

# **Labor Rights in Iran**

A Zamaneh Project

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Since the start of the nationwide protests of Dec 2018 and Jan 2019 in Iran which was around workers' and citizens' economic demands for a better life, Zamaneh Media (Stichting Radio Zamaneh, ZM) has decided to monitor, analyze and publish on local labor rights developments in Iran in a bi-monthly brief in both Persian and English. These bi-monthly briefs detail the state of labor rights and legislation in Iran to develop alliances of knowledge sharing in order to promote and build public pressure for the adoption and enforcement of internationally-recognized treaties related to labor rights in Iran.

Zamaneh has identified several key areas of concern for Iran's workers which will be prioritized in these bi-monthly briefs to include workplace security and health; discrimination in the workforce and fair wages; labor legislation; women in the workforce; child labor; contractual issues and unemployment; and freedom of association/unionization. Zamaneh monitors, collects and reports labor news through our platforms on a daily basis. This brief is intended to be a thematic 'big-picture' and is published in two languages to increase the knowledge and awareness of workers situation in Iran.

The current and fourth bi-monthly report covers events in the approximate range of Dec 2018 and January 2019. The newsletter does not claim to be inclusive of all labor events that took place during this period.



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## Introduction

Electro Steel a leading company, with over 3000 workers, who had for 45 years manufactured refrigeration appliances in Mashhad, closed down. Iran Electricity Meter Manufacturing Company in Qazvin, which manufactured electric meters for over 50 years, also shut down its doors permanently; this one was transferred to the private sector ten years ago.

The most important labor developments of the past two months were the arrest, torture and forced confessions of labor activists. With the security crackdown on the labor strikes and protests, the 28-day strike of the workers of Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-Industry Company (HSAI; commonly known as Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Complex) ended. However, as the workers strike in Haft Tappeh were ending due to state suppression, in the northwest of the country, the workers of the Moghan Agro-Industry and Animal Husbandry Complex in Ardebil province began their protests and strike. Both Haft Tappeh and Moghan strikes were against the government-mediated privatization of the companies. Moghan Agro-Industry and Animal Husbandry Complex was recently sold and transferred to Shirin-Asal Company for a price of 1750 billion tomans (146 million USD).<sup>1</sup>

On the first day of the year 2019, more than 3,600 students at Razi University wrote and signed an open letter to the Kermanshah representatives in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis) and warned against the transfer of Kermanshah Oil Refining Company to the private sector and its possible negative consequences.

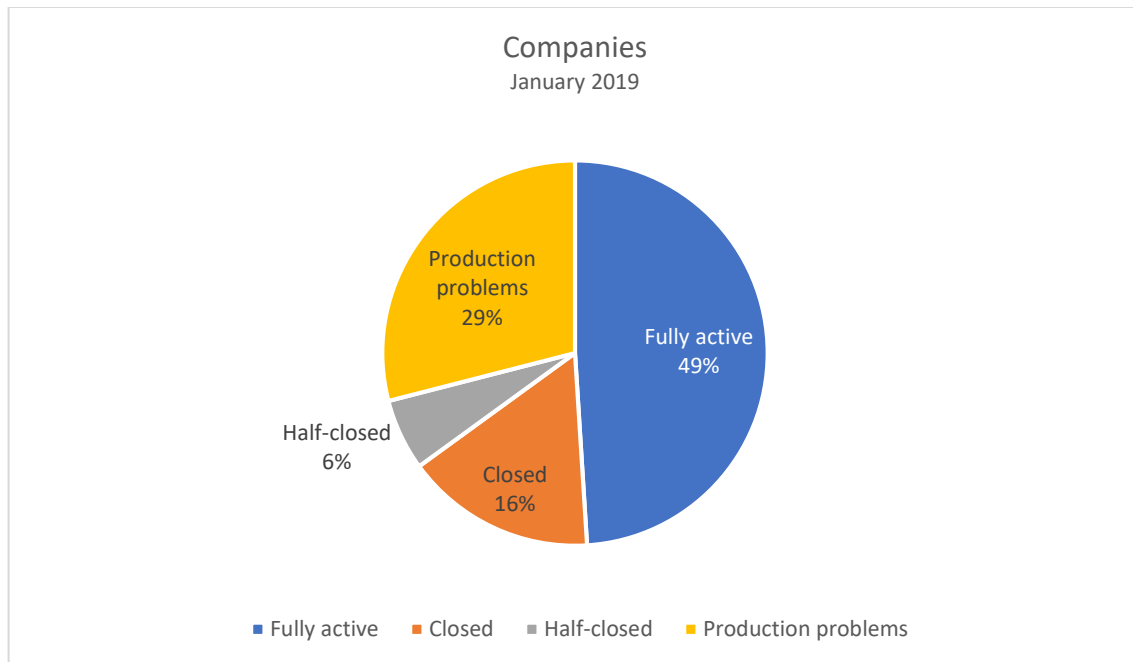
The Shargh daily, in an investigative report on 6 January 2019 published the fate and the status of the first 100 companies that were enrolled in the government-mediated privatization program in Iran.

The government mediated privatizations often go wrong in Iran because privatization is an economic strategy – a means of disposing of governmentally-owned bankrupt enterprises. By transferring bankrupt institutions, companies, and enterprises to the private sector at a fraction of the price of the actual value of the production unit, the government rids itself of the burden of paying past due wages and debts.

The Iranian Privatization Organization (IPO) is a state-owned government agency working under the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. The agency was established in April 2001 in order to promote privatization and transfer the shares and the ownership rights of some companies from the government to the private sector.

