

# Iranian Workers' News

## SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN WITH IRANIAN WORKERS

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### Thousands of teachers protest in Tehran

■ Teachers demand pay rise, abolition of discrimination and the right to establish their independent organisations.

■ During the attack by anti riot police at least 15 demonstrators were arrested and dozens were injured.

In continuation of their protests over the last few weeks, thousands of teachers demonstrated, on Saturday 26th Jan 2002 outside the presidential palace and shouted slogans in defence of their demands. Anti riot police and security forces, who had (continued on page 2)



### In defence of Iranian teachers

on page 6

#### Protest sit-in by workers from textile factories 1,2,3 in Kashan

On Monday the 7th Jan 2002, workers from textile factories 1,2,3 in Kashan (central Iran) staged a sit-in in front of the local governor's office. The sit in was in protest at (continued on page 7)



#### Protest gathering by Razi petro-chemical workers in Mahshahr

Sacked workers from Razi petrochemical company in Mahshahr (southern Iran) gathered in protest at their sacking in front of the Majles (IslamicParliament) (continued on page 7)



### Economic and political pressure on Iranian workers\*

Given the rate of inflation, workers wages has reduced considerably over the last 10 years and their purchasing power reduced to such an extent that even the shorahaye Islami (government workers organisations) are demanding monthly pay rises of 70,000 toman( 60 pounds) . However Shoraye Aali Kar (a government body set up by the ministry of Labour) has fixed the (continued on page 3)

### Strike by workers in the Transfer motor building sector of Iran Transfo

on page 7

### Strike by Bus company drivers and workers in Orumiyeh

On Tuesday 18th December 2001, 600 workers and drivers from the Bus company in Orumiyeh (north west Iran) stopped work and gathered in the western terminal of this city in protest at their appalling working conditions, this was their third protest in the last 9 months. Striking workers were demanding pay increases and they said they can not live and pay for basic (continued on page 5)

### Sponsors of the Solidarity Campaign with Iranian Workers

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**Thousands of teachers...**

(continued from page 1)

gathered waiting for the demonstrators, attacked the demonstration, injuring many and forcing the demonstrators to disperse. During this attack, at least 15 demonstrators were arrested and dozens were injured.

Saturday's demonstration took place at a time when the ministry of Interior had announced that the demonstration was illegal and various organisations associated with government factions amongst teachers had tried to control and stop the growing protest movement of Iranian teachers. These people were on the one hand strengthening their own position in the inter government squabble and competitions and on the other hand pretending to support teachers demands while deterring them to take part in Saturday's demonstration.

Military and security forces, who had gathered since early Saturday in the surrounding streets the attacked the demonstrators as they were approaching the presidential palace in Pastor square. However hundreds of demonstrators managed to escape the police cordon and gathered in the square, as they were shouting slogans they were attacked by the police.

The protesters who were determined to continue their peaceful protest, changed the demonstration's route towards Enghelab square. However the attacks by the police and military forces continued and the police tried to stop others joining the demonstration and to stop their gathering in Enghelab square.

The protesters carried many placards asking people to join them. They gave slogans such as: "teachers, teachers, unity", "teachers will die rather than accept humiliation", "Khatami Khatami, police baton shouldn't be your answer", "arrested teachers should be released", "our problem is our

wages, your promises are lies"

A woman teacher who had taken part in the demonstration told a radio station: "women were in the first row in front of men teachers as we approached the square. The soldiers attacked indiscriminately, attacking even the women who were in the front, I was one of them we tried to resist but they started beating us up. They first attacked the women in the front of the demonstration, then they started hitting the men really badly. A woman in front of me was hit on the head and was very ill, I pulled her to the pavement. Another woman had come with her child, they started beating her up and she fell to the ground with her child. It was a very bad scene."

Before this demonstration teachers had demonstrated and staged sit-ins on the 15th, 18th and 22nd of January 2002 in support of their demands on the morning of 22nd of January, more than 12,000 teachers went on strike and staged a sit-in outside the Majles (Islamic Parliament).

Many retired teachers and pupils also took part in this protest, which lasted more than 4 hours. After that teachers and pupils demonstrated in Enghelab square. It had been agreed that at the same time as the teachers demonstration, workers from various industrial units join the protest outside the Majles and put forward their joint demands. However the reaction of the authorities did not allow this, only workers from 'Ama' factory in Tehran, managed to protest against low wages and non-implementation of the Labour legislation. In this protest the teachers demanded to see the Majles leader and gave slogans such as: "we are below poverty line, Majles doesn't know", "death is better than this life, we face so much shame", "and you claim justice, shame on you, shame on you", "teachers, workers, unity, unity"

Following this major protest in

front of the Majles, Khatami, Iran's president announced that a commission has been set up with the ministers of Education, Finance, Director of Central bank and some Mps to deal with teachers demands. But the teachers, who will have no representation in this commission and have no faith in government promises decided to pursue their struggle and after their demonstration outside the presidential palace continued the demonstration towards the residence of the supreme leader, Khamnei.

