



Briefing 188-9

A Weekly of the Worker-communist Party of Iran (WPI)

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Editors: Maryam Namazie and Fariborz Pooya

www.wpiran.org



'The basis of socialism is the human being... Socialism is the movement to restore human being's conscious will.'

Mansoor Hekmat

1951-2002

Even children are not spared!

Interview with Mahdiye Salimi, the 12 year old daughter of union member who was beaten and arrested, page 4

Our apologies for taking such a long break. We wish you a belated happy new year and look forward to once again provide you with thought-provoking pieces on important social-political issues, update you on the activities of the Worker-communist Party of Iran and its personalities, and respond to your questions and comments.

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On the Islamic Republic of Iran's attempt to obtain nuclear weapons

Resolution of the WPI Political Bureau

The Islamic Republic of Iran's attempt to obtain nuclear weapons has escalated the tension and danger of nuclear conflict across the world and caused a great deal of concern to the civilised people of the world.

The Worker-communist Party of Iran's (WPI) policy on this issue are based on the following:

- 1- The WPI demands an immediate end to the gory race for atomic armament

and the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the world. The WPI is part of civilised humanity's movement to destroy and eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

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On the USA's military threat

Resolution of the WPI Political Bureau

1. The recent US government's military threat to attack the nuclear facilities of the Islamic regime of Iran is linked to its policy towards guaranteeing USA hegemony after the Cold War within the framework of the New World Order doctrine.

This in particular is another round of confrontation between western state terrorism versus Islamic terrorism.

2. The possible USA military attack is thrusting the world into a new phase of the war

of terrorists and towards further destruction and the killing of civilians. On one side of this war stands the immense war machinery of the USA's state terrorism and its allies and on the other

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Defend striking bus workers of Tehran!

Up to 700 workers arrested

Bahram Soroush

Hundreds of striking bus workers of the state-owned Vahed bus company are still in detention in Tehran today, 30th January, following the vicious attack by thousands of members of the security forces on their strike last Saturday.

The exact number of the detainees is still unknown. Anywhere from 500 to 700 workers may have been arrested - according to union officials speaking on foreign-based radio stations. Further arrests have been reported today, with pressure being

put on the detained workers to sign pledges to give up their fight or risk losing their jobs. In a statement issued today, the bus workers' union has called for a stoppage on 3rd February.

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Defend striking bus workers of Tehran! from page 1

The arrests started on Friday 27th January, the eve of the strike, during police raids on the homes of the strikers and union leaders. The management of the company and the Islamic Council (handmade organisations of the regime in the workplaces) worked hand in hand with the security forces to help identify the workers and assist in the arrests.

On Saturday, as the workers arrived at the picket lines, they were rounded up. Many were verbally abused, threatened and beaten up to force them to drive the buses. Those who refused were taken away. Some buses had been moved the night before, and replacement drivers had been enlisted from among the military and mercenary Baseej militia.

‘Indescribable brutality’

Union officials said the brutality of the security forces was indescribable. The wives and children of some union executive members were also arrested. They were taken out of bed and beaten up during raids on Friday night. The beatings continued in detention. 2-year-old daughter of Yaghoub Salimi, substitute member of the union’s executive board, was injured on her face in the attack, when she was thrown into a waiting patrol van. Her 12-year-old elder sister, Mahdiye, described the ordeal in detail in an interview yesterday with a radio station abroad.

She said they raided their home while they were asleep, pulled away the blankets and started hitting them with their “hands and feet”. They used their boots to kick their mother “around the heart” and Mrs Razavi too was badly beaten up. They tried to spray her sister in the face. Her mother still bears the bruises from the beatings she received.

Yaghoub Salimi gave a last interview to a radio station shortly before turning himself in. This was the condition for the release of his wife and children, who were being used as hostages.

The majority of the detainees are now in the high security Evin Prison, along with seven members of the union’s executive, including the leader of the union Mansoor Ossanlou. This prison is notorious for being the centre for the jailing, torture and execution of thousands of political prisoners.

‘Even greater resolve and unity’

In a letter to world labour and progressive organisations, issued on Saturday, the union said that in the light of what the Islamic Republic regime had done, they had no option but to continue their fight with even greater resolve and unity. It thanked international labour and progressive organisations for their solidarity so far and appealed for continued support:

“We ask you our colleagues and fellow workers

throughout the world ... to condemn this action of the Iranian state. We trust that you will call for the immediate and unconditional release of all the detainees, for the recognition of our union and for the meeting of our demands. We expect that you will condemn the assault on our strike and demand the prosecution and punishment of all those who stormed workers’ picket lines.... We have a hard and long battle ahead of us and urge you to continue your support”.

