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**International Centre for Trade Union Right**

*Centro Internacional para los Derechos Sindical*  
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ICTUR was founded to defend and extend trade union rights and to raise awareness of these rights and their violations around the world.

**AUGUST 2017**

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Attn:

**Hassan Rouhani**  
**President of the Islamic Republic of Iran**  
**Office of the President**  
**Pasteur St.**  
**Tehran, IRAN**

CC:

Ali Rabiei, Minister of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare  
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations  
International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (IASWI)  
International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering,  
Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)  
Education International (EI)  
International Transport Workers Federation (ITF)  
International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)  
Annalisa Ciampi, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to  
freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Dear President Rouhani,

The International Centre for Trade Union Rights is writing to raise very serious concerns about the treatment of workers and trade unionists in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

ICTUR understands that on the evening of 25 July 2017, police and security forces raided the residences of workers at the Haft Tapeh sugar cane plantation and mill complex in the southern city of Shush. Fifteen workers were arrested and detained. Workers at Haft Tapeh have been protesting to demand payment of unpaid wages and benefits; it is understood that currently thousands of workers are owed up to four months in salary arrears. Workers at Haft Tapeh have long demanded recognition of their trade union rights and faced harassment, arrest, blacklisting, dismissal, as well as

surveillance by the security forces. Members of the union were reportedly attacked by the Basij paramilitary group during a protest in February 2016.

In its latest report, the International Labour Organisation's Committee on Freedom of Association described the on-going arrests and detention of large numbers of trade unionists in Iran as an 'extremely serious and urgent' matter (Case No 2508, Interim Report No. 382, June 2017).

While ICTUR welcomes the news that trade union activists Jafar Azimzadeh and Shapour Ehsani-Rad were acquitted in May 2017 of charges of 'acting against national security' for peacefully advocating for labour rights, it is understood that a number of similar charges brought against trade unionists remain outstanding. Azimzadeh and Ehsani-Rad's acquittal comes after they were initially sentenced to 11 years in September 2016 by the Criminal Court of Saveh. However Azimzadeh still faces a six-year prison sentence imposed in March 2015 by the Tehran Revolutionary Court on similar charges.

Additionally, Esmail Abdi of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association was sentenced to six years in prison in October 2016 and recently undertook a hunger strike to protest the persecution of trade unionists in Iran. Other targeted trade unionists include Davoud Razavi, Ebrahim Madadi and Reza Shahabi of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company who have each been charged with similar 'national security' offences. Reza Shahabi is serving a five-year sentence, extended by one year in 2016. Ebrahim Madadi was sentenced to five years and three months in August 2016. Davoud Razavi was sentenced to five years in prison in February 2016.

**As a member of the ILO, the Islamic Republic of Iran is obligated under the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work to respect, promote and to realise, in good faith and in accordance with the ILO Constitution, the principles of the ILO fundamental Conventions, including freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.** As the Committee on Freedom of Association clearly states in its June 2017 report, 'the frequent arrest and sentencing of trade unionists to long periods of imprisonment under such general charges in this case is likely to severely hinder the exercise of legitimate trade union activities'. The Committee has therefore urged the government 'to bring its conclusions to the attention of the Iranian judiciary with a view to ensuring that peaceful trade union activists are not sentenced to prison on vague charges of acting against national security and propaganda against the State'.

ICTUR calls on the government to implement all of the Committee's recommendations, and to ensure that all outstanding charges are dropped against trade unionists who have been targeted or arrested for legitimately exercising their fundamental rights; to secure the immediate release of all trade unionists

detained or sentenced to prison on spurious 'national security' grounds; and to further take any measures necessary to guarantee the fundamental rights of workers to join and form unions and to take action in defence of their interests. ICTUR further calls on the government to support the workers and retired workers at Haft Tapeh to claim their wage and benefit arrears, and for the Haft Tapeh Sugar Workers Union to be recognised as the workers' legal bargaining representative.

ICTUR will report these incidents in the journal *International Union Rights*, which was established in 1993, and which enjoys a readership in more than 100 countries.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Blackburn', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Daniel Blackburn, Director