

# *Solidarité*



*avec les Travailleurs en Iran*

**To: International Labour Organization (ILO)**  
**From: The Syndicate of Workers of Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Company**  
**Cc: Labour organizations, Human rights groups and media**

Subject: Appeal for actions to prevent the Government of Iran from violating Conventions 98 and 87

We, workers of Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Company, have faced continuing violation of our rights and demands, including non-payments of our wages for several months, in addition to the concerted efforts by the employer to cease sugar cane plantation and eventually closing down the factory and privatizing the company. We workers of Haft Tapeh are foreseeing mass layoffs. They have already stopped paying us for our over-time work.

Workers organized protests and rallies from 2006 to 2009, and through peaceful means complained to legal authorities about the situation; however, all this did not achieve any results and our delayed wages were not paid and even some workers were persecuted. The Islamic Labour Council, which is a sham “worker” organization affiliated to the government and the employer has done nothing to help achieve our rights. Other places are facing similar situation.

Having said the above, the main reason for writing this to you is as follows:

In October 2008, Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane workers organized their general assembly and elected their representatives under the name of the Syndicate of Workers of Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Company (Sandikaa-ye Kargarane-e Sherkat-e Neyshekar-e Haft Tapeh). In addition to a number of national and international laws, we also referred to the ILO conventions 98 and 87.

We believe that we have every right to form our independent labour organization. Accordingly, 9 workers were elected as representatives of the Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane workers in a general election by workers. This was the first time in more than four decades that thousands of workers participated freely and enthusiastically in an election to choose their own representatives.

Unfortunately, both before and after our election, we, the representatives of four thousand workers and other members of the board of directors of the Syndicate, were arrested, jailed and interrogated numerous times; our families have been under pressure and were persecuted by the intelligence forces. We were taken to the court recurrently using allegations like “action against national security” against us. The president of our board of directors, Ali Nejati, was incarcerated in a solitary confinement for about 40 days and was subjected to constant interrogation and mistreatment. Finally, Mr. Nejati was fired from work in March 2009 by the intelligence office and the company’ security department.

The court has issued one year imprisonment (which has been divided into 6 months of incarceration and 6 months of suspended imprisonment) and other fines and social restrictions against five members of the Haft Tapeh Workers Syndicate’s board of directors, Ali Nejati, Jalil Ahmadi, Feridoun Nikoufard, Ghorban Alipour and Mohammad Heydari mehr. Subsequently, they were also banned from working for the company.

The following explanations have been given in their court orders for the above sentences:

“Acting against national security through the formation of a syndicate outside the law”!

We are asking the International Labour Organization the following questions:

- Is the Iranian government permissible to violating fundamental conventions like 98 and 87?
- Isn’t the Iranian government a permanent member of the ILO?
- Has the Iranian government ever been held accountable for its actions?
- Why are workers being jailed, fired, persecuted, interrogated and tortured for creating their own independent trade organizations?

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- Shouldn't the Iranian government be accountable for its repressive actions against the representatives of the Vahed Workers' Syndicate including Mansour Osanloo and Ebrahim Madadi over and above the Haft Tapeh workers' representatives?
- Shouldn't the Iranian government be told that it cannot imprison workers (over 150 in Tehran May Day event) for organizing a peaceful commemoration of the International Workers' Day? That they must not put on trial, flog or jail workers for celebrating the May Day, (for instance Mahmoud Salehi who was jailed for one year)?
- Is the ILO aware of the government actions against teachers' representatives and the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association? ... And so on and so forth.

We, workers and members of the board of directors of the Haft Tapeh Workers' Syndicate, are writing this letter while the police is involved in intimidating and terrorizing our families. The police have been acting, in our cities of Shoush, Haft Tapeh and Andimeshk, as though we are criminals and fugitives. We are writing this while awaiting to be arrested and sent to prison for the above unjust sentences; and while our names have been put on the company's entrance as offenders that are not allowed to enter the workplace. If we go to our work the police will arrest us and that will give them another excuse to further penalize us. It is very strange that if we go to work they arrest us and if we don't they'll treat us as absentees which would justify sacking us altogether which would lead to our arrest and imprisonment. This vicious cycle has been orchestrated in a way that at the end of the day we will be both sacked and imprisoned. Thus, we don't know when you're going to be reading this letter whether we would be in jail or not.

Nevertheless, we are hoping that you will be pressuring the Iranian government to respect some of the most basic rights of Haft Tapeh workers and workers across Iran including the freedom to form workers' independent organizations.

We are not afraid of any consequences for ourselves in the path that we have chosen for the achievement of our rights, but we are hoping that, in jail, we would hear that the ILO has taken all necessary measures concerning the inhumane actions of the Iranian government and the violations of conventions 98 and 87. We will anticipate to hearing about your actions in this regard.

Should workers pin any hope on the ILO?

We, and many workers in Iran, will look forward to seeing an actual outcome of your efforts.

Will ever any effective action be taken?

Sincerely,

The Syndicate of Workers of Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Company  
Ali Nejati, Union Secretary  
Feridoun Nikoufard, the Union Vice Secretary  
Jalil Ahmadi, member Secretariat  
Reza Rakhshan, member of Secretariat and Responsible for Public Relations and Education

Haft Tapeh, Shoush, Khozestan Province, Iran  
October 24, 2009