The Worker-communist Party of Iran (WPI) has called for a powerful and immediate response to the bus workers’ appeal by all possible means.

A hard and long battle

The strike has had the overwhelming backing of the 17,000 employees of the state-owned company, who have been battling the management and authorities since last year. Their demands include a decent pay increase, introduction of collectively negotiated agreements and recognition of their union. Since the arrest of the leaders of the union, the bus workers have been fighting for their release too. The head of the union, Ossanlou, has been in jail for over five weeks.

The present protest was triggered when on 22nd December a dozen members of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Sherkat e Vahed) were arrested in armed police

raids on their homes. The arrests led to a powerful strike on Sunday 25 December, widely supported by the people of the capital. Further arrests were made during the strike itself. In all, around 40 workers were detained. However, the workers succeeded in securing the release of all but Ossanlou.

The fight for the release of Ossanlou and all the original demands continued. In the meantime the workers were subjected to all kinds of harassment – from unpaid salaries and frozen bank accounts to direct threats made to individual activists by the Intelligence Ministry. Negotiations with the Mayor, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, produced no results; all the demands remained unmet. Ghalibaf asked for 15 days by which time to respond. The deadline passed without any action.

On 7th January the bus workers held a day of action by putting up a poster on their screens with the words ‘Mansoor Ossanlou must be released’ and drove their buses with their lights on all day.

Meanwhile, concerns grew about Mansoor Ossanlou’s health, in particular the condition of one of his eyes, as he was due to be operated on before being arrested. He sustained the damage to his eye during a vicious attack in May 2005 on a meeting of the bus workers’ union by

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Defend striking bus workers of Tehran! from page 2

vigilante thugs of the Government-set up and run "Islamic Councils of Labour" and "Workers' House". Dissolution of these mercenary organisations has been a key demand of the workers throughout.

As the workers called for an all-out strike on Saturday 28th January, six more members of the union's executive were summoned, questioned and then arrested. The government issued further threats and prepared to crush the strike.

A fight for all workers in Iran

The brave bus workers of Tehran are leading a fight

that concerns all the workers in Iran. Their demands – the right to organise freely and independently of the state, dissolution of the hated Islamic Councils, introduction of collective bargaining and a substantial increase in the minimum wage (to US\$600) – are the demands of all Iranian workers. The bus workers have put these demands high up on the banner of the whole labour movement in Iran. Despite coming under such a vicious and overwhelming attack, the strike has already shaken up the regime. Indeed the sheer scale of the Islamic regime's reaction was an indication, not of its power and stability, but, rather, of its

fear and vulnerability. The bus workers' struggle is the prelude to more decisive battles to come.

All the detained workers must be immediately freed. The Islamic Republic must be condemned for this outrageous attack. Islamic councils – as anti-labour government-set up and run bodies in the workplaces – must be thrown out of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The bus workers' union (Syndicate) must be recognised. All the workers' demands must be met.

Support the Tehran bus workers! Send your protest

letters to Ahmadinejad, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran at dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir. A Tehran Bus Workers' Strike Fund has also been set up in aid of the bus workers and their families. Please make urgently-needed donations (see the announcement in this issue).

Please forward copies of protest letters and notify us of any donations to the International Labour Solidarity Committee of the Worker-communist Party of Iran so that they may be brought to the attention of the workers and people of Iran. All donations will be individually acknowledged.

Sample letter of protest

dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir

I/My Organisation am/is outraged to learn of the Islamic Republic of Iran's brutal attack on Tehran bus workers and the arrest of hundreds of workers, including executive committee members of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Sherkat e Vahed) as well as some of their wives and children. I/We demand the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained. Moreover the bus workers' union (Syndicate) must be recognised and the legitimate demands of the workers met.

Signed

Name, organisation, if any, city

Cc. International Labour Solidarity Committee of the Worker-communist Party of Iran, Co-ordinator: Shahla Daneshfar (shahla_daneshfar@yahoo.com) and Public Relations: Bahram Soroush (b.soroush@ukonline.co.uk)

Support Tehran Bus Workers' Strike Fund

The bus workers' all-out strike in Tehran, Iran, on Saturday 28th January was viciously attacked by the Iranian regime's security forces. Hundreds of workers have been arrested. In a letter issued on the same day, the bus workers' union appeals to labour and progressive organisations of the world for support. A strike fund

has now been set up in aid of the bus workers and their families. Please make urgently-needed donations to any of the following bank accounts and notify us at the same. All contributions will be individually acknowledged. More bank accounts are to be announced soon. Please contact the International Labour

Solidarity Committee of the Worker-communist Party of Iran for further information.