The first teachers demonstration which took place early last year with protests at cuts in special teachers pay of 25% has taken new quantitative and qualitative dimensions in recent weeks. Teachers protests early last year, which were under the control of supporters of various government factions, was controlled and therefore restrained and did not last or achieve any results, But the new round of protests, by distancing itself from government factions, has become more and more independent and insisted on its demands.

Iran's teachers, around 1.5 million, are one of the largest workforces in the country. This major force which has no trade union, lives under the poverty line, even according to official figure. They are not only facing economic hardship, but the imposition of religious dictate on their teachings, investigation of their ideas and thoughts, the police atmosphere in schools, absence of civil and scientific liberties, puts them under even more pressure. □

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**Closure of 47 textile...**

(continued from page 6)

( Kar va Kargar, 27th Nov 2001) . He added in 433 textile units in this province around 23 thousand people are employed and they constitute 49.5 per cent of this province's employed. □

**Economic and political...**

(continued from page 1)

minimum wage at 15,367 tomans. In relation to the colossal living expenses this amount is so little that it has met with widespread workers protest. However for a long time now, even this insignificant salary is not paid in many factories and productions units for 3, 6 months and even in some cases 2 years. Of course unprecedented protests have accompanied these shortcomings however the dispersion of these protests and the fact they remain limited to a single factory have only lead to very limited and minor improvements in conditions of regular payment of wages and bonuses. To such an extent that the issue of non-payment of wages remains one of the main problems a major section of the working class. What can these workers do regarding their daily expenses, to feed their children, pay for the rent? They have no alternative but to take up other jobs (second even third jobs) 14, 16 hours of work and even at times 18 hours of hard work as well as working Fridays (Iranian weekend) and holidays. Workers suffer from this physically and mentally long hours of hard work, lack of sleep together with worries and stress has destroyed the workers reducing the average life expectancy amongst them, this is quite obvious and it is reflected in newspaper reports. (5)

The problems facing the working class are not one or two, they are an endless chain, one of the problems is that the majority of Iranian workers have no insurance. If these workers loose their job or if they can't work, they face very difficult conditions, full of obstacles with no end. The following letter is a clear sign of such devastation: "I am a worker with ten years experience who at the age of 32 can't continue working because of the damaging hard labour I have had

to do over these years, to such an extent that I cannot walk but of course I was not insured all this time and now I cannot get any unemployment insurance and my family (5 people) who depend on the grace of God and the labour of my hands are crashed by the weight of the situation. (paper Kar va Kargar, Sept 1999)

On the other hand, even the workers who are insured cannot benefit much from medical services as insurance medical centres constantly reduce their services.

Insurance companies take up payment of a small proportion of the patient's needs and in recent months, social service insurance has covered no more than 180,000 to 250,000 tomans (160- 220 pounds) for each patient. How much medicine can a patient buy with so little money and what is to become for patient who cannot afford paying for the rest of the medicine on the open market? (paper Kar va Kargar, Oct 1999)

Pity the relative of a worker who suffers from a serious illness, the patient will vanish and deteriorate in front of the eyes of his/her family.

Such traumatic events often lead to irreparable psychological and emotional problems. Many die because of lack of money and their relatives suffer as long as they live from the pain of this senseless loss. Workers have housing problems, a large number of them live in contaminated houses and in the absence of health services, their families suffer from all sorts of sicknesses. A series of worries and problems leaves little time for workers to deal with the problems of their children. That is why in many cases children and youth from these families do not flourish and their talents die early on. Workers children are often forced to leave their studies and sometimes get involved in illegal jobs or they are forced to take harsh work in mines or workshops or bazaars.

The above only indicate some aspects of the misery of full time workers with steady jobs. The life of temporary workers is far worse. The sad site of large numbers of temporary workers, their faces red with anger, waiting for any job outside a factory is a common occurrence happening daily . In some of their suffering faces one can see nothing but anger and hatred and some of them have pleading eyes hoping for any job at a factory or a site.

Usually contracts are renewed or cancelled at the will of the manager every 30, 60 or 86 days . The order to expel or keep these slaves of capital in the factory is decided before you can blink. If they are given a job they have to worry again about renewal of their contracts. Beside this situation and as a complement to it, let us add unemployment of millions of workers. A widespread unemployment which has reached unprecedented widespread dimensions. This because the Iranian population is principally young (the third youngest nation in the world) and according to state statistics around 37million of Iran's population is below 24 years old, that is 67% of the population are young people are seeking a job in the coming years. (paper Kar va Kargar 10 Bahman-February 2000)

According to the director of Kanoun-e-Aali-e-Shorahaye-Eslami-e-Kar (a government workers organisation) the statistics of the Planning and Budget organisation show that during the third program of development, around 6,5million people require employment (including 2.8million unemployed at the beginning of this period and 3.7 young people, entering the job market) and jobs have to be created for them. In other words to reach full employment very year 1.3 million new jobs have to be created. (Kar va Kargar, November 2000)

### **New conditions demand new tasks from government organisations**

“Calming the atmosphere in workers environment is a very important yet difficult task today...”(6)

Sociologists are of the opinion that the appalling conditions of workers in any society creates crisis in the work environment and unemployment of millions paves the way for social rebellion and upheaval. Some of those in power have warned about such circumstances a number of times emphasising the need to review and change the formation of government organs. They have put forward their security plans for controlling and managing existing protests and these have been published in the media.

