

## *Letters page*

### **Free Mansour Osanloo!**

**Editors:** Mansour Osanloo, the President of the Syndicate of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Sherkat-e Vahed) was arrested by plain clothes agents, who refused to show any identification or arrest warrants, on Sunday, November 19, 2006 while he, along with two other union board members, were on their way to the office of the Labour Ministry in Tehran East. The agents physically and verbally assaulted Osanloo and Ebrahim Madadi, the union's vice-president, and one of them pointed a gun at Mr. Madadi and fired a bullet in the air. The agents finally forced Mr. Osanloo into a waiting car and drove away.

Osanloo, who had an eye operation last week and whose eye was bandaged at time of his arrest, was summoned to attend a court hearing on November 20, 2006. In December 2005, Mr. Osanloo was arrested following a job action by members of his union. He was released on 150 million Toman (about \$US 165,000) bail after about 8 months in Tehran's Evin prison.

In addition, according to the latest news, Mahmoud Salehi, the former President of the Bakery Workers' Association of the city of Saqez and a co-founder of the Coordinating Committee to Form Worker's Organization, has been sentenced to 4 years imprisonment. Jalal Hosseini, a labour activist in the city of Saqez and an executive board member of the Coordinating Committee to Form Worker's Organization in the Western Iran, was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment. Borhan Divargar, another labour activists arrested on May Day 2004, was earlier sentenced to two years in prison. The initial arrests and the final charges against the above labour activists were made in connection with their attempts to participate in May Day 2004 celebration in Saqez.

### **You can help!**

Send a protest email Go to:

[http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=167](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=167)

In addition, we'd like to you consider downloading and printing out an offline version of this campaign, here:

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<http://www.labourstart.org/freemansour.pdf>

You can make copies of this page and take it to meetings, signing up people offline. Working together, we can turn this into the biggest online campaign LabourStart has ever run – and let's send a loud and clear message to Tehran that workers' rights are human rights, and must be respected everywhere.

Eric Lee, LabourStart

### UPDATE (November 30, 2006)

We know that Oslanloo has been taken to Evin prison where authorities claim that they are 'negotiating' with him. (How you can negotiate with someone who you've arrested is an interesting question.)

The authorities also claim that he will be allowed one visitor, his mother – but no one has told the guards outside the prison. His mother waited in vain for a chance to see her son.

His family has not even been allowed to phone him.

Clearly the authorities are hoping to break his will – and thereby weaken the emerging trade union movement in Iran. Remember that this is a movement which managed to completely shut down the capital with a transport strike earlier in the year, despite massive repression.

It is essential that we turn up the pressure and flood the Iranian government with more messages this week. Please make sure to send on your message today – and to pass this letter on!

English:

[http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=167](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=167)

French:

[http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=169](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=169)

Norwegian:

[http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=168](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=168)

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Polish:

[http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=170](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=170)

### UPDATE (13 December 2006)

We have good news and bad news from Iran.

The good news first: several of the activists from the bus workers' union who had been arrested in recent days have been released from jail. These included Seyyed Davoud Razavi and Abdolreza Taraazi, members of the union's Executive Board, and Gholamreza Gholam-Hosseini.

Now the bad news: the union leader, Mansour Osanloo, who was arrested on 19 November, is still locked up.

Osanloo is the focus of a huge international campaign involving global union federations, national unions, the newly-formed International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and, of course, LabourStart.

Our own online campaign has already generated over 4,500 messages of protest which have been sent to the Iranian government. 1,300 of those messages have come from the USA, 839 from Canada, 638 each from the U.K. and Australia, 226 from Norway, 106 each from Ireland and New Zealand, 57 from Sweden, 56 from Germany, and 39 from the Netherlands. Surely we can do better than that.

Over 40,000 of you who are reading this message have not yet sent out a message. I'm not talking to the wider world out there, the millions of trade unionists who may not know about this case. I'm talking to you – to the 40,000 who have gotten these emails and have not yet taken the time to respond.

Please do not ignore this appeal.

We know that these campaigns work. We know that the more messages sent from around the world, the greater the likelihood that our brother, Mansour Osanloo, will be released.

Right now, the Iranian government is feeling the pressure. They have released three activists in the last few days.

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And as you may have heard, on Sunday, hundreds of Iranian students risked their lives to shout out messages of protest at a speech given by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Imagine the courage it takes to shout out 'Death to the dictator!' in the face of a real dictator.

Imagine the courage being shown by Mansour Osanloo and family as they try to cope with brutal police repression.

It doesn't take courage for us to send off messages – in fact, all it takes is about 30 seconds of your time.

Our campaign is now working in an unprecedented six languages – English, French, Spanish, German, Norwegian and Polish. We know that you understand at least one of these languages.

Please click here now:

[http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=167](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=167)

Please pass on this message – spread the word. Workers rights are human rights!

Thank you.

### UPDATE (20 December 2006)

#### GOOD NEWS – MANSOUR OSANLOO FREED

Following a very large international campaign that brought together the International Trade Union Confederation, the International Transport Workers Federation, Amnesty International, the European Union, and thousands of individual trade unionists who participated in the online campaign on LabourStart, jailed Iranian trade union leader Mansour Osanloo is now free after a month in jail.

Full details are here: <http://www.itfglobal.org/solidarity/Osanloo.cfm>

Thanks to the more than 7,000 of you who sent off messages demanding his release.

Eric Lee, LabourStart