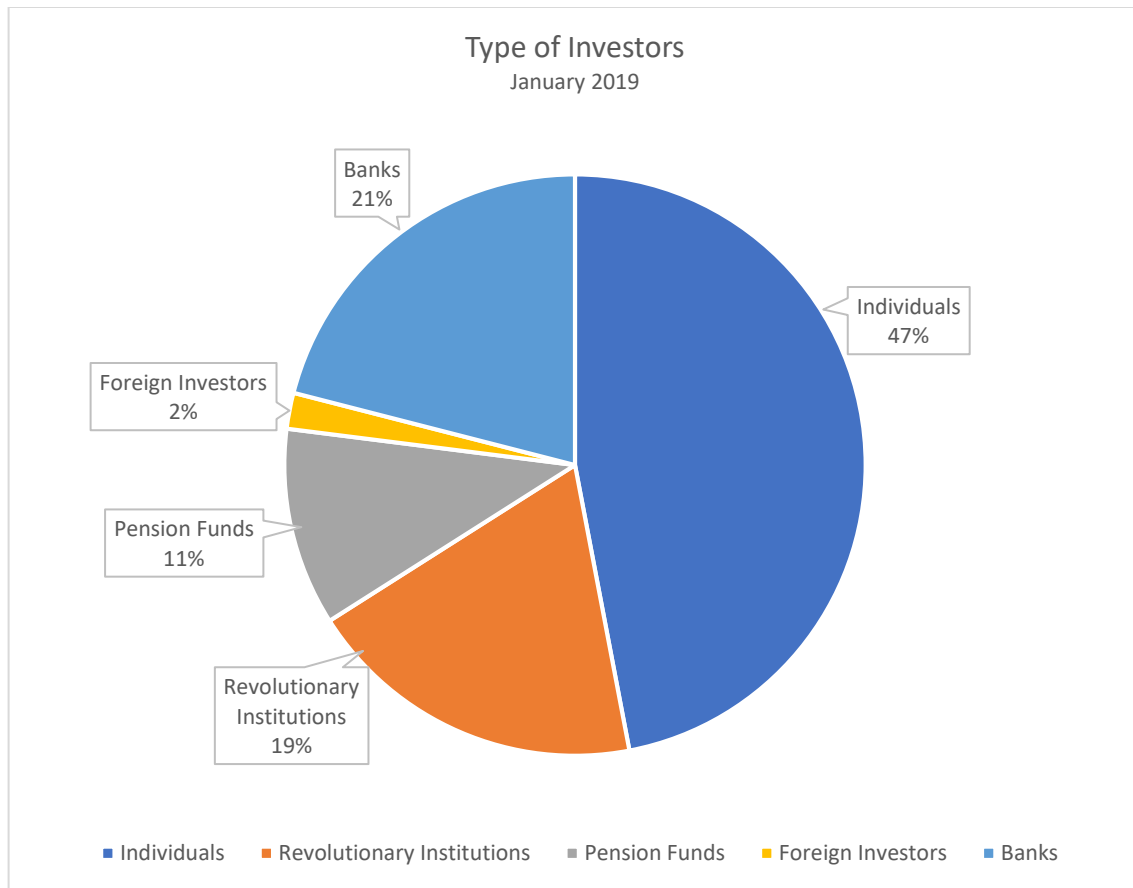
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<sup>1</sup> The Iranian Rial (IRR) has lost over 70% of its value in the summer of 2018. It even reached an exchange value of 190,000 against the US dollar. At the time of publication of this report the USD was being exchanged in the market for 1 USD  $\approx$  120,000 IRR. With the fluctuating value of IRR, representing values in USD in this report will not indicate the increase or decreases of values of goods and wages. As such values will be presented either in IRR or in Iranian Toman – the unofficial currency of the country at a rate of 1 Toman = 10 Rials. Unless otherwise noted all currency values are in Tomans.



Shargh daily has investigated the fate of the first 100 companies that were ever transferred to the private sector by the authorities of the IPO. Of the first 100 companies, 16 are completely shut down or merely exist on paper without any actual physical manifestation or production remaining of the company. Six companies are in a semi-closed state, and although they still have names and addresses on paper, they have stopped all economic activities. 29 companies are in serious trouble; these include less than ideal production, reduced workforce capacity, reduced production, sales and market problems, and so on. Also, out of these 100 companies, at least 62 have documented serious labor force reduction, massive workforce cuts, mass layoffs, and unpaid wages for consecutive months as well as contractual problems.

The companies that had documented cases of major labor rights violations were 62 of 100.



In the past two months, the cost of meat proteins has been rising. For every kilogram of beef, Iranians paid more than 100,000 tomans and every kilogram of chicken cost them 15,000 tomans. Bread prices in most provinces are on the rise; in the city of Ahvaz in the past two months the bread cost increased by 25%. Similarly, the price of writing paper has tripled in the last year alone. The housing market has also been very unstable with property prices almost doubling in the past year in Tehran.

As the Iranian Rial (IRR) is stabilizing around 1 USD ≈ 120,000 IRR, the prices are still rising for the average Iranian family. However, it has been reported that despite the rising prices, the Supreme Labor Council (SLC) in charge of determining a new rate for the national minimum wage is not about to announce a new rate based on the actual living costs of a family of four (two adults, two children) for the upcoming fiscal year which begins in March 2019.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In March 2018, around the same time as the SLC’s meeting for determining the minimum wage, independent labor organizations in Iran demanded that the monthly minimum wage be set at 50 million IRR which at the time equaled to 800 USD and with the current IRR to USD rates equals to ≈\$416 that is at the rate of 1 USD ≈ 120,000 IRR but the SLC did not agree with this rate and announced a monthly cutoff of 11,106,917 IRR (less than 100 USD).

SLC in compliance with Article 41 of the Labor Law is obliged to calculate the national minimum wage in accordance to the living basket or living wage of an average worker's households (calculating the minimum cost of food and necessities).

In December 2018, the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran stopped publishing news on inflation rate by the order of the government of Hassan Rouhani. Until further notice, the Statistical Center of Iran will be the only official institution that will publish the national inflation rate. Because of what is said to be a difference in the "technical calculation method," Statistical Center of Iran 's inflation rate is often a few percentage points less than that of the Central Bank's announced rate.

Inflation Rate in Percentage	22 Aug- 21 Sept	22 Sept- 21 Oct	22 Oct- 21 Nov	22 Nov - 21 Dec
the Central Bank of Iran	15.9	18.4	-	-
Statistical Center of Iran	13.4	15.6	18.0	20.6

According to the Statistical Center of Iran, the Point-to-point inflation rate from 22 Dec 2018 to 21 Jan 2019 in all regions of Iran is 39.6%; this figure is unprecedented in the past five years. Independent economists in the country estimate that the real rate of inflation in Iran differs from the official reported one and they argue that the real inflation rate is much higher.

According to Fariborz Raisdana, an independent economist, due to inflation inflicted on Iran's economy, 70% of workers now live below the absolute poverty line.