The factory atmosphere has changed and many forces are well aware of this. They have seen how over the last two years, waves of workers protests have appeared from Golestan province to Khuzestan, from eastern Azabaijan to Sistan and Balouchestan. They see that the relentless struggles of the working class has moved away from the control of official organisations and they are worried by this. However it is also clear that the independent dispersed struggles of the working class are limited to defensive ones. Workers in each unit or factory have followed their protest in isolation, independent of other struggles and unconnected to similar struggles elsewhere. The actions of protest committees have been remarkable but in the absence of independent, united workers organisations they have not been able to become a major social force putting forward their specific demands and influencing society. Khaneh-e-kargar (a government workers organisation) recognises its strengths and weaknesses in recent times. This government organisation knows that the total force concealed in workers environments can be

compared to a dormant volcano. At the same time this organisation knows that this force is not solid or united, it doesn't have an organisation. As it is deprived of its own organisations, it has no self-confidence and cannot rely on itself to fight for its rights and against the onslaught waged by capital against its standard of living.

At the same time Khaneh-e-Kargar is also aware of its strength, it is an organ associated with the state, although workers have no confidence in it. However it is a powerful organisation, with many branches and executive arms throughout Iran. With its widespread organisation and connections with government forces and with its ear to the ground in workers environments, with a few thousand workers employed and getting wages from it, with its national paper, regular meetings and gatherings, with 20 years of experience it has the necessary material conditions, the capability and readiness to control and to a certain extent Khaneh-e-Kargar can do all this given the dispersion and confusion of the workers. In order to achieve this under the present conditions they have to take up new responsibilities and to echo some of the demands of the protesting workers and the unemployed in order to be able to stop conscious workers and stop them from organising the working class around these demands. This way they can dominate the protest and dictate their own limits and restrictions on the protest, replacing independent workers organisations with their own groups.

“These workers organisations-Shorahey Eslami- have served and protected the Islamic revolution, its leadership and capitalists time and time again since the Feb uprising in 1979. Now if they don't pursue their duties the incentive to join such organisations will weaken amongst workers and this is precisely what

we think the enemies of the current order pursue”. ( paper Kar va Kargar, December 1999)

It is now two years since workers have entered the scene demanding payment of their meagre wages and they felt in soul and body the problems caused by the absence of an independent organisation. But the institution that speaks in the name of workers is Khaneh-e-Kargar and its political party (the Islamic Labour Party). It has complained about the absence of 'Shorahaye Eslami' under the name of workers syndicates. “The conditions to set up such syndicates is not favourable at the moment and from 7000 units where according to the Labour legislation, 'Shora' ( government workers organisation) can be set up only 2000 units have such institutions.” (7)

Khaneh-e-Kargar and independent workers organisations There is no doubt that Khaneh-e-Kargar hijacks workers protests to impose its own line and that of its party. Inevitably this government organ believes that with its programs and party solutions it can gain more political power within the state. But for Khaneh-e-Kargar the more important issue is that by mobilising workers in a controlled manner, it can gain their confidence and present itself as the nationwide trade union of the workers, as an organisation that defends the workers against the onslaught of capital, a 'realist' defender of the workers. With this, Khaneh-e-Kargar can present itself as the tendency that is a facilitator in the workers movement, a tendency that presents a ray of hope in the current dark conditions a tendency confronting any attempts at creating an independent organisation of the working class. They can envisage the conversation between two combatant workers the first presenting a heated argument in defence of setting up independent workers organisations and that in the

desert of Khaneh-e-Kargar one cannot grow any flowers and the other one explains the numerous problems of setting up such organisations reminding that it will require much more time and should be seen as long term objectives and therefore emphasising the need to use existing structures and tells the first workers: never mind the gallop, let us first grasp.

Of course building, developing and establishing independent workers organisations requires a But of course this will not happen in a vacuum. In the same way that the trend of self-education, gaining confidence and believing in one's abilities does not happen in a vacuum. This trend requires the independent involvement of workers in dealing with their problems. The more widespread the participation of the workers, the easier it will be for them to develop more capabilities, to think of their own development and radical and combatant tendencies to grow amongst them. One effective task and a specialities of Khaneh-e-Kargar is that it tries to stifle attempts at setting up independent workers organisations and present itself as the advocate of workers rights. From the point of view of Kahneh-e-Kargar one shouldn't allow workers a possibility to think for themselves, to give them the opportunity to put forward their own demands relying on their own power. In reality Khaneh-e-Kargar is one of the main obstacles against the establishment of such organisations and the tendency who in desperation sees this organisation, as a ray of hope should pay attention to this fact.

