

Health-Social Federation

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International Commission

Solidarity with the mobilizations of the nurses in Iran

Two years after the murder of Jina Mahsa Amini by the regime, "Jin Jiyan Azadî" has become an internationalist feminist slogan.

This real cry from the heart refers to the dignity of women who are the main victims of this phallogocratic regime. They suffer physical violence (including torture) and economic pressure (including low wages and high precariousness). This violence is a strategic tool used to silence their voices and control their bodies.

The intersectional demands of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement are not limited to the issue of compulsory veiling. They have expanded to reject the mullahs' dictatorship, to defend freedoms, to the women's rights, as well ethnic, gender and minorities rights.

From the first days of protests, due to the regime's bloody repression, when a significant number of injured demonstrators went to hospitals many health professionals decided to support them by setting up a system to protect them from possible arrest.

In addition, in December 2022, employees of the Shariati hospital in Mashhad (northeast) gathered in support of the protesters. A placard read: "*Free the health professionals*"; and on another: "*Last year, (following the COVID epidemic), health workers were heroes, this year they are accused by the regime of bringing corruption to Earth*".

The neo-liberal reforms of the health system, started in 1995, have widened inequalities;

- on the one hand between doctors and nurses,
- on the other hand, amongst nurses according to their department of assignment.

Following this, the nurses have regularly mobilized. In 2024, the movement has grown and unprecedented strikes have taken place first in Shiraz (central Iran) and then spread to more than fifty cities throughout the country. Social networks have contributed to the promotion of these mobilizations and therefore to their intensification.

Until now, the mobilizations mainly concerned nurses on fixed-term contracts. But this time, all categories of nurses are mobilized. Other health professionals, such as midwives and radiologists, have joined the mobilization.

While on strike, the nurses maintained a minimum service to ensure emergencies.

The only response from the authorities has been silence and repression. Workers' organizations, especially pensioners and teachers, have expressed their support for the nurses in struggle and their movement. These organizations firmly have condemned the violent reaction of the authorities.

The nurses' demands are essentially about:

- the end of mandatory overtime. Legally, nurses must not work more than 80 hours of overtime per month, but they are often obliged to work up to 300 hours per month.
- a 50% increase in night pay as well for public holiday pay,
- a significant reduction in working hours,
- the application of a special bonus for special situations, such as epidemics;
- the on time payment of salaries.

In Iran, as in many countries, women work mainly in social reproduction professions, particularly in sectors related to the caring of vulnerable people.

According to WHO statistics, women make up 70% of the world's health workforce. In Iran, the number of women nurses reaches 85% of the profession. Today, there exist twelve forms of recruitment for nurses.

Given the drastic neo-liberal policies of the regime that has weakened seriously the public services, women are intentionally placed in a precarious situation at work, and are de facto invisible. Low salaries for women nurses are one form of gender-based discrimination.

During the protests, many employees were arrested by the security services, subjected to police violence, threatened in order to return to their jobs, or summoned to disciplinary interviews.

Following this repression, the movement weakened from 25 September. The solidarity of the international workers' movement is needed now more than ever.

SUD SANTE-SOCIAUX:

- condemns any repressive action by the Iranian regime against workers,
- supports the collective struggles of health workers for decent working conditions,
- defends the right to strike as a tool of the international labour movement,
- defends the elementary right of women to control their bodies,
- calls for the repeal of all existing phallocratic laws.

Paris, November 10, 2024