Afghan migrant workers and workers in underserved, deprived and peripheral regions like Kurdistan and Sistan and Baluchistan, in addition to poverty, have to deal with the additional burden of ethnic and religious discrimination.

According to The International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2018, more than 800,000 Afghan migrants returned to Afghanistan. Iran's economic situation, the reinstatement of US economic sanctions against Iran, as well as economic fluctuations, have been the main factors behind the return of Afghan immigrants to their home country.

In the border regions of Iran, human mules or Kulbar are locals who transport loads of goods sometimes as large as a refrigerator on their backs through the mountainous regions bordering Iran, Iraq and Turkey – often for importers who want to avoid taxation, tariffs and border checkpoints.

In January 2019, two thousand people signed a letter demanding that the government of the Islamic Republic stops killing Kulbars in the border regions of Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan, Kermanshah and Ilam. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as well as border guards systematically attack and shoot Kulbars who are among the poorest and most deprived citizens

of the country and who are making a living by becoming human mules because of the high unemployment rate in peripheral areas of Iran.

## Labor Protests

In Dec 2018 and Jan 2019, workers continued to wage strikes and protests against the postponement of wage payments, nonpayment of wages, lack of job security, state mediated privatization, and the halting of production or reduction in production capacity in various sectors.

Meanwhile, the security government crackdown on labor protests and workers on strike has led to more politicization of the protests.

After the re-arrest of Esmail Bakhshi, one of the representatives of the workers at the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Complex and Sepideh Gholian a civil society activist who had joined the workers protests on 20 Jan 2019, some more protests took place in front of the government buildings and at universities in solidarity with Bakhshi, Gholian and other prisoners of the labor protests.

Bakhshi and Gholin who are still being held in custody were both arrested once on 18 Nov 2018 and for the second time on 20 Jan after they came out in public and said they were tortured. Prior to this, they were forced to go in front of the camera on national television for a show of forced confessions. Gholian hours before re-arrest wrote on social media that the aired confessions were coerced.

On 11 Dec 2018, a group of workers and labor activists went in front of the Islamic parliament (Majlis) to protest the failure of this body to address the demands of the workers of Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-Industry Company and Iran National Steel Industrial Group (INSI) in Ahvaz. They also demanded the release of Bakhshi and Gholian.

*Table: Workers' Protests in the Industrial Production Sector in December 2018 and January 2019*

Date	Protesters	The subject of the protest	Type of Protest	Province
10 Nov to 17 Dec	Workers of Iran National Steel Industrial Group (INSI)	Privatization, wage demands, and objection to the security crackdown	Strike and gathering in front of government buildings	Khuzestan
1 and 4 Dec	Workers of Metal Wire Manufacturers of Takestan	6 months of overdue wages contractual problems; reduced production capacity	Gathering in front of the factory security gate.	Qazvin
5 Dec to 9 Dec	The workers of the Spongy Iron Factory of Korani Bijar and the people of Korani	In protest of the factory transfer plan	Strike, rally and closing of the roads	Kurdistan
9 Dec	The staff of Flat Copper Factory of Takht Gonbad	Low wages and benefits	Strike and gathering at the company's premises	Kerman



9 Dec	Workers of Jam UPVC Door and Window Makers	Lack of government support from native small factories and workshops	Gathering in front of the Industrial, Mining and Trade Administration of Jam County	Bushehr
10 Dec &/ 23 and 24 Dec	Workers at Aria Steel Alvand Factory	6 months overdue wages	Gathering in front of Andimeshk's Governor's office	Khuzestan
21 Dec	Factory workers of <a href="#">Tabriz Machinery Manufacturing Co.</a>	6 months of overdue wages and reduced production capacity	Strike	East Azarbaijan
23 Dec	Masjed Soleiman Cement Factory Workers	Non-payment of wages and insurance premiums	Strike	Khuzestan
23 and 24 Dec	Workers of Tabriz <a href="#">Iranian Bearing Factory</a>	4 months overdue payments	Strike	East Azarbaijan
2nd of Dec	Workers of Nain Cement Company	5 months of overdue wages	Strike	Esfahan
23 Dec 2018 and 1 Jan 2019	Workers of High-Pressure Cylinders Manufacturer - <a href="#">KAVOSH</a>	Dismissal of 80 workers	Gathering in front of the Factory and governor's office	Qazvin
1 Jan 2019	Workers of Khorasan Exhaust Mfg.co ( <a href="#">KEM</a> )	Dismissal and moderation of workers and lack of job security	Strike	Khorasan Razavi
22 Jan 2019	Workers of Ghoflkar Lock Making Company	Overdue Wages	Gathering in front of Alborz Province Judiciary office	Qazvin
23 Jan 2019	Dismissed Workers of Karun Neoprene Company	The dismissal of 40 workers	Gathering in front of Shushtar governor's building	Khuzestan
25 Jan 2019	Dismissed Workers of Farsist Factory	Unemployment after the factory closure	Gathering in front of the factory	Lorestan
25 Jan 2019	Frame wood factory workers	4 months of overdue wages and dismissal of four workers	Rally and occupation of the company's director's office	Mazandaran

## East Isfahan Farmers' Resistance Resulted in Water Flowing in the River Zayanderud

The climate crisis, management disaster, and military-security reaction to protests are three sides of the triangle that East Isfahan farmers are plagued with, while their insignificant income is constantly decreasing. In the past two months, the province of Isfahan witnessed a massive protest by farmers. In Varzaneh and Khorasgan, farmers set up tents many times and organized protests. The protest rally on 2 January 2019 at Khajoo Bridge and on the Zayanderud<sup>3</sup> dry

<sup>3</sup> Also known as Zāyandé-Rūd or Pāyanderūd also spelled as Zayandeh-Rood or Zayanderood, is the largest river of the Iranian Plateau in central Iran. A highly disputed water body, Zayanderud starts in the

riverbed was violently attacked by security forces with bullets shot in the air. Earlier, on 25 November 2018, after the farmers of Ziar broke the water pipeline to the city of Yazd, they were faced with a severe crackdown by law enforcement forces.