Today if the Hezb-e-Eslami-e-Kar (the Islamic Labour Party) issues statements talking of official recognition of strikes as the 'basic fundamental right of workers' (statement issue 1st May 2000) if Kamali the ex-minister of Labour talks of workers tendency to support national and trade deals (paper Kar

va Kargar, Feb 2000) if Shorahaey Eslami (government workers organisation) talks of monthly pay rises of 70,000tomans (paper Hamshahri, March 2000) if the youth organisation of Hezb-e-Eslami-e-Kar talks of paying unemployment insurance to the youth, this does not mark a change in the nature of these organisations or officials, it is not a sign of the formation of a reformist trend within these groups but a direct result of the workers protests and the turbulent situation in the society.

If they take up the demands of progressive workers and at least in words support these demands, their aim is to present themselves once more as the 'representatives' of the workers. □

*\* This is a translation of a shortened version of Jalil Mahmoudi' article published in issue 16 of the journal 'Andishe Jamee' in persian.*

#### Notes

- 1- Workers pay rise over the last 10 years has lagged the rate of inflation by 130 per cent. (Kar va Kargar, Dec 1999)
- 2- Khatami- the Iranian president –wrote that as real wages have not kept up with the rate of inflation over the last 10 years, workers pay should be increased by 70,000tomans a month.(Hamshahri, March 1999)
- 3- Shoraye Aali Kar (government workers organisation) specified the rise in the minimum wage in March 2000 and later the same month this was published in the paper Hamshahri. According to these figures, the minimum wage rose by 10% in the Iranian year 1379 (March 2000- March 2001) compared to 1378 ( March 1999-March 2000). In addition daily wages rose by a minimum of 300 tomans. According to these figures the minimum daily wage was set at 15,267 rials. (around 1dollar and 70cents)
- 4- The spokesman for Hezb-e-Eslami-e-Kar (Faraji) referred to the dissatisfaction of workers with the minimum wage in 1379 (2000) while warning workers against 'provocative actions' asking the government to guarantee workers pay to avoid a crisis. (paper Hamshahri, April 2000)

5- Under the present conditions, workers face difficulties such as low pay, lack of provision of housing, educational, training problems, acceptance of these conditions have lead to stress, psychological pressures to such an extent that the average life expectancy of workers was reduced. (paper Kar va Kargar, Jan 2000)

6 – Hashemi, political security deputy governor in Ghazvin, April 2000.

7- Statement by Hezb-e-Eslami-e-Kar on the occasion of Fisrt of May 2000.

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### Strike by Bus company...

(continued from page 1)

necessities on the meagre salaries they get. The workers said we cannot pay the rent, medical and educational expenses of our children, and after all that even this low wage is not paid in time.

The workers were complaining that overtime pay has not been paid for 7months and they have not been issued with work clothes for 9 months. This strike, which lasted until the 24th of December, according to our reports, was crashed by the Bus company managers and security forces. Following this strike the Orumiyeh Bus Company issued a statement announcing the expulsion of 99 workers and 108 contract workers and in another act, government drivers were told to drive the buses. One of the se drivers told the student news agency ISNA on the 19th of December: "I am a lorry driver for the municipality. With bringing me to drive the buses there is no guarantee that passengers will get to their destination safely". One of the other drivers said: "I don't even know how the bus doors open and close, they have forced me to work for this company". According to the same report the new drivers cause d4 accidents. In addition a number of striking workers were arrested by the security forces and sent to prison.

## In defence of Iranian teachers

Dear colleagues, fellow teachers, supporters of trade union rights  
This is the second week of teachers protests in Iran and over the last few days we primary and secondary teachers, as well as pupils have been demonstrating in Tehran and other Iranian cities.

Today in Iran the 2million teachers who teach some 20million pupils live below the poverty line, worried about their day-to-day livelihood.

A teacher with over 20years of experience earns less than 80,000 tomans a month (around 64 Pounds) a sum clearly not sufficient to pay the rent of a 2 bedroom flat in the poorest area of the capital. The Iranian teachers demands as expressed in their demonstrations are as follows:

- Resolution of their financial problems, housing benefit in line with increases in rent
- Correction of the 2002-2003 budget in respect of teachers salaries
- Pay increase in line with the rate of inflation
- The right to set up a teachers trade union
- Transport for teachers
- The right to express and publish their opinions ( in defence of unlimited freedoms)
- In schools and in professional teachers' journal.
- Freedom of teachers arrested in previous demonstrations and protests

We the signatories to this petition ask governments, political parties and human rights organisations, teachers and lecturers trade unions to use your international collective power to put pressure on the Islamic regime in Iran to respond to teachers' demands.