England:
Account no: 49606174
Sort code: 60 07 38
Bank: NatWest

Germany:
Hamid Rahimpour
Konto Nr 11271061

BLZ 29050101
Sparkasse

Sweden:
Konto nr: 400 11 845 429
Nordea Bank

Holland:
Bahman Khani
Bank rekening: 7299850
Postbank, Eindhoven

Even children are not spared!

Interview with Mahdiye Salimi, the 12 year old daughter of union member who was beaten and arrested

As reported in WPI Briefing, up to 700 workers of the Syndicate of Workers and Employees of Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company have been arrested. Moreover, the wives and children of some executive members have also been arrested. They were taken out of bed and beaten up during raids on Friday 27 January night. The beatings continued in detention. Substitute member of the union's executive board, Yaghoub Salimi's 2-year-old daughter was injured on her face in the attack, when she was thrown into a waiting patrol van. Her 12-year-old elder sister, Mahdiye, described the ordeal in detail in an interview with a radio station abroad. Below you will find a translation of the full transcript of radio "Avaye Ashena" (familiar voice) interview with 12 year old Mahdiye Salimi:

Reporter: Hello.

Mahdiye: Hello. How are you?

Reporter: Thank you. I hope you are alright. Please tell us what happened.

Mahdiye: We were asleep. They rang the doorbell of our home. They called out: Mrs. Salami, come to door for one moment" They were in such a hurry that they didn't even allow my mom to dress

properly. As soon as my mom opened the door, they poured into our home. I was asleep along with Mrs. Zia's daughter. They pulled the blankets from our bodies and started to hit us with their "feet and hands" and told us to get into the van. Mrs. Razavi wanted to get some clothes for her daughter and they started to hit her badly. They even kicked my mom's heart with their boots and my mom had an enormous ache in her heart. She still has some wounds on her body. They hit her with a baton and didn't listen to my mother's appeals. They even wanted to spray something in my [2 year old] sister's mouth.

Then they took us to detention. Where we went was not hygienic at all and it was so cold. We asked for blankets. They said "we don't have any". "We are just doing our duty". They hit us so much. We asked for lunch. They brought us the leftovers of their own lunch which was nasty chicken skin mixed with some kind of sauce.

Reporter: Why did they keep hitting you and your mom?

Mahdiye: She wanted to get on the van but first wanted to take my sister to the bathroom. As soon as she started to go, they grabbed my sister from behind and pushed her into the van. My sister hit her head when she was thrown into the van and they also kept hitting my

mom.

Reporter: Did they do all of this in the street? Did your neighbours see all this?

Mahdiye: Yes they did. All the neighbours came out and were watching what was going on. When they raided our home, there was at least 70-80 of them while we were only 3 women and 5 children. They rushed to the roof so no one could escape. They even went to our neighbours' homes and even arrested our neighbours' guests.

Reporter: What did they want?

Mahdiye: They wanted to know where my dad is. We didn't know that. We didn't have any news of my dad's whereabouts.

Reporter: Where is your mom right now?

Mahdiye: Yesterday they told us that she will be released soon. They wanted to bring her to the Ministry of Intelligence. Somebody said they might take her to Evin Prison but then they said she would be taken to the fourth base of the Ministry of Intelligence.

Reporter: how old are you?

Mahdiye: I am 12.

Reporter: Did they hit you?

Mahdiye: Yes they did. They

hit all of us. Even a child from year 1. They made all the children cry.

Reporter: can I ask your name?

Mahdiye: I am Mahdiye Salimi.

Reporter: Why do you think they are doing this? Has your father done something wrong?

Mahdiye: Nothing. My father has done nothing wrong. He just has asked for his rights. The rights that they didn't give him. For example for every 200 tomans of his wage, they have taken 100 for themselves.

Reporter: Are you going to the prison with your father again?

Mahdiye: Yes.

Reporter: Are you anxious?

Mahdiye: Of course I am. How can I not be? When they took my mother they didn't even let us to be with her for a moment. They even didn't let us hug her.

Reporter: I heard that your [two year old] sister was also wounded. Is that true?