Farmers' gathering on a dry bed of Zayanderud

The reason for the protest was the government's failure to fulfill its promise to provide water for autumn cultivation. Farmers are opposed to the management of harvesting and distribution of Zayanderud water, as regards the transfer of water to other areas; they specifically call for the implementation of the 2014 High Council of Water resolution on the revitalization of the Zayanderud basin. The resolution has been neglected; it has addressed the issue of "determining the amount of water right compensations" and "organizing the water harvesting in the provinces of Isfahan, Yazd and Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari and preventing unauthorized harvesting." The resolution also bans any "new loading on Zayanderud resources."

On 5 December 2018, a total of 18 representatives of the province of Isfahan in parliament resigned over the elimination of funds for water supply projects and even providing drinking water to the province of Isfahan. Earlier, Hasan Kamran, the representative of Isfahan, had

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Zard-Kuh of the Zagros Mountains in the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. It then flows 400 kilometers eastward to the Gavkhouni swamp in Isfahan province.

accused the Ministry of Energy of selling the water right of East Isfahan farmers to industrial and military sectors.

On 18 December 2018, the representatives who had resigned demanded the reopening of the Zayanderud Recovery offices, and President Hassan Rouhani agreed to this request. It was announced afterward that the representatives of Isfahan had withdrawn their resignation, but they denied it. Farmers also continued their protests by announcing that they "will not return home until the water returns to Zayanderud."

Eventually, on 28 January 2019, the Zayanderud Dam opened the water to the farmers' lands in East Isfahan. It was initially agreed that the water would run for 20 days for the fall season, but the opening of the dam was already too late as the cultivation season had passed.

According to Article 44 of the Fair Water Distribution Act (passed in 1982), the government is required to compensate farmers for any non-provision of water. The government had promised that farmers' bank loans will be approved by the Plan and Budget Organization for a three-year period, and part of the damage to farmers would be compensated through grants. Farmers, however, said that only some of them who had a farmer's account received 500 thousand tomans of donations.

Failure to enforce three-year agricultural loans is not the problem of only Isfahan farmers; on 16 January 2019, a group of farmers in the city of Takestan (located in Qazvin province) gathered in front of the Agricultural Bank of this city to protest. Around the same time as farmers of East Isfahan and Takestan, on 20 December 2018, farmers in the Shabankareh district of Dashtestan City in Bushehr province gathered in front of the government offices, spreading a symbolic empty table to protest the reduction of their water quota compensation from Raisali-Delvari Dam. In Lordegan, in the province of Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari, farmers gathered on 24 January 2019 to protest the unfair distribution of chemical fertilizers.

*Table: Workers' Protests in the Food Industry (December 2018 - January 2019)*

Date	Protesters	Issue	How	Province
5 Nov-2 Dec 2018 8-12 Jan 2019	The workers of Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-Industry Co.	Wage claims, privatization, and release of imprisoned workers	Strike and gathering in front of government centers	Khuzestan
1 Dec 2018	Workers at Ahwaz Sugar Factory	8 months overdue wages	Gathering in front of government centers	Khuzestan
8-9 Dec 2018	<a href="#">Pegah Milk</a> Workers Tehran	The seizure of land granted to workers for the construction of housing in the Tehran-Pars Tehran area by a government agency	24-hour gathering in front of the judiciary offices	Tehran
25-26 Dec 2018	Workers at <a href="#">Moghan Agro-Industry &amp; Livestock Co.</a>	Privatization and lack of job security	Rally in front of the corporate headquarters	Ardebil

29-30Dec 2018	Workers at Mamassani and Rustam Sugar Factory	50 months of deferred salary	Gathering in front of government centers	Fars
2 Jan 2019	Workers at <a href="#">Varna Milk and Dairy Factory</a>	Wage claims	Gathering in front of the court of Varamin	Tehran
29 Jan 2019	Workers at Parandak-Khazar slaughterhouse (Sheikh Mahalla) in the city of Sowme'eh Sara	Unpaid salaries and benefits after the slaughterhouse closure	Gathering in front of government centers	Gilan

## Transportation Workers

From 22 December 2018, at least for five days, truck drivers in the provinces of Kurdistan, Sistan and Baluchistan, and Khuzestan started a strike. Among their demand were providing tires and spare parts at government exchange rates, paying government share of healthcare premium, identifying truck-driving as a hazardous job, reducing freight custom fees, increasing freight rates, implementing a pay-per-kilometer rate calculation plan, and dealing with police officers corruption. The truck drivers' strike spread in September 2018 to 381 cities.

The dissatisfaction and wage claims of the railway workers are still ongoing. On 7 January 2019, several repair workers of Doroud railroads ceased to work, protesting the failure to meet their union claims; they gathered in front of the government offices in Lorestan. On 30 January 2019, a group of Travers Railway Workers in Andimeshk set up rallies protesting their 4 months overdue wages.

*Table: Other labor protests in the transportation sector (December 2018 - January 2019)*

Date	Protesters	Issue	How	Province
2 Dec 2018	Taxi drivers in Hamedan	Low fare rates	Strike	Hamedan
2 Dec 2018	Minibus drivers in Tehran	Penalties and tickets	Rally in front of Tehran City Council building	Tehran
9 Dec 2018	Rental drivers Southern Drilling Company	Non-payment of salaries	Strike and blockage of Ahwaz road	Khuzestan
12-13 Dec 2018	The drivers of transportation services of the National Steel Industrial Group of Iran	2 months overdue wages	Strike	Khuzestan
17 Dec 2018	A group of taxi drivers in Rasht	Low fares, as well as rising prices for auto parts	Strike and gathering in Rasht Teacher's Street	Gilan
19 Dec 2018	City bus drivers	Livelihood problems and the shortage of auto parts	Strike and gathering on the highway	Zanjan
19 Dec 2018 30 Jan 2019	A group of taxi drivers in Boakan	Low fare rates	Rally in front of government offices and taxi	West Azerbaijan

			administration building	
22 Dec 2018	Drivers of Faradis Qazvin Co.	Company fines	Strike	Qazvin
22 Dec 2018	A group of city bus drivers in Tehran	Privatization	The gathering in front of the Dehyari organizations and municipalities	Tehran
23-25 Dec 2018	Drivers of the National Drilling Company	10 months overdue wages	Strike	Khuzestan
8 Jan 2019	Drivers of South Pars Phase 12 Machinery	Several months of overdue wages	Strike	Bushehr
9 Jan 2019	Motorcyclists for the online Snapbox Shipping Company	Bad working conditions and low wages	Strike	Tehran
12 Jan 2019	A group of discharged drivers from Abadan Shipping Company	Wage claims	Rally at the office of the company	Khuzestan
26 Jan 2019	The bus drivers of the private company Sir ToosManedgarin Mashhad	Non-payment of state subsidies	Strike	Khorasan Razavi
24 Jan 2019 Ongoing	Truck drivers in Bojnourd Cement Factory	Low fare and non-implementation of a ton-km scheme	Strike	North Khorasan
29 Jan 2019	A group of Tehran pickup drivers	Problems of an odd-even days scheme	Rally in front of the City Council building	Tehran