We are especially concerned about the plight of teachers arrested and call for their immediate release.

We support the right of teachers to set up trade unions in Iran and defend their right to demonstrate, protest and strike.

**Solidarity Campaign with Iranian Workers**  
**26 Jan 2002**

Please send emails to:  
**sciw@iranian-workers-news.net**

### Protest by 1500...

(continued from page 10)  
This protest lasted 9hours and was eventually broken up by the security forces that dispersed the workers.

### Sit-in by Rahimzadeh textile workers in Isfahan

On Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2001,

hundreds of workers from Rahimzadeh textile factory in Isfahan (central Iran) staged a sit-in in front of the factory in protest at non-payment of their wages over the last few months.

This factory has 800 workers. □

### 230 workers Ghazal...

(continued from page 11)

According to one of the workers, nearly all the workers have mental and psychological problems because of the uncertainty they face. Every morning they come to the factory and sit around beside the walls, with no job, anxious of what those responsible would do.

### Closure of Ghelzat factory in Kermanshah and sacking of all its workers

Ghelzat factory, producers of tomato paste in Kermanshah (western Iran), has closed for unknown reasons and 46 workers have been sacked. Although most of these workers have gone to the Labour office and issued a writ against the manager, they have not been able to get their unpaid wages.

### 500 workers from Ghataat-e- Fouladi (steel) in Karaj have not been paid for over 5 months

Production in this major industrial unit, which operates under the cover of a state bank, Bank Melli Iran, has come to a stop over the last few months and the salaries of 500 workers has not been paid for over 5 months. Workers in this factory have so far demanded a few times to renew production and pay their delayed wages , their protests have included various methods including blocking the Tehran-Karaj road.

### Closure of 47 textile units in Yazd province and unemployment of thousands of workers

According to the director of the Industrial and Mines organisation of Yazd, 47 textile units which constitutes 11per cent of all the textile units in this province have been closed (continued on page 2)

# Workers struggles in Iran

## Protest sit-in by workers from textile factories 1,2,3 in Kashan

(continued from page 1)

non payment of workers wages for over 4 months and following this protest one the town's main streets was blocked, however none of those in charge of these factories responded to the workers.

## Protest gathering by Razi petrochemical in workers Mahshahr

(continued from page 1)

on Wednesday 26 December 2001. Protesting workers, some of whom had 22 to 27 years of experience said: we have not been paid since August and we have been sacked with not rights.

## Strike by workers in the Transfer motor building sector of Iran Transfo in Shahr-e-Rey

676 workers in the Transfer motor building sector of Iran Transfo in Shahr-e-Rey (south of Tehran) went on strike the 25th and 26th December 2001. The main incentive for the strike was to protest at the method of payment of bonuses and benefits for extra production. Most of these bonuses were paid to managers and office employees, who played no part in production. The other grievance of the workers was the issue of contract workers. Although the nature of the se workers jobs is a permanent job, managers sign 6 months contracts with them. As a result these workers are not only given lowered pay and benefits, they lack job security.

One of the workers who had 13 years experiences: "with all this experience my monthly salary is 670,000 rials (around 60 pounds) and this salary is not even sufficient to pay the rent and I and other workers had hoped to live from the bonuses."

## Protest by Shariati hospital workers

On Wednesday 12th December 2001, a group of workers from Shariati hospital in Karaj (situated near Tehran) protested at the transfer of the service department in this hospital to the private sector. These workers told Irna (National News Agency) that the implementation of this policy will lead to the sacking of experience workers. One of the protesting workers said: Privatisation of the services department has so far lead to the sacking of 10 workers in the cleaning section. He added most of the workers who were sacked were middle aged and they cannot find another job.

A responsible of the Health and Medical network in Karaj said privatisation was part of the policy of the government to reduce cost. He added, so far this plan has only been implemented in Shariati hospital but if it is applied throughout Karaj, it will lead to 600 service workers loosing their jobs.

## Strike and sit-in by Jihad-e-Nassr wokers in Khuzestan

Strike and sit-in by 300 workers from Jihad-e-Nassr in Khuzestan (southern Iran) went on strike and staged a sit in the factory compound in the first half of December in protest at non payment of their wages and widespread sacking of workers. One of these workers told the paper Kar va Kargar (9 December 2002): "the company's managers are not paying our salaried s and every time we complain, they threaten us with expulsion and call us trouble makers." other workers said:" After 6 years work in this factory they have sacked."

The brother of one of this factory's workers who had attempted to burn himself told the paper Kar va Kargar: "Mohamed Reza Moghadam who had 4 children, had a pulmonary problem in the year 2000, his doctor had told him that he factory managers have to change his job. But the managers refused to change his job and forced him to resign. As he was ashamed of being unemployed in front of his wife and children he set fire to himself."