Mahdiye: Yes. When they pushed her into the van, her lips hit metal and was badly hurt.

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Release Ossanlou Now!

Hamid Taqvaei's letter to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

12 January 2006

Dear Mr Annan,

As you may be aware, Mansoor Ossanlou, the head of the Union of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs United Bus Company (Sherkat e Vahed), was arrested by the Islamic Republic of Iran's authorities on 22 December 2005 and is still in detention.

There are grave concerns about Mr Ossanlou's health; he has a heart condition and suffers from a serious eye problem. Mr Ossanlou has not committed any crime except voicing workers' basic demands. Up to now the Islamic regime in Iran has

failed to give any reason for his arrest and detention. He has even been denied the right to a lawyer. Apparently, Ossanlou's only crime is to be a labour activist. This is a clear example of the violation of the most basic rights of people under the Islamic Republic.

So far, Amnesty International, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and many labour organisations in Britain, Germany, France, Scandinavia, Austria, Australia, Canada and United States have protested against this action of the Islamic Republic and called for



Mansoor Ossanlou

Ossanlou's release. I ask you to strongly condemn the detention of Mr Ossanlou and use all within your powers to ensure the Islamic Republic releases him immediately and unconditionally.

I look forward to your response in this urgent matter.

Cc. Ms. Louise Arbour, High Commissioner, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

For more information contact: International Labour Solidarity Committee of the Worker-communist Party of Iran, Co-ordinator: Shahla Daneshfar (shahla_daneshfar@yahoo.com), Public Relations: Bahram Soroush (b.soroush@ukonline.co.uk), www.kargaran.org.

Even children are not spared, from page 4

Reporter: Did they continue hitting your mom there?

Mahdiye: Yes. I missed my classes.

women? Do you remember how many you were in total?

from people who are listening to you? What is your wish?

Mahdiye: Yes they did. They hit her even there.

Reporter: How many children were there?

Mahdiye: There were 3 women.

Mahdiye: I want them to defend us. Do something so my mother will be released soon. Now our mother is in detention and there is nobody to take care of us.

Reporter: Is your school closed?

Mahdiye: There were 5. Mrs. Zia's daughter from year 3 (10 years old). Mrs. Razavi's daughter from year 1 (7 years old). And one from year 9 (15 years) and myself (I am 12 year old and from year 6) and my own sister who is 2 and a half.

Reporter: Are you the only children who were released?

Mahdiye: No it is not. It was supposed to be closed because of heavy snowfall but they announced that it was open.

Mahdiye: No all the children were released but our mothers (my mother and Mrs. Zia) have not been released yet.

Reporter: So you missed school too?

Reporter: And how many

Reporter: What do you want

The above was translated by Arash Sorx for WPI Briefing.

On the USA's military threat, from page 1

stands Islamic terrorism and the despicable political Islamic movement. This potential war and its expansion will take many victims from the defenceless and innocent people of Iran and other corners of the world.

3. Contrary to the propaganda of the western media, the aim of the USA's military policy against the Islamic Republic of Iran is not merely to neutralise the regime's efforts to gain access to nuclear weapons. Undoubtedly, the west will not tolerate an atomic Islamic Republic but nuclear disarmament is not the crux of the recent tug of war between the Islamic Republic and the USA. The specific aim of the USA is to challenge the influence of the Islamic regime of Iran in Iraq and Palestine and to drive back and restrain political Islam that is dependent on the Islamic regime, particularly in the Middle East.

4. It is not highly likely that the USA will carry out its military threat. The USA is stuck in a quagmire in Iraq and does not want to face a similar experience in a society with vast geopolitical significance such as Iran. Moreover, what makes the USA cautious in attacking the Islamic Republic of Iran is the difference in societal conditions in Iran compared with Afghanistan or Iraq - the likelihood of a popular uprising against the Islamic regime under the Left's banner. The consequences of the people's struggle under

the Left's leadership vis-à-vis both sides of this war will mean a loss of control by the regime and the west. The possibility of people's entry into the political scene with Left and freedom-seeking slogans is an important element in the USA administration's cautious approach in its war against the regime. The USA government will first and foremost strive to use its military threat as a means to reach a diplomatic solution. This situation further suggests that the objective of any USA military action would not be the overthrow of the Islamic regime but rather, to force the Islamic regime and political Islam to retreat and in order to confine it within the framework of the USA's foreign policy in the region.

