



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

Head Office

5, Bd du Roi Albert II
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 2 224 06 11
Fax +32 2 224 06 06
headoffice@ei-ie.org
http://www.ei-ie.org

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President Islamic Republic of Iran
Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: 011-98-21-649-5880

Brussels, 19 April 2007

President Ahmadinejad,

I write to you again on behalf of Education International (EI) to condemn the arrest of more members of the various teachers' associations in connection with their legitimate and peaceful demonstrations for a decent living wage.

On 7 April 2007, security forces arrested more than 45 teachers in Hamedan. All but nine were released the next day and five more were released on 15 April, but four – Mssrs. Ghadimi, Refahiyat, Zarei and Gholami – are still detained. On 16 April 2007, plainclothes agents arrested the Superintendent of the Teachers' Trade Association of Iran, Mr. Baghani, at his workplace at the Roshd Middle School in region 7 of Tehran. Mr Baghani had previously been arrested along with 300 teachers, including Executive Board members of his union, on 14 March. They remained in jail until 28 March 2007.

Mr. President, following previous letters addressed to you by EI on earlier arrests and intimidation of teachers and their representatives, and subsequent to an audience requested by the Iranian delegation to the ILO with the Workers Group on 21 March, the Labour Attaché of the Iranian delegation to the ILO stated in correspondence that:

"Recognising the constitutional and civil rights of the teachers for peaceful assemblies and their freedom of speech, the Supreme Chief of the Judiciary decreed for the immediate release of all protesters arrested in front of the Parliament. According to the former, the legitimate and peaceful assemblies of the teachers are to be respected."

However, recent developments show a different attitude on the part of the Iranian authorities.

Interestingly the recent massive arrest occurred after the announcement by the Coordinated Council of Cultural Workers' Associations of strikes scheduled for 15 and 16 April 2007. Teachers reported increased scrutiny and pressure from Government authorities and in Tehran many teachers, including Executive Board members of the Teachers' Trade Association, were given mandatory summons to the revolutionary courts. At least six members have been transferred to the Evin prison: Hamid Pourvosough, the Deputy Executive Director of the Association, Seyd Mahmoud Bagheri, Mohammad Taghi Fallahi, Ali Asghar Montajabi, Mohammad Reza Rezai, and Alireza Akbar Nabi.

Iran is a longstanding member of the International Labour Organisation and is therefore requested to adhere to the *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*, which guarantees freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

Teachers are protesting to uphold their right to a decent living wage. Quality education for children requires teachers who are well trained, adequately remunerated and provided with good working conditions. By organising protests, teachers and their union representatives are merely requesting fair negotiations and social dialogue.

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EI therefore urges you, Mr. President, to:

- Secure the immediate and unconditional release of all teachers and their representatives detained in the context of the teacher protests;
- Open serious negotiations with the teachers' representatives on their longstanding request for improved wages and respectable working conditions;
- Ensure that, in future, the right of teachers and workers' organisations to exercise their activities and to hold meetings relating to the conditions of work and economic and social policy be respected.

EI would welcome a positive response on these requests, and will, in the meantime, continue to monitor the situation in Iran closely.

Sincerely yours,

Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary

Copies sent to:

- Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei
- Golam-Ali Haddad-Adel, Leader of the Iranian Parliament – Fax: +98 21 646 1746
- Hon Mohammed Jahromi, Minister of Labour – Fax +98 21 6693 1062
- Hon. Manouchehr Mottaki, Foreign Minister – Fax +98 21 667 31 49
- Ambassador Mohammad Reza Alborzi – Fax: +41 22 733 02 03
- ILO
- ITUC