According to latest reports, more than 70 workers from this factory have received dismissal notices and the numbers of workers have been arrested by the security forces.

## Pars Poya protesting workers are arrested

Following the repeated protests of Pars Pouya workers in Maragheh (north west Iran) who demanded that the authorities should deal with their problems, a number of workers were arrested by the security forces. According to the paper Kar va Kargar 14th Nov 2001, arrested workers were transferred following temporary detention in the police station to prison.

## Protest by Jam shoe factory workers

Workers from Jam shoe factory situated on the Tehran-Karaj road wrote a letter to the paper Kar va kargar on the 4th of December 2001, complaining about factory 's closure and unemployment of 231 workers from this factory. They wrote: "The new factory owner who was in charge of dismantling this factory, has announced

that the company has had losses for 15 years and we say that if this is a loss making enterprise why aren't the managers prosecuted and the workers have to pay for their mistakes. Is it right that workers who have 18-22 years experience working in the worst conditions and now face uncertainty."

Workers in this factory had also written an open letter to the president in mid November, demanding that he deals with their demands. Jam shoe factory associated with Bella Industrial group belongs to Bank Melli Iran.

### **Protest gathering by workers of Sanaye Pashm Kerman**

A group of workers from Sanaye Pashm Kerman (a textile factory in south east Iran), gathered in mid November in front of Khaneh-e-Kargar (a government workers organisation) protesting against the appalling conditions in this factory and the possibility of its closure, they asked that their problems should be dealt with and that they should have job security. The workers said, the company managers are closing down the factory claiming that it faces financial difficulties. The managers have said that the workers will be paid one month salary for every year they have worked and this will be a final settlement, but workers with 10-20 years experience who had put up with all sort of problems and difficulties refused to accept the managers' conditions.

### **Protest by Foka Sanaat workers in Hamadan**

A group of workers from Foka Sanaat (western Iran) published an open letter to announce that the accusations made by the factory managers against 3 of their colleagues are baseless and is part of a policy to pave the way for sacking workers.

This factory's managers had accused 3 workers of swearing, disruptive behaviour and inciting workers to rebel. The workers wrote in their letter that the management has not paid workers wages and bonuses and by making false accusations against workers it is trying to stop the factory's operation and sack the entire workforce.

### **Protest gathering by 700 workers from Electric factory in Rasht**

On Wednesday 28th November 2001, more than 700 workers from Electric company Rasht (northern Iran) gathered outside Khaneh-e-Kargar (a government set up workers organisation) in this town and demanded a resolution of their problems.

Last summer Iran Electric factory sacked more than 700 workers under the guise of 'factory restructuring' and at the same time employed 100 contract workers.

The sacked workers who were at the time under the cover of unemployment benefit, protested against the pittance paid for this insurance and protested that their insurance books are not renewed, These workers demanded a return to work.

### **1760 workers in the Science faculty of Shahr Kord University threaten to sit-in**

1760 workers in the Science faculty of Shahr Kord University (western Iran) have announced that they will start a sit in protest at non-implementation of the job classification plan. This plan should have been implemented in 1995 and despite workers protests it has not yet been implemented.

### **Protest gathering by MehrAbad textile workers**

On Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2001, a group of workers from MehrAbad textile factory in Karaj (near Tehran) gathered in protest at non-payment of their wages for 6 months and uncertainty facing the factory. The workers gathered outside the central office of Khaneh-e-Kargar (a government set up workers organisation) in Tehran.

This factory was transferred to the private sector in 1992.

### **Mine workers in Faryab blocked the international route Bandar Abbas-Kerman**

Miners from Faryab mine, blocked the international route Bandar Abbas- Kerman on Sunday the 2nd of Dec in protest at non payment of their salaries for over 8 months. The protesting workers from this company gathered on this road and used a loader equipment to block the road with earth, stopping the traffic on this road.

Following this protest by 1800 workers of Faryab mine, the governor arrived and asked the workers to open the road. He promised that if the workers agree to this demand their salaries will be paid in 48 hours. The workers rejected the governor's offer and said that they will open the Bandar Abbas- Kerman road only when their delayed wages are paid and the management has changed.

### **Protest by Kamrad workers in Ghom**

Around 300 workers from Kamrad Company, producers of industrial screws, situated in Ghom (central Iran) protested in the last week of December in protest at non-payment of their wages for over 5 months. These workers had protested before. Various gatherings by Kamrad workers in front of the Labour offices, the governor and provincial director's offices had led nowhere. Those responsible for this factory have claimed



that non-payment of workers wages is due to cash shortage and the inability to sell the factory's products.

### **Protest gathering by Jamko workers in front of the provincial offices**

On Monday the 10th of December 2001, more than 150 workers from garment manufacturers Jamko gathered outside Tehran's provincial offices, in protest at appalling condition of the factory and non-payment of their wages for 12 months. In recent months these workers have protested a number of times in front of the Majles (Islamic Parliament), the presidential office and the provincial office, their recent gathering took place after the authorities failed to keep their promises regarding restarting factory and paying part of the workers wages.