## Teachers Are Protesting

Currently employed as well as retired teachers held protest rallies over the past two months. Failure to provide sufficient funding for the implementation of the Management of Public Services Law<sup>4</sup>, the failure to implement a teachers' ranking system under the Teachers' Ranking Bill,<sup>5</sup> the failure to raise teachers' wages, the corruption and theft at teachers' pension fund, and commodification of education are among the reasons for the teachers' protests.

At the same time, teachers are demanding that discrimination be eliminated from the structure of the educational system, the right to free education in accordance with Article 30 of the

<sup>4</sup> The Law on the Management of public Services contains 128 articles and 106 notes. It was approved in 2006 in accordance with Article 85 of the Iranian Constitution. This law demands enough government funding allocation for public education among other public services.

<sup>5</sup> Teachers' Ranking Bill was introduced in the Ministry of Education under Hassan Rouhani presidency and it intends to implement a set of qualification criteria to rank teachers based on education, experience, expertise and more. The implementer of the bill will be the Ministry of Education and it intends to introduce a rating and ranking system. Ministry of Education has submitted the bill to the government and is asking for allocation of budget for an experimental round of implementation; however, the ranking system is not yet put into use. Teachers are hoping to use these professional qualifications ranking system to fight for more funding and salary raise.

Constitution, the abolition of the "full hours teacher" plan (which requires longer hours to compensate for shortage of instructors), the release of jailed teachers, and the right to organize and strike.

The next year's budget bill has also raised the anger of teachers. A 20% wage increase proposed in the 2019 budget is hardly enough to compensate for constantly rising living expenses.



A teacher in the city of Hamedan holding a placard: "No to corporal punishment in the classroom! No to overcrowded classes! No to worn out buildings! No to wages below the poverty line!"

The share of education in the budget bill next year is 45,831 billion tomans (about 3 billion USD). The deputy director of the Ministry of Education said the government's requirements next year would be to "buy educational services" and "reduce offices in the provincial centers." Teachers' activists regard this policy as "the government's determination to privatize education."

In January, teachers from all over Iran launched a campaign in which more than 30,000 people in a few days objected to "ineffective supplemental insurance."

*Table: The protest by retired and employed staff in the education sector (December 2018 and January 2019)*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Protesters</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Type of Protest</b>	<b>Province</b>
2 Dec 2018	A group of retired teachers and educators from across the country	Cost of living	Rally in front of Presidency Headquarters	Tehran
13 Dec 2018	A group of Hamedan teachers	The hostile and humiliating representation of teachers on the official television of the country	Rally in front of the Education Department	Hamedan
19 Dec 2018 10 Jan 2019 24 Jan 2019	A group of retired teachers and educators in Kermanshah	Wages and benefits demand	Rally in front of the Education Department	Kermanshah
20 Dec 2018 27 Dec 2018 10 Jan 2019 24 Jan 2019	A group of teachers and educators, employed and retired, in Isfahan	Wages and benefits demand	Rally in front of the Education Department	Isfahan
20 Dec 2018	A group of teachers and educators, employed and retired, in Yazd	Wages and benefits demand	Rally in Fanavari (Technology) Park	Yazd
20 Dec 2018	A group of teachers and educators, employed and retired, in Rasht	Wages and benefits demand	Rally in front of Governor's Office	Gilan
20 Dec 2018	A group of teachers and educators, employed and retired, in Abhar City	Wages and benefits demand	Rally in front of the Education Department	Zanjan
23 Dec 2018	A group of teachers and educators, employed and retired, in Tabriz	Wages and benefits demand	Rally in front of the Education Department	Eastern Azerbaijan
10 Jan 2019 24 Jan 2019	A group of teachers and educators, employed and retired, in Ardebil	Wages and benefits demand	Rally in front of the Education Department	Ardebil
13 Jan 2019 15 Jan 2019	A group of temporary teachers in Yazd	9 months of deferred salary and privatization	Rally in front of Governor's office, office of Friday prayers imam, and Education Dep. offices	Yazd
13 Jan 2019	A group of teachers and educators, employed and retired, in Tehran	Wages and benefits demand	A gathering in front of the office of the Teachers' Pension Fund	Tehran
14 Jan 2019	A group of teachers and educators, employed and retired, in Tehran	Wage and benefit claims, protesting the ineffective supplementary insurance	Rally in front of the Teachers' Retirement Organization	Tehran

22 Jan 2019	A group of teachers and educators, employed and retired, in Tehran	Wages and benefits demand	Rally in front of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare	Tehran
24 Jan 2019	A group of teachers and educators, employed and retired, in Khorram Abad	Wages and benefits demand	Rally in front of the Education Department	Lorestan
24 Jan 2019	A group of teachers and educators, employed and retired, in Karaj	Wages and benefits demand	Rally in front of the Education Department	Alborz
5 Dec 2018	Retirees of 2017-18 of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences	Nonpayment of retirement bonus	Rally in the university campus	Kermanshah
16 Dec 2018 15 Jan 2019	Retirees of Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences	Nonpayment of retirement bonus	Rally in front of the university's central building	Khuzestan
28 Dec 2018	A group of staff and faculty members of Azad University, Meybod	Wage claims	Rally in front of Governor's Office	Yazd
29 Dec 2018	Retirees of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences	Nonpayment of retirement bonus	Rally in the university campus	Khorasan Razavi
15 Jan 2019	Staff at Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz	Non-payment of health subsidies and other wage claims	Rally in the university campus	Khuzestan
27 Jan 2019	Students at Farhangian University of Tehran	Protesting the teachers' contract recruitment directive	Rally in the university campus	Tehran

## What Do Pensioners Want?

The main collective demand of retirees is the salary adjustment, which, despite the explicit emphasis of the law, has not yet been implemented.