5. Politically and as far as the people's revolutionary struggle against the Islamic regime are concerned, the USA's attack on the Islamic Republic and even the very utterance of and hype surrounding this threat, is a negative development and an obstruction in the path of the revolutionary movement for the overthrow of the regime. The first and earliest consequence and impact of the US military attack would be the consolidation of the Islamic regime in the short term, intimidation of the population at large, and the overall bolstering of the Right's alternative and solutions in society. It is even possible that in the event that the people become desperate and lose hope and are

consequently forced to retreat from the scene of struggle that the structure of society may collapse and Iran may find itself in a similar situation to that of Iraq. However, despite this situation, for the Left movement, there exists a real possibility to confront this and turn the situation in the people's favour. The existence of an immense revolutionary movement for the regime's overthrow, the immense hatred of political Islam's rule by a vast majority of the population at large, and the social presence of the Worker-communist Party of Iran are amongst the factors that can change the developments completely in favour of the people and their struggle against the regime. Active resistance against both poles of the terrorist war and organising an active, vast and vigorous struggle for the overthrow of the Islamic regime under these conditions is completely linked to the actions of the Left in society and in particular - the Worker-communist Party of Iran.

6. With the increased military threat and the confrontation between the USA and the Islamic regime, and particularly if the threats are materialised, a new realignment within the ranks of the counter-revolutionary opponents of the Islamic regime will take place. On the one hand, in the religious-nationalist movement, support for the regime will increase under the guise of opposing foreign intervention and on the other hand, in the

pro-west Rightist movement, the military attack will be backed with the hopes of increasing their likelihood of gaining power. The Mujahedeen Organisation of Iran (PMOI) is also hopeful that it can organise military manoeuvres in border areas under the cover and backing of the USA's attack. These seemingly contradictory positions of all the counter-revolutionary camp are in reality ways in which to bolster their shared strategy and objective of opposing the revolution and the popular revolutionary struggle of the people in the current situation.

In light of the above, we declare:

1. The Worker-communist Party of Iran (WPI) unequivocally condemns the USA's military attack and both sides of this military conflict, i.e. the terrorism of the Islamic Republic as well as the state terrorism of western governments. It calls upon people in Iran and across the world to oppose both poles of terrorism. The path to freedom and liberation of the people of Iran will not come about through the confrontation of these two poles which represent today's capitalist barbarity. The overthrow of the Islamic regime and achieving freedom, prosperity, and equality are only possible with the revolutionary struggle under the banner of the civilised world, humanity and socialism.

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2. The WPI will confront any attempt to militarise the political environment in Iran and intimidate and repress the people's struggle under the pretext of the USA's military attack and will not permit the war of terrorists to bring the struggle of workers, women and youth to a halt.

3. The WPI will use the subsequent situation as a result of the conflict between the USA and western governments with the Islamic regime to organise and mobilise the revolutionary movement on a massive scale to overthrow the Islamic regime. The only way to prevent the USA's military attack, and in the event of its materialisation, to neutralise its destructive effects such as revenge terrorist attacks, is to bring to the fore the workers, women, youth and other protesting sections of the population for the overthrow of the regime and the attainment of prosperity, freedom and equality under the banner of a better world and the socialist republic.

4. The WPI will relentlessly and consistently expose the positions and actions of parties and political opposition forces that take sides with the Islamic regime

or the west in this military confrontation. The WPI will stand up to any force that will act as an ally of the USA or the Islamic regime. The guiding position of the party will remain representing the revolution, defending the people's revolutionary movement and intensifying and pushing it forward vis-à-vis the entire counter-revolutionary camp either in power or in opposition.

5. The WPI calls on the progressive and humanist people of the world to oppose the USA's military threats and the state terrorism of the USA and other western governments on the one hand and the Islamic regime and political Islam on the other. The ever stronger and more widespread the presence of people, labour unions, humanitarian and progressive organisations and groups internationally, the more effective will be their determining role in the confrontation with these two poles of terrorism at an international level.

Translators: Maryam Namazie and Fariborz Pooya. The above was adopted on February 9, 2005 but is being reprinted because of its relevance.

On the Islamic Republic's attempt to obtain nuclear weapons, from page 1

2- The WPI strongly condemns the Islamic regime's attempts to obtain nuclear weapons. Political Islam has a long history of heinous crimes – from stoning, amputations, decapitations and daily terrorism to Islamic jihad, killing children and massacring of innocent people. This camp has now become an active pole of international terrorism and one side of the bourgeois power struggle in the Middle East. The Islamic Republic armed with nuclear weapons will transform political Islam and Islamic terrorism into a nuclear power that can take the Middle East to the brink of annihilation.

