ strikes and protests were met by government attacks and that many labour activists have recently been arrested and persecuted – including a number of members of the coordinating committee.

The committee reported on its activities over the last two years:

1. Active involvement and dissemination of information on actions and protests by workers around the country.
2. Reporting on arrests and imprisonment of labour activists.
3. Active involvement in the fundraising campaigns in support of the imprisoned members of the Haft Tapeh Workers’ Syndicate.
4. Organising meetings in support of jailed workers, which unfortunately ended up with the arrests of a number of

participants - but it was an important solidarity event and raised morale.

5. Participating in International Labour Day 2010, and issuing a joint statement with other independent labour formations.

6. Issuing many statements and position papers on various issues affecting the working class, including wages and wage arrears, subsidies, solidarity etc.

7. Refocussing its websites on key workers’ issues and struggles.

8. In this period, we have tried to increase knowledge of this committee, its goal and objectives as an independent open organisation.

9. According to a decision by the fourth general assembly, we asked the Ministry of Labour to register the coordinating committee. This request failed, and we wrote a protest letter to the Ministry and filed a complaint with the ILO.

10. The coordinating committee issued a statement for International Women’s Day in March 2011.”

Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Workers: still not free

We publish extracts from a letter of the Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Factory Workers Syndicate to the International Labour Organisation on the firing and persecution of their leading representatives.

“We have recently heard that the Iranian representative to the International Labour Organisation (Mr. Habib Tavakolizadeh, the international affairs chief at Iranian Labour Ministry) has claimed that the fired Haft Tapeh sugar cane workers and members of the syndicate of this company do not have any further issues and are currently reinstated in their jobs.

The fired Haft Tapeh sugar cane workers were fired from their jobs about two years ago (in addition to facing incarceration and numerous security, psychological, and financial pressures). Haft Tapeh sugar

cane workers have received no wages for almost two years, and our families are suffering from these hardships.

The Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Workers Syndicate, while strongly refuting the Iranian government’s claims, calls for the reinstatement of the fired Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane syndicalists Ali Nejati, Fereidoun Nikoufard, Ghorban Alipour, Mohammad Heidari Mehr, Jalil Ahmadi, and Reza Rakhshan - all members of the board of directors of the syndicate - and the other fired worker, Behrooz Nikoufard.

This syndicate calls on the authorities at ILO, workers’ organisations and media to do all they can to pressure the Iranian government to reinstate these workers to their jobs and to end the firing, persecution, and incarceration of all workers and workers activists and to respect the free association of the workers’ organisation. We are only perse-

cuted, fired and put in jail because of exercising our basic right to independent labour organisations. The Iranian government must end all such practices immediately.

Respectfully, Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Factory Workers Syndicate, April 18, 2011”

Massive price rises

Iran has raised the price of bread by as much as 25% as part of a plan to phase out government subsidies. This price hike increases the cost of the four most popular types of bread to as much as 45 cents a loaf.

In January, Iran’s main legislative body, the Guardian Council, approved a bill that gradually decreases government subsidies for goods such as fuel, electricity and bread. The plan is supposed to stabilise Iran’s economy as it struggles under international sanctions – all the while it is still attempting to integrate more and more into the international capitalist system.

In March, Iran raised the minimum wage for labourers in cities to approximately \$350 per month. About a third of city workers earn this little and many people working in villages often receive even lower wages.



May Day statement of seven workers’ organisations in Iran

On the occasion of the International Labour Day on May 1, seven Iranian labour organisations have published this radical statement. We publish extracts here. For the full statement, see www.hopoi.org.

“While all over the world, workers show their joy and passion and will to fight on May 1, Iranian workers are not only deprived of the social rights to establish organisations and street protests, they are also exposed to the most severe attacks on their lives and livelihood”, the statement says.

The seven labour organisations are the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, the Iran Free Trade Union, the Committee To Restart The Paint and Decoration Construction Workers Syndicate, The Committee To Restart the Mechanical Metal Workers Syndicate, Centre For The Defence of Workers, The Committee To Pursue Building Labour Coalitions, and The Coordinating Committee To Help Establish Labour Organisations.

“Any demands by the workers are answered with arrests and prison; the so-called ‘Targeted Subsidies’ plan (which have been enforced by the ruling capitalists with the help of international capitalist organisations), is further destroying the lives and livelihoods of millions of workers and their families. Of course, nobody is allowed to freely express their opinion about this. With the dizzying rise in the prices of energy and the continuing closures of many factories, every day hundreds and thousands of workers join the millions of unemployed.

“Meanwhile, unemployment insurance laws have been changed to the detriment of the workers; hospitals and government medical centres have become more expensive; it has become more difficult to receive retirement benefits; the construction workers’ insurance is degouted by the bureaucracy; and while the state has taken measures which will increase the prices of basic staples at an alarming pace, they have insultingly increased the minimum wages of workers by 9%.

“From our viewpoint, this will result in further desperation and the imposition of

poverty and an increasing state of misery for millions of working class families. But we, the workers, will not be mere observers of the gradual deaths of ourselves, our spouses and our children. We shall not tolerate the daily attacks on our lives and livelihood, and will persevere united against poverty and misery and the deterioration of social rights.

“We, the Iranian workers, express our disgust at the existing situation, and call on everyone all over the country to raise their demands in a united and sweeping way. We demand:

1. The unconditional freedom to set up independent labour organisations, to strike, to protest and to demonstrate. Freedom of joining political parties, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and a free press are our inalienable rights and while all government-made organisations must be eliminated from our places of work and our homes, these demands must be formally recognised as indisputable social rights of the Iranian workers and the general public.
2. We will not stand for a society in which a minority holds wealth and huge capital, and the majority have no dinner at night. In our opinion, the 9% increase of the minimum wage, especially in view of the plan to cease subsidies and the accelerated increase in living expenses, is an insult to human decency and the workers’ right to live. We consider such wages an imposition of poverty and absolute misery on millions of working class families. We reject the current manner of determining the wages and emphatically demand a cessation of the plan to cut subsidies. Wages should be determined by the workers’ real representatives, according to a decent standard of living.
3. We demand the elimination of temporary and blanket contracts and the elimination of contractors. We demand direct group contracts, providing workers with job security and observation of the highest

standards of hygiene and safety inside work and living environments.

4. The outstanding wages of workers must be paid immediately and without any excuses. Non-payment must be treated as a crime which may be pursued in the judicial system, and the related damages must be paid to the workers.

7. We condemn any attack on worker and public protests. We demand the revocation of death sentences and the immediate and unconditional release of all imprisoned workers and members of other social movements, an end to the judicial proceedings against them, and an end to the existing security atmosphere.

8. We demand that all laws that are discriminatory to women be revoked, and that the total and unconditional equality of men’s and women’s rights is guaranteed in all social, economic, political, cultural, and family realms.

11. We consider the demand for change an inalienable right of all human beings all over the world and assert our support of the people’s struggles and protests in all Middle East countries. We strongly condemn any government crackdown on public protests or plots to change the directions of the people’s demands, and any kind of intervention in the fate of the people of the Middle East.

12. We are a part of the international working class and condemn the deportation and imposition of any discrimination on refugee workers from Afghanistan or any other country.

13. We appreciate the international labour and public support of the Iranian workers’ struggles, and we assertively support the protests and demands of workers all over the world and consider ourselves united with them. Now, more than ever, we emphasise the international solidarity of workers to fight for freedom from the hardships of the capitalist system.”