According to Article 109 of the law on the "Reform and Permanence of the State Service Management Act" (approved by the Cabinet in 2017), the government is required within five years to adjust the existing inequality between pensioners of different age with similar employees in each facility, in such a way that pensions from the fifth year onwards won't be less than 85% of the salaries and benefits of retirees in similar occupations. In practice, the government has not provided the necessary funding for the implementation of the plan.

In the 2019 budget bill, the government initially allocated a disappointing 2,000 billion tomans to adjust the retirement pensions. According to Salman Khodadadi, chairman of the parliament's social commission, on January 15, 2019, during the review of the budget bill in the parliament,



another 8,000 billion tomans were added to the original amount approved by the government. Still, there are ambiguities and contradictions about the allocated budget, and it is unclear which pensioners benefit from this fund.

Considering the current economic state in the country, the implementation of the equalization of pensioners in the year 2019 requires at least 10-15 thousand billion tomans worth of credits, Jamshid Taghizadeh, director of The Civil Servants Pension Organization (C.S.P.O), said on 16 September 2018. Mohammad Shariatmadari, the Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, said on 29 October 2018: "We need 30 thousand billion tomans to adjust and equalize (the pensions), and we have to move forward in steps."

*Table: Retiree protests (December 2018 -January 2019) [Except educators and teachers]*

Date	Protesters	Issue	Type of Protest	Province
16 Dec 2018	A group of retired workers in Shiraz telecommunications	Deferred wages	Rally in front of Governor's Office	Fars
18 Dec 2018 22-23 Jan 2019	A group of retired military and state employees	Low pensions and subsistence-level problems	Gatherings in front of Parliament and the Planning and Budget Organization and the Ministry of Labor	Tehran
18 Dec 2018	A group of retired employees of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad	The appropriation of land allocated to employees by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	Gathering in front of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	Tehran
19 Dec 2018	A group of retirees in Gilan province	Livelihood problems	Rally in front of Governor's Office	Gilan
1 Jan 2019	A group of retired military personnel	Uncertainty about cooperative homes	Rally in front of the Prosecutor's Office, District 12	
2 Jan 2019	A group of retirees Mashhad	Livelihood problems	Rally in front of the Retirement Pension Fund	Khorasan Razavi
9 Jan 2019 12 Jan 201	Retired Kai Tire workers	Non-payment of compensatory severance bonus	Rally in front of the Ministry of Industry offices	Tehran

## Municipalities: Imposing Hunger on Workers

Municipal workers in many parts of Iran face wage delays. In some parts, delays in payment of wages have reached one year. In addition to wage arrears, municipality workers are often given temporary or volume contracts which means they will be expelled as soon as the municipal budget depletes, or the season turns.

Municipality officials and members of Islamic city councils claim that the reason for the late payment is the reduction in income due to the downturn in the construction industry and the failure to meet the demands of municipalities by state and private companies.

The neglected point is the widespread financial corruption in the city departments and among members of the city councils. Since the formation of the fifth-time Islamic city councils, several mayors have been dismissed. Several members of the city council also were arrested and imprisoned for bribery, and quite a few suspended.

Such conditions caused mass protests by municipal workers in several cities. Over the past two months, at least in 10 cities the municipal workers have been engaged in intermittent and sporadic protests, sit-ins, and gatherings. In some cities, for a few days the workers refused to provide urban services like street cleaning and garbage collecting. In Boroujerd alone (Lorestan province), about 1500 municipality workers went on strike twice. Ultimately, the strike ended with the promise of paying part of the claims temporarily. However, Boroujerd Islamic Council chairman said the municipality's finances are inadequate for the wage claims to be completely fulfilled. The representative of the city in the Islamic parliament (Majlis) also called for special credit to pay wage claims. In Abadan, the municipal workers received a part of their wage claims after several rallies and sit-ins. The situation was the same for the workers of Marivan municipality in Kurdistan province which, after seven days of the sit-in, received 1,400,000 tomans as part of the six-month wage claims.

*Table: Several protests by municipal workers in December 2018 and January 2019*

Date	Location	Reason for Protest	Type of Work
11-20 Dec 2018	Boroujerd, Lorestan	9 months late payment of wages	Contractual
18 Dec 2018	Kurdkooy, Golestan	Workers in urban services have two months of deferred wages / Their unpaid benefits goes back to 2016 / Health insurance plans are not renewed / Municipality has no credit fund for paying wages	Contractual
22 Dec 2018	Abadan, Khuzestan	Pay arrears/attempt to self-immolate by a worker	Contractual
26 Dec 2018	Mahabad, West Azerbaijan	Failure to pay 4 months' pay and 14 months overtime	Contractual
30 Dec 2018	Lushan, Gilan	6 months delay in payment of wages and health benefits	Contractual
31 Dec 2018	Neyshabur, Khorasan Razavi	Temporary contracts / Two protesters arrested	Contractual
8 Jan 2019	Dezful, Khuzestan	Delay in green space workers salary reaches eight months / municipal office faces debt	Contractual
8 Jan 2019	Chouebdeh, Khuzestan	Wages of urban service workers have been delayed by 4 and benefits by 6 months	Contractual
12 Jan 2019	Shadegan, Khuzestan	8-month delay in wage payments	Contractual
12-13 Jan 2019	Abadan, Khuzestan	Delay in payment of wages for urban and green space workers	Contractual

*Table: Workers' Protests in Construction and Infrastructure Development (December 2018 - January 2019)*

Date	Who	Why	Type of Protest	Province
1-4 Dec 2018 and Several times in Jan	Ahwaz Urban Train Project Workers ( <a href="#">Kayson</a> Contractor Company)	19, and then 18 months wage arrears (the employer later paid one month's claims)	Rally in the workshop and in front of the Ahwaz city train company	Khuzestan
2 Dec 2018	Contract workers of Jihad Nasr Kowsar Company (Sistan Water Supply Project)	Deferred wages	Covered by the media	Sistan and Baluchestan
6 Dec 2018	Contract workers of <a href="#">Sabir</a> contracting company (construction of six train lines in Tehran)	Stopping the project (drilling) and suspension of 150 to 270 workers	Covered by the media	Tehran
17 Dec 2018	Workers at the Ariobrazan dam project in Behbahan	6 months of deferred salary	Rally at work	Khuzestan
23 Dec 2018	Workers at <a href="#">Tirage</a> Construction company in Isfahan (the contractor for the construction of a Freeway in East Isfahan)	9 months of deferred salary	Rally at work	Isfahan

