

Briefing: For peace, democracy and human rights in Iran



Background

- Street protests were a major feature of life in Iran long before the murder in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, in September 2022, but have significantly intensified since then and led to pose a real existential crisis for the theocratic regime in Iran.
- Since the death of Ms. Amini, Iranian people, with women and youth often at the forefront, have been taking to the streets across the country, despite the growing threats and brutal suppression carried out by the security forces, acting on the commands of the regime's leaders.
- Iran has a long and proud tradition of labour and trade union activism, with independent trade union activists courageously articulating their righteous demands, demonstrating, and continuing with their popular campaigns despite the extremely fraught and indeed dangerous backdrop - along with the huge risk of severe reprisals from the regime.
- According to United Nations (UN) sources, over 200 people have been executed in Iran in 2023 alone. This follows on from 580 reported executions last year, described by the UN as an "abominable record".

Human rights abuses

- The wave of protests following the murder of Ms. Amini has been met with increasing ferocity by the regime, including the use of live ammunition. This has resulted in numerous arrests without due process and access to lawyers, family, or medical care.

- Detainees are routinely charged with 'espionage' or 'endangering national security' without any evidence to substantiate such charges and are often subject to brutal treatment - including torture.
- The regime has extensively deployed its security forces and paramilitaries to intimidate labour and pension activists; violently break up their gatherings, protests, and vigils; and arrest and prosecute trade union leaders and prominent activists on spurious 'national security' charges. Several such figures have been subjected to repeated and extended terms of imprisonment - including Esmail Abdi, the Secretary General of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association (ITTA). Trade unionists and labour activists account for the largest contingent of Iran's significant political prisoner population - with ITTA activists believed to comprise the largest number among them.
- In an attempt to suppress reporting of protests and dissent, the regime is stepping up its campaign of intimidation against journalists, with over 70 having been arrested since September 2022 alone.
- Amnesty International has reported that Iran's intelligence and security forces have been committing horrific acts of torture - including beatings, flogging, electric shocks, and rape and other sexual violence - against protesters as young as 12, in an attempt to quell their involvement in the nationwide protests.

International Response

- The Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) has

been co-ordinating calls for the release of all political prisoners in Iran and an end to arbitrary arrest and torture.

- The IndustriALL Global Union - which represents more than 50 million workers across mining, energy, and manufacturing sectors in more than 141 countries - has expressed its solidarity with workers at oil and gas fields in Southern Iran, who have launched coordinated strikes demanding better pay and conditions of service.
- In Britain, the RMT union has expressed solidarity with the striking Iranian workers.
- The National Education Union (NEU) has actively campaigned for the release of imprisoned teachers in Iran including their counterparts in the ITTA.
- The European Union (EU) and its member states have urged the Iranian authorities to stop the violent crackdown against peaceful protests, cease their resort to arbitrary detention as a means of silencing critical voices, and release all those unjustly detained.
- UN experts have strongly condemned several recent executions and warned that executions following flawed trials

were tantamount to arbitrary deprivation of life under international law.

Priority Demands

- An immediate end to the ongoing executions and the use of the death penalty in Iran.
- The immediate and unconditional release of all those detained solely on account of their participation in the recent protests, labour and trade union activism, and independent journalism - as well as all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Iran.
- Iran to recognise the right to free independent trade union activity without fear of arrest or persecution pursuant to the relevant provision in the Iranian Constitution as well as ILO Conventions 87 and 98.
- Iranian government to immediately cease all violence against protesters and ensure full and open investigations against the perpetrators of such abuses.
- Iranian government to end the practice of 'vetting' all prospective parliamentary candidates and lift all bans on opposition political parties and their activities.

About Liberation:

Liberation opposes new forms of imperialism, or "neocolonialism" that intervenes and lays waste to the global south, perpetuating economic exploitation, inequality and racism. We work to address the legacies of colonialism. Democracy, human rights, peace and social justice are central to our goals. We reject foreign interventionism and militarism. We support popular sovereignty. We believe international solidarity and co-operation are the means to make a better world. Our main focus is Britain's former colonies and the Anglo-American sphere of influence.

Liberation organises public meetings to raise awareness of current events and stimulate action. We run seminars, webinars and other educational activities. We work with UK parliamentarians to influence UK foreign policy and engage at an international level through the UN Human Rights Council. We publish a quarterly journal, and comment and analysis on relevant matters on our website, giving voice to progressive popular organisations in the Global South.