This factory has 260 workers and was privatised 7 years ago. It should be added that 35% of the workers in this factory are women who are sole wage earner in their family and currently live under very bad conditions. One of the protesting workers said: "non payment of wages for 12 months has forced some of the children of Jamko workers to leave their studies, there are a number of divorces and some workers live in tents (they can't afford to any rent) all this at a time when 3 of our flowerers have died". Another worker said: "Instead of listening to our grievances, the authorities confront us with weapons and hot water. Their promises never materialise and we are determined to stay here until our problems are resolves". Referring to his/her workmate she said: "this man is responsible for a family of 10 and for the last few months he has had incurable cancer. He hasn't got 50 pound in his pocket while in order to stop the advance of cancer he needs money."

Unfortunately during this protest gathering the child of one of the workers was killed by a car. According to the reporter of the paper Javan, while he was talking to the workers he heard the sudden breaks of a car. The workers looked in anguish and fear and rushed to the street. One of their colleagues who were attending the protests with her family was screaming on the ground holding her child who had to be dragged from under the car's tyres.

### **Protesting workers from Dadely flour factory close the Shiraz-Esfahan highway**

On Saturday the 1st of December, around 300 workers, from Dadely flour factory situated in Marvdasht (southern Iran), gathered outside the factory in protest at non-payment of their wages. The workers set fire to tyres and threw them to the middle of the Shiraz-Esfahan highway which is directly in front of the factory, disrupting traffic on this main road for a while. The

protesting workers, including women workers demanded payment of their delayed wages.

### **Protest gathering by workers from industrial lime factory in Lorestan**

Sacked workers from industrial lime factory in Lorestan (western Iran) gathered outside the governor's office in Poldokhtar (Lorestan province) protesting at the factory closure and their job losses. The workers threatened to stage a sit-in in front of the Majles (Islamic Parliament). The sacked workers said that they have not received any salary since the factory's closure 5 months ago and they and their families face real hardship.

This factory started production in 1992 with capital from the state bank of Housing, however the failures of the management lead to a drop in production and eventual closure of the factory. Workers in this company had previously protested at a meeting between representatives of the Housing bank who had met Labour office officials in Tehran on the 10th of November, stopping their vehicles and refusing to allow them passage.

### **Striking workers from Ghaem Shahr textile factory kidnap the financial-administrative director of the factory**

On Saturday 17th November 2001, around 1000 workers from Ghaem Shahr (northern Iran) textile factory protested in the factory compound against non-payment of their wages. The workers also the financial-administrative director of the factory hostage and announced that he will be released only if their salaries are paid.

### **Protest gathering by Bafnaz workers in Isfahan**

Workers from Bafnaz textile factory in Isfahan (central Iran) gathered on Monday the 19th of November 2001 in front of the main factory entrance in Isfahan's famous Chahr Bagh Street, in protest at non-payment of their wages for 3 months and the irresponsible attitude of the authorities who have cause anxiety for the workers.

### **Protesting workers from Kouh Fard close the Tehran-Isfahan road**

Workers from the closed down factory, Kouh Fard, manufacturers of Television, tape recorders in Isfahan, blocked the Tehran-Isfahan road on the 19th of November for the second time demanding payment of their unpaid wages.

These workers opened the highway after three hours when the governor promised to deal with their demands.

## **Protest gathering by Chokha textile workers in Sari**

On Saturday the 10th November 2001, a group of workers sacked by Chokha textile in Sari (northern Iran), staged a sit-in in front of Mazandaran's provincial offices. The workers protested against the indifference of the provincial directors towards their problems and the closure of the factory for over one year. The workers demanded urgent action to deal with the factory's financial problems and called for the workers to return to work.

Chokha Company is owned by the state bank of Industry and Mining. Its 340 workers have lost their jobs for the last year as the factory has stopped production. All this at a time when they are deprived of meagre unemployment insurance payment. One of these protesting workers said the workers have received no payment for the last year. The factory managers have bought back the jobs of 100 workers and with this action and given their decision to dissolve the factory, the 340 workers face an uncertain future.

## **Protest gathering by 1400 workers in the Petrochemical installation company in Bandar Khomeini**

1400 workers in the Petrochemical installation company in Bandar Khomeini (southern Iran) gathered in front of the entrance of this factory. These workers have not been paid any salary for 4 months and most of them have families. These workers were asking: we have sold everything we had to pay for our expenses; however there is still no sign of any payment.

## **Strike by Gharb textile workers in Kermanshah**

Workers from Gharb textile factory in Kermanshah western Iran went on strike from Tuesday 30th of October 2001 in protest at non payment of their wages; the fact the Electricity Company has cut the factory's power. The discussions, according to reports we have received this strike lasted until the 3rd of November 2001. Discussions to end the strike between factory managers and the workers bore no results and these managers didn't make another effort to discuss with the workers.

