

# Workers in Iran

News & views from the labour movement in Iran



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## Report of the ILO Committee of Experts on workers situation in Iran

### International Labour Conference, 93rd Session, 2005 Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (Articles 19, 22 and 35 of the Constitution)

#### Islamic Republic of Iran

*Protection of Wages Convention,  
1949 (No. 95) (ratification: 1972)*

The Committee recalls that by communications dated 20 September and 31 October 2002, respectively, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) had submitted observations concerning the application of the Convention, indicating in particular, serious and persistent problems of non-payment of wages, especially in the textile industry, and detailing the different actions taken by unpaid workers in specific textile mills and other industrial plants to protest against the several months delay in the payment of their wages.

Both organizations consider the situation prevailing throughout the country to be dramatic; they refer to growing unrest among Iranian workers and they denounce the sometimes violent re-

sponse of the authorities. Among the many facts and figures reported by the ICFTU and the WCL, the Committee notes that the delay in the payment of wages often varies from three to nine months and may even stretch to two years. It also notes that problems of unpaid remuneration relate to the payment not only of wages but also of unemployment benefits and pensions. In addition, the Committee notes other sources of information, such as UN documents concerning the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which refer to the critical situation of 1,400 companies, chiefly in the textile sector, and an estimated 80,000 workers who are not being paid.

In its reply, transmitted some two years after the filing of the comments of the two organizations, the Government gives a general overview of the legal remedies provided for in the Labour Code for the recovery of unpaid wages and the settlement of wage claims, and

provides some up-to-date information on the current employment situation in some of the textile factories referred to in the communications of the ICFTU and the WCL. The Government does not supply, however, concrete statistics showing the nature and scale of the wage crisis facing the textile industry and possibly other sectors of the national economy, nor its evolution in the past few years.

As the Committee has pointed out on numerous occasions, a proper assessment of the problem is only possible through the systematic collection of statistical data emanating from credible sources. It therefore asks the Government to supply in its next report, documented information on the number of workers affected, the number of textile factories or related establishments experiencing difficulties in the payment of wages, the average length of the delay in the payment of wages, the amount of arrears settled and the outstanding amount of arrears, the number of inspections made and the penalties imposed, and any negotiated time schedule for the repayment of the sums outstanding. The Committee would also appreciate receiving detailed information on any other occupational category or branch of economic activity which may experience similar problems on a large scale.



## Textile workers' protest brutally attacked

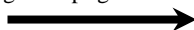
On Wednesday this week a protest of about 100 textile workers in the south eastern province of Kerman - most of them women - was violently attacked by the Iranian regime's security forces, according to the state news agency ILNA.

The workers of Asia Wool-Spinning Company were protesting at the non-payment of their wages and benefits. Each worker in this company is owed up to 3 million Tomans (about \$3,500) in unpaid wages. The

workers blocked the main road outside the factory to highlight their protest.

However, the security forces started attacking the workers. A pregnant woman was dragged on the road and kicked in the back. Another worker had her leg injured when it was caught under the wheel of a vehicle, which had been ordered to move by the security forces.

The workers said their attempts over the years to bring their plight to the attention



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The Committee recalls that for the past six years it has been commenting extensively on problems related to abusive pay practices and the non-payment of wages affecting a considerable number of countries worldwide, and has been drawing attention to three essential elements insofar as the application of the Convention is concerned: (i) efficient control and supervision basically implying the strengthening of labour inspection services; (ii) truly dissuasive and strictly enforced sanctions against those who take advantage of the economic situation to commit abuses; and (iii) the means to redress the injury caused, including not only the full repayment of the amounts due but also fair compensation for the losses incurred on account of the delayed payment. In this connection, reference may be made to paragraphs 356 to 374 of the General Survey of 2003 on the protection of wages in which various wage debt crises are discussed in light of the obligations arising out of *Article 12, paragraph 1, of the Convention*. The Committee therefore requests the Government to indicate in its next report the legislative, administrative or other measures, especially regarding methods of supervision and enforcement of national legislation, that it intends to adopt to ensure effectively that wages are paid in full and on time and all wage arrears are settled. It also asks the Government to forward copies of any relevant legal text in this regard.

Finally, the Committee wishes to emphasize, as it was noted in paragraph 366 of the abovementioned General Survey, that the phenomenon of wage arrears is "part of a vicious circle that inexorably affects the national economy in its entirety" and that unless urgent action is taken to contain it before it takes significant proportions, it may spill over to other sectors of the national economy with disastrous social and financial consequences. The Committee accordingly requests the Government to intensify its efforts and exhaust all available means in order to eliminate accumulated wage debts and prevent the recurrence of similar phenomena in the future.

## To the all trade Unions Support textile workers of Kashan!

Textile workers have started a march from Kashan to Tehran (the capital) in protest against none payment and late payment of their wages.

More than 2500 textile workers are currently on strike, because they have not been paid for more than 14 months. A protest march has started since this morning, Wednesday, 20th July. It started by around 200 of textile workers and along the way others joined them in groups. At the moment more than 600 are marching towards Tehran.

We are strongly concerned that the workers might face violent suppression from the authorities. we see it our duty (and we have been specifically asked by the protesters) to raise awareness about this movement and try to get international support in order to stop the government arresting and imprisoning the protesters.

Dear friends

Workers in Iran are among the most deprived people on earth. They are denied the right to organise and each time they strike or protest about something, they face violence, arrest and imprisonment. In Iran, worker's wages are not usually paid on time, and there are long delays, months or even sometimes years in paying their wages. The employers and factory owners, simply refuse to pay workers' wages on time. According to regimes own statistics, workers in Iran are already living under the poverty line and even if they are paid on time, the wages are not enough to get them the most basic necessities of life. You can imagine the misery of a family who has not been paid for months. Most workers are not able to provide the most basic needs of their families, their children are not able to go to school and in many cases they find themselves begging in the streets.

Friends

Despite the brutal suppression and imprisonment and torture, workers in Iran

have been fighting for their rights year after year. In some occasions they have received international support and solidarity and have been successful. Today, workers in Kashan need your support. We must not let this protest end up in violence and be suppressed. We must seek international support and help them win. Please help us spread the news of their strike and get people to support them any way they can.

We will be in touch and keep you informed of the progress of this protest.

Khalil Keyvan

Secretary of the worker-communist party of Iran- organisation abroad  
20/07/05

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### **Textile ... continued from p 1**

of the authorities had led them nowhere. Hundreds of thousands of workers in Iran continue to suffer from long delays in the payment of their wages – sometimes for up to two years; a fact also highlighted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in this year's International Labour Conference. The disastrous consequences of unpaid wages for workers in Iran, who can barely survive on the basic pay in any case, are all too obvious. Putting children to work, sale of body organs, prostitution and suicide are just some of the tragic results of the poverty that has been imposed on large sections of Iranian workers and their families.

Withholding workers' pay must be treated as a grave criminal offence, and the government in Iran held to account for this catastrophic situation for Iranian workers.

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