



ICFTU ONLINE...

IRAN: verdicts against independent trade unionists unacceptable, says ICFTU
10/11/2005

Brussels, 10 November 2005 (ICFTU Online) The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) today forcefully condemned the sentencing of two independent trade union activists from the city of Saqez, in Iran's Kurdistan Province, eighteen months after they were initially arrested during a May Day rally. Under a verdict issued yesterday, 9 November, Mahmoud Salehi, former President of the Bakery Workers' Association in Saqez and a co-founder of the Coordinating Committee to Form Workers' Organisations, has been sentenced to 5 years imprisonment and 3 years in exile in the city of Ghorveh. One of his co-defendants, Jalal Hosseini, also member of the Bakery Workers' Association, was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment, whereas two more defendants, Hadi Tanomand and Esmail Khodkam, were acquitted. Three other unionists prosecuted in the same case are still awaiting their verdicts.

Ever since they were charged with support of the illegal political organisation "Komala", in mid-2004, the ICFTU had been attempting to send international observers to their trial. Its requests for entry visas have been repeatedly denied. In a letter sent today to Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the ICFTU once more insists that the unionists' prosecution mainly stems from their meetings with an official ICFTU mission which visited Iran in April 2004, shortly before the "Saqez Seven's" arrests. The ICFTU believes this is all the more the case since the defendants were acquitted of the original "Komala" charges. It now appears that Salehi and Hosseini were sentenced under art. 610 of the Islamic Punishment Act. The article foresees penalties from 2 to 5 years of imprisonment for unauthorised meetings of two or more people "conspiring to commit criminal acts against national security".

In his letter to President Ahmadinejad, ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder said his organisation was "outraged at these sentences, which show that your government utterly disregards fundamental trade union rights". He added that Iran's failure to meet its international obligations towards the International Labour Organisation (ILO) "tarnishes its image abroad and undermines international trust" in its government. He also expressed the hope that the unionists' innocence would be fully recognised during latter stages of the judicial process and that the ICFTU would be allowed to send its observers to future court hearings.

The ICFTU said it would now report the sentences to the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association and increase the pressure on Iran's government, with the support of its worldwide membership.

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers through its 234 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. The ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions:
<http://www.global-unions.org>

For more information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2 224 0210 or +32 477 580 486.

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions(ICFTU)
Boulevard du Roi Albert II 5, B1, B-1210 Brussels, Belgium. For more information please
contact ICFTU Press on: +32 (2) 224 0232 - press@icftu.org