## **Military attacks Chitsazi-e-Behshahr workers**

On the morning of 12<sup>th</sup> Nov 2001, a protest by Chitsazi-e-Behshahr (textile factory) workers in northern Iran) was attacked by security forces and a number of protesting workers were arrested. Three days earlier,

the workers had gathered ousted the governor's office and closed the inter province Mazandaran-Khorassan highway, demanding payment of their unpaid wages. During the confrontation, the workers broke the windows of a number of buildings and a state bank, to express their anger at the anti government policies of the regime.

The protests of Chitsazi-e-Behshahr textile workers started months ago, when the approval of legislation for buying back the surplus labour in textile industries, took new dimensions. According to the regime's officials, the implementation this legislation has led to unemployment of 15000 from 25 thousand textile workers in Mazandaran province alone.

## **Sit-in by Iran Press workers in front of Lorestan provincial offices**

Workers from Iran Press in Lorestan province (western Iran) staged a sit-in in front of Lorestan provincial offices. The protesting workers said, while we have years of experience working in this factory, the factory management has decided to pave the way for sacking all of them by making their pay dependent on contracts of a few months and sacking a number of workers. The factory management has threatened the workers that if they protest they will be sacked and replaced by Afghani refugees who will accept lower wages.

According to official government statistics, the rate of unemployment in Lorestan province is over 30 per cent and many production units in this province have been closed down, many others face recession.

## **Protest gathering by aluminium making factory in Arak**

More than 600 workers from aluminium making factory in Arak (central Iran) gathered for a few days in Mid November 2001 in front of their factory, demanding implementation of job classification and payment of delayed wages. Workers were also protesting at 'temporary' work contracts and demanded job security.

## **Protest by 1500 workers from Karoun Company in Shoushtar**

The directive by the management of Kesht-o-sanaat Karoun (producer of cane sugar) near Shoushtar (in south west Iran) sacking 1500 contract workers of this industrial complex, workers caused anger and protest amongst sacked workers. To such an extent that on the 14th of November, 300 of these workers blocked the private road between this complex and the town of Dezful stopping other workers getting to Dezful and surrounding areas.

(continued on page 6)

# Labour reports from Iran

## **In protest at sacking, a worker burns himself to death**

Following the sacking of workers in a company in Ahvaz (south west Iran) a 38 years old worker, Mohamad Reza, set fire to himself in depressed and in desperation at dealing with colossal expenses He was transferred to hospital but died minutes after arriving there. This worker has 5 children and 10years of experience of working in this institution and he couldn't believe that he was sacked.

## **600 workers from the Medical health network of Karaj have been expelled**

According to the paper Kar va Kargar (3rd Dec 2001) with the transfer of the medical and health network of Karaj town (near Tehran) to the private sector, more than 600 workers have lost their work .Most of these workers are employed in the service sector and on contracts. Expulsions and widespread sackings in Iran are all done in the year named the "year of employment" during which some 800,000 people have entered the job market.

## **Food poisoning and death of 2 Afghani workers in Boushehr**

On Tuesday the 11 December 2001, two immigrant Afghani workers died from food poisoning in the village of Talkho in Boushehr province (southern Iran).

Two other Afghani workers were also severely poisoned. These 4 workers were working in a plantation in Talkho village, one of them who was responsible for cooking food, had poor eyesight and poured chemical pesticide in the food instead of salt, this lead to the poisoning. Two of the workers died immediately and 2 were transferred to hospital. It should be noted that these workers had only one room for cooking, resting and because of rain and in order to stop the pesticide getting damaged, they had put sacks of pesticide in their room.

Afghani workers are amongst the most deprived sections of the Iranian work force, taking most difficult jobs with lowest salaries. These workers have no rights and victims of accidents at work in Iran.

## **Asphyxiation and death of 5 workers in Masjed Soleyman Communications Company**

Tuesday 18th december 2001, 5 workers from Masjed Soleyman Communications (southern Iran), were

asphyxiated and lost their lives while they were working in an underground cell. Another worker injured as a result of this incident was hospitalised. According to Masjed Soleyman's governor this accident happened because safety issues were not followed. (paper Iran, 20th December 2001)

## **230 workers Ghazal shoe factory are made redundant**

For more than 6 months Ghazal shoe factory has stopped production and 230 workers in this factory face uncertainty. The factory managers have blamed losses in production and factory's debts.(continued on page 6)

### **About the campaign**

*Solidarity Campaign with Iranian Workers has been set up to seek the support of International organisation, trade unions and workers organisation throughout the world for the struggles of the Iranian working class against job losses, to obtain their wages on time, to demand pay increases, to obtain the right to set up their own independent organisation, the right to strike, the right to social security and insurance and all other basic workers rights. With this in mind, the Campaign considers providing regular information about the struggles of Iranian workers as its most important task.*

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