3- The WPI asserts that only the overthrow of the Islamic regime of Iran will wholly guarantee the end of the regime's ambition to obtain nuclear weapons.

4- The WPI announces that the policies of the USA and its allies to disarm the Islamic Republic do not have the slightest correlation with protecting the people from nuclear peril or establishing peace. On the contrary, it aims to maintain the monopoly of control over weapons of mass destruction and the atomic arsenal in the world. The USA and its allies

are all nuclear powers themselves with the USA being the only state that has used nuclear weapons and turned hundreds of thousands of defenceless people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki into ash in seconds. The history of this camp of international state terrorism and imperialist bullying is undeniable and clear for all the people of the world to see.

5- Whilst the WPI is struggling for the overthrow of the Islamic regime, it would strongly and unequivocally condemn any military attack on the regime's nuclear facilities or economic sanctions that would result in the deplorable misery of the population at large.

6- The WPI announces that upon the overthrow of the Islamic regime and the establishment of a socialist republic in Iran, the new government will guarantee that Iran will not be a nuclear state and will lead a struggle to bring about a comprehensive end to all weapons of mass destruction all over the world.

Translator: Fariborz Pooya. The above was adopted in October 2004 but is being published here because of its relevance.

New TV Programme – No to Political Islam

View 'No to Political Islam' a new, one hour weekly programme by Azar Majedi. In this programme, through interviews, reports and debates, Azar Majedi examines different issues concerning political Islam, crisis in the Middle East, secularism, women's rights and Islamic terrorism both in the Middle East and internationally. We invite all those interested in these topics to watch the programme and contribute by sending their questions and comments to Azar Majedi. To view the programme via internet, go to: <http://www.newchannel.tv/NoToPolitical-Islam.htm>.

Condemn the attack on our strike Syndicate of Workers and Employees of Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company

The following is an appeal by the striking bus workers of Tehran to world labour and progressive organisations for a massive international support, following the brutal attack today on their strike by the Iranian regime's security forces. The workers are demanding the immediate and unconditional release of all their detained colleagues, recognition of their union (syndicate), introduction of collectively negotiated agreements and prosecution of all those behind today's vicious attack on their assemblies and picket lines. The International Labour Solidarity Committee of the Worker-communist Party of Iran calls for the strongest possible international protest at this outrageous attack and resolute support of the brave bus workers of Tehran and their syndicate. The bus workers of Tehran should not be left alone in this critical hour of their battle. Please make a powerful and immediate

response to this appeal by whatever means you deem appropriate. Keep us informed of all your interventions and support actions so that they may be brought to the attention of the workers and people of Iran through our radio and TV stations and other communication channels.

To workers, all trade unions and progressive organisations of the world

Condemn the attack on our strike

On behalf of the 17,000 workers and employees of Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company, we would like to inform you, the labour organisations of the world and all those who are distressed by the violation of the most evident rights of people, that today, 28th January, our all-out strike met the unprecedented assault of the security forces of the Islamic Republic.

They raided our homes from the night before; they even

took our young kids to prison. They arrested a large number of people - the exact figure for which we still don't have, but certainly over several hundred. They forced some of our colleagues to drive the buses, by beating them up and threatening them. They enlisted the help of drivers from the armed forces, and set upon us thousands of police and security officers – both uniformed and plain clothed – in order to smash our strike. This is the situation we are in.

What was the strike for? It was for the release of Mr Ossanlou and the other leaders of the Syndicate, thrown into jail for no reason at all by bullying. It was for the introduction of collective bargaining, for the recognition of the union, for a pay increase, and so on. Can you believe it that for such demands they would launch such a brutal and massive war on us bus workers?

This is what the Islamic Republic did, and we have no choice but to continue our

struggle with even greater resolve and unity. We ask you our colleagues and fellow workers throughout the world, you who can have your own unions and organisations, to condemn this action of the Iranian state. We trust that you will call for the immediate and unconditional release of all the detainees, for the recognition of our union and for the meeting of our demands. We expect that you will condemn the assault on our strike and demand the prosecution and punishment of all those who stormed workers' picket lines.

We hereby thank all those trade unions and organisations who have supported our struggles. We have a hard and long battle ahead of us and urge you to continue your support.

Regards,
Syndicate of Workers and Employees of Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company
January 28, 2006

The Islamic Republic must be condemned for its outrageous attacks on labour rights and workers.