

### **Mahmoud Salehi's Brief Biography:**

Mahmoud Salehi is a resident of the City of Saqez in the Kurdistan province of Iran . He was born in 1962 (1341). He is married with 2 children. Due to living in poverty, Mahmoud could not attend school and thus joined the labour market when he was only 6. He did some tailoring and bakery jobs. After the 1979 revolution, Mahmoud joined the newly formed bakery workers syndicate in the City of Saqez . Mahmoud started his labour activities since then. In May 1979, he actively participated in organizing the May Day demonstration in Saqez; however, when the government forces attacked the City, Mahmoud along with hundreds of other workers (including many members of the bakery workers' syndicate) ran away from the City. He consequently moved to Mahabad City . In May 1983 (1362), Mahmoud helped to organize a May Day event, in which they closed about 60 bakeries in Mahabad and Mahmoud delivered speeches in the workplaces. Consequently, the government prosecuted Mahmoud and he had no other choice but to leave Mahabad. After some time, Mahmoud decided to go back to Saqez but after a short while the Intelligence agency arrested Mahmoud and jailed him for three years. In the winter of 1989 (1367), Mahmoud was released from the prison. From 1989 to 1993 (1368 to 1372), Mahmoud helped to organized labour events such as May Day with the help of city residents in suburban areas so that the government forces could not interfere.

In 1994 (1373), the Founding Committee of the Trade Association of Saqez Bakery Workers held its general assembly, in which all participants decided to nominate Mahmoud as their representative but the authorities of the Ministry of Labour opposed that decision. Workers immediately protested the Ministry of Labour's interference, which helped to result in the Labour Administration's retreat from the decision and thus Mahmoud formally became workers' representative. In 1995 (1374), Mahmoud was arrested again for his activities with the trade association and after a short period of detention he was released. In 1999 (1378), Mahmoud, along with a few other labour activists, among them Mohammad Abdipour, Jalal Hosseini, Ebrahim Karimi, and Mohammad Mohammadi (Mola), were arrested by the security forces and spent 75 days in a jail cell. In 2000 (1379), Mahmoud was arrested another time, this time he was incarcerated for 10 months. After his release, the intelligence service removed Mahmoud from his position as the representative of the trade association and denied his eligibility to run for the position again.

In 2001 (1380), while the governor's office had given Mahmoud the permission for 7 minutes of speech at the May Day event, Mahmoud was arrested in front of the crowd. But people staged a protest and demanded that the governor intervene for Mahmoud's release. People threatened that they would demonstrate outside the office of the intelligence service, which helped to secure Mahmoud's freedom after 3 days. With the order of the intelligence service and with the collaboration of the local authorities of the labour Ministry, Mahmoud was fired from his workplace after 9 years of seniority without any severance or benefits given to him. After that, due to the fear of the intelligence agency, no employer has hired Mahmoud. Mahmoud is currently working for the Bakery Workers Cooperative Society.

Mahmoud along with Jalal Hussein, Mohsen Hakimi, Borhan Divargar, Mohammad Abdipoor, Esmail Khodkam and Hadi Tanomand and many other workers were arrested on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2004 at the beginning of a rally in celebration of May Day in the City of Saez , Kurdistan Province . The above labour activists, internationally known as Saez Seven, went on hunger strike while in custody until they were released on heavy bail on May 12, 2004. While three of the above seven have since been acquitted, the remaining four continued to face numerous trials. They were awaiting the final verdicts.

In late April 2004, Salehi met with Ms. Anna Biondi of the ICFTU in Tehran to discuss the dire situation of workers in Iran , while she was on a mission in Iran ; this mission was closely monitored by the Iranian intelligent services. Mahmoud was arrested two days after the meeting in Saez on the May Day event. Since his release on May 12, 2004, Mahmoud has incessantly been involved in organizing and mobilizing labour movement. He was the leading person to found the Coordinating Committee to Form Workers' organization in 2005, which was signed by thousands of workers across the country despite the repressive conditions in the country. While facing three years of trials since May 2004, Mahmoud has been writing numerous articles on workers' rights and systemic barriers imposed by the ruling capitalist class and the government, and he has been interviewed frequently by various independent radios and websites. He has been supporting the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company and strived for Mansoor Osanlou's freedom while he was in jail. Salehi and his Saez colleagues have been receiving considerable support and solidarity from labour and progressive activists and organizations internationally since the Saez trials began. Mahmoud is undoubtedly one of the most courageous and well-known labour activists in Iran today. He has contributed greatly to the recent rise of the labour movement in the country.

Mahmoud Salehi was last arrested on April 9, 2007 and transferred to a prison in the city of Sanandaj . The Kurdistan Province Appeal Court has sentenced Mahmoud to one year imprisonment and also a three year suspended prison sentence, and the verdict was carried out immediately without prior notice to Mahmoud, his family or his lawyer. Various campaigns for Mahmoud's freedom are being launched in Iran and other countries by labour and progressive activists. Please support Mahmoud Salehi and demand his immediate and unconditional freedom and the annulment of all sentences.