*Table: Workers' Protests in Oil, Gas, and Petrochemicals (December 2018 - November 2018)*

Date	Who	Why	Type	Province
1 Dec 2018	Abadan Refinery's Phase 2 Contract Workers	Non-payment of salaries	Rally in front of the contractor's headquarters	Khuzestan
5 Dec 2018	Workers at Ilam Petrochemical Company	Deferred wages, non-transparent hiring	Strike	Ilam
11 Dec 2018	Workers on the disinfection sites of Port Khomeini oil tankers	Issuing a permit for the launch of a new disinfection site at the port's shipping terminal	Rally in front of the MP office	Khuzestan
11-18 Dec 2018	Farabi Petrochemical workers	Wage arrears and failure to implement a job ranking scheme	Strike and gathering at the workplace	Khuzestan
22 Dec 2018	Workers at Andimeshk gas station	6 months of deferred salary	Strike	Khuzestan
8 Jan 2019	Workers of Qeshm <a href="#">Petropay</a> Co.	4 months of wage overdue	Rally at work	Hormozgan
8 Jan 2019	Official staff of the National Iranian Oil Company	Variety of income problems	Rally in front of the parliament	Tehran
15-17 Jan 2019	Petrochemical workers at site 2 in Assaluyeh	Deferred wages	Strike	Bushehr
16 Jan 2019	The workers of Petrochemical Company ( <a href="#">RAMPCO</a> )	Deferred wages	Strike	Bushehr
21 Jan 2019	Workers of <a href="#">Bidboland Oil Refinery Company</a> in the Persian Gulf	Wage claims	Strike	Khuzestan

*Table: Energy Workers' Protest (December 2018 - January 2019)*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Why</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Location</b>
9 Dec 2018	Kashan Combined Cycle Power Plant Workers	Failure to pay several months' salary	Strike	Isfahan
23 Dec 2018	The workers of the power plant of Nowshahr	Deferred wages	Rally at work	Mazandaran

## 40 Percent of Iranians Are Looking for Work

The Islamic Republic of Iran has predicted the creation of more than a million new jobs in the next year's budget bill. Reports, however, indicate the closure of production units, the loss of existing jobs, and the increase in the number of unemployed.

Moreover, due to the sharp decline in oil exports, there are serious doubts about the coming year's budget. According to the Majlis Research Center, the government will face a deficit of 193 trillion tomans for the 2019 budget.

According to the labor force survey data, in the fall of 2018, 11.7% of the active population was unemployed. The report shows that over the past year 56,374 people were added to the number of the unemployed. The highest unemployment rate is in the 15-24 age group which is 31.1%. The rate for 15-29-year-old was reported at 24.5% in this period, that's one person in four who is unemployed officially.

Of note in the same report is the official employment rate among women. Men's economic participation rate is about four times the rate of women's economic participation: in fall 2018, while male economic participation rates were 64.4%, the index is estimated at 16.4% for women.

Iranian Statistics Center considers all those who worked even for only one hour over the week as employed, including trainees, soldiers, and employees of unpaid family businesses. However, in this period, 18.3% of university graduates were unemployed. The unemployment rate for female graduates (27.9%) is twice the male unemployment rate (13.4%). Of the total unemployed population this autumn, 40.5% are college graduates; 28.1% male and 68.2% female.

Women's unemployment rate has been reported by about eight percent more than males, while men's unemployment rate was 10.1%; the index was 18% for women. What is not mentioned in the Center's report is the full employment rate for women. An examination of past statistics shows that only 5% of working women in 2017 had full employment (more than 31 hours per week).

The share of employment in the agricultural, service and industry sectors also indicates a decline. The service sector continues to account for almost half of the employed population (49.9%) in Iran's labor market. Most workers in the service sector have temporary contracts as office workers, sales or travel agents, municipalities' menial laborers, and so on. Salaries in

health centers and many other private sector services are generally below the minimum wage, without insurance and outside the scope of labor law. The employment rate in the industrial sector was reported 32.9% and in agriculture 17.2%.

*Table: Unemployment statistics given by authorities (last two months)*

Date	The Official	Unemployment Figures
1 Dec 2018	Salman Khodadadi, chairman of the Social Affairs committee of the Majlis	Six million educated young people are unemployed and do not have jobs.
3 Dec 2018	Isa Mansoori, Deputy Minister of Labor for Job Creation	According to the Statistics Center, the country's unemployment rate is 12.1%, and the number of unemployed is 3,300,000, using international standards.
3 Dec 2018	Ahmadreza Pishbin, a cultural deputy at the University of Applied Science and Technology	More than 100,000 Ph.D. graduates are unemployed in the country.
4 Dec 2018	Mahmoud Kari, President of the Association of Voice of the Disabled	The unemployment rate in the disabled population is about 64%.
20 Dec 2018	Hamid Reza Amir Hassan Khani, The representative of the people of Ferdows, Tabas, Sarayan and Bashrooyeh in parliament	The actual unemployment rate in South Khorasan Province is above 25%. (In official statistics, the unemployment rate in South Khorasan is about 11%.)
4 Jan 2019	Omid AliParsa, Head of Statistics Center of Iran	40.5% of Iranians are job seekers.
8 Jan 2019	Majid Kianpour, member of the Construction Commission, Majlis	More than 3,000 to 4,000 workers in the automobile junkyards are on the brink of unemployment.

## The Wave of Unemployment

The car industry is facing a crisis this spring. Foreign car makers such as Renault have left Iran, and two major automakers in Iran, [Iran Khodro](#) and [Saipa](#) owe more than \$600 billion (USD) to contractors. In this situation, contractors are not able to pay wages due to lack of liquidity.

According to Arash Mohibinjad, secretary of the Iranian Specialized Manufactures of Auto ([ISMAPA](#)), from January to December 2018, about 280,000 workers employed by contractors have been suspended. Mohammad Reza Najafi, chairman of the board of ISMAPA, said on December 10, "With the continuation of the current trend, the country's parts manufacturing industry will be stopped by next month."

In the area of industrial production, according to a report by the Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), only 21% of the manufacturing units are currently operating at more than 70% capacity. More than 42% of industrial units operate between 50% to 70% capacity and 35.7% of units with less than 50%.

In the field of energy, oil and gas, especially after [Total](#) company withdrew due to US sanctions against IRI, and the reduction of oil revenues, the resources necessary to advance projects are often not provided.

On 22 December 2018, Vahid Shaikhi, a member of the Board of Directors of the Iranian Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters Union (OPEX), said that tar factories in the country are closed and exporters don't know what to do.

*Table: The news of the layoffs in the media over the past two months*

Date	Production Unit	Number of Layoffs	Province
8 Dec 2018	<a href="#">ARMCO</a> radiator company	More than 80 workers	Tehran
Dec 2018	<a href="#">Hood Mas</a> home appliances	10 workers	Tehran
Dec 2018	Jokar Training Group (Gaj)	150 workers in November and 400 workers in December (according to workers) - 255 workers (according to the employer)	Tehran
17 Dec 2018	Sepehr Safe Glass Co.	80 workers	Markazi
17 Dec 2018	Kermanshah Cement Factory	About 120 people	Kermanshah
22 Dec 2018	Iranian Rail Industries Development Co ( <a href="#">IRICO</a> )	35workers on 24 March, 6 on 18 Dec, and 23 on 22 December	Zanjan
24 Dec 2018	<a href="#">Mahshahr Pipe Mill Co</a>	108 workers	Khuzestan
25 Dec 2018	High-Pressure Cylinders Manufacturer - <a href="#">KAVOSH(CNG)</a>	About 100 people	Qazvin
30 Dec 2018	Qazvin Marliksan Co.	180 workers	Qazvin
9 Jan 2019	Aghdareh Gold Mine	320 workers (over the past two months)	Western Azerbaijan
20 Jan 2019	<a href="#">NeopanKaroon Co</a>	40 workers	Khuzestan
27 Jan 2019	<a href="#">Khorasan Exhaust Co</a>	About 200 workers (in the last few months)	Khorasan Razavi

In December 2018, Electro Steel, the largest refrigerator factory in Mashhad, and the Iranian Electricity Meter Manufacturing Company both closed after 50 years. The latter (located in Qazvin) was privatized in 2008. Also, in December, Ilna State News Agency warned of impending unemployment of a million poultry workers.

*Table: Dispersed rallies protesting unemployment (from the beginning of October 2018 to the end of January 2019)*

Date	Protesters	Issue	How	Province
10-11 Oct 2018	Seasonal workers of tobacco co. and tobacco farms in Aliabad Katoul	Unemployment due to private sector entry	Rally in front of the tobacco company	Golestan
12 Oct 2018	A group of people in Behbahan	Unemployment and lack of recruitment of local youth	Rally in the Friday prayer venue	Khuzestan
5 Nov 2018	A group of young people from Hoveizeh	Unemployment and lack of recruitment of local youth	Gathering in front of South Azadegan Oil Development Company	Khuzestan
17 Nov 2018	A group of Dehloran youths	No recruitment of indigenous forces	Rally in the city	Ilam

		in Dehloran oil and gas companies		
17 Nov 2018	Workers in Yasouj City	Poverty and unemployment	Rally in front of Governor's office	Kohgiluyeh and Boyerahmad
11 Dec 2018	A group of young people and graduates of Tehran	Unemployment	Rally in front of Parliament	Tehran
13 and 16 Dec 2018	A group of young people from Rafsanjan	Unemployment and lack of recruitment of indigenous youth	Rally in front of Rafsanjan Sarcheshmeh Copper Complex	Kerman
21 Jan 2019	A group of young people in Bushehr	Unemployment	The gathering in front of the South Pars Energy Special Economic Zone in Assalouyeh and blocking it	Bushehr
29 Jan 2019	A group of graduate students in law	Unemployment	In front of the Bar Association	Tehran
29 Jan 2019	A group of residents of Jalalabad village from the city of Zarand	Unemployment and lack of recruitment of native forces at the factories of this city	Rally	Kerman

## Children of labor

Late December 2018, a video was released on social networks by an employee of a Kerman Municipality contracting company, which showed two children who were selling flowers on the sidewalk, apparently illegally, were forced by authorities to swallow their flowers. The video sparked a wave of criticism and highlighted once again the issue of child labor. The Welfare Organization and municipal authorities of Kerman had to react. Mehran Alemzadeh the mayor of Kerman claimed the employee of the contracting company was dismissed. The Public Prosecutor at Revolutionary Court, Dadkhoda Salari, also announced the culprit's detention. The mayor met with the two children and gave them a bouquet of flowers. Rights activists condemned the official response as hypocritical and inadequate.

Municipalities in Iran have been accused of not having proper oversight of their contracting companies who enlist Afghan migrant children as cheap laborers in menial jobs such as waste recycling centers. These children work without gloves and masks in non-standard conditions and often become victims of sexual abuse. As we mentioned in a previous report, Tayebeh Siavoshi, MP from Tehran and a member of the parliament's Cultural Commission, had said, "Children working at waste-separation sites are in dire situation. They are reported getting sick, contracting AIDS, sometimes dying and being buried at the same garbage removal sites." Ms. Siavoshi's remarks were focused on Mahmoud-Abad waste-accumulation site near Shahr-e-Ray in the outskirts of Tehran. Elham Fakhari a member of the City Council of Tehran also told

reporters, "According to a study on the prevalence of AIDS among a thousand child workers in Tehran, 4-5% of them are infected with AIDS." She added a third of child workers with AIDS are 10 to 14 and two-thirds are 15 to 18 years old.

To solve the problem, government agencies put together a draft called "Plan for Organizing the Children of Labor." Children rights activists are worried about the involvement of police forces and their violent clash with child laborers. In line with this plan, the Welfare Organization of Iran has implemented an electronic system for the identification of child workers.

Reza Jafari Sadeghi, Director General of the Office of Social Welfare, last summer announced about 10,500 children were identified by welfare centers. There are no reliable statistics on child labor in Iran. In early 2018, Valiollah ShujaPoorian, the social and cultural deputy of the municipality of Tehran, had declared the number of children working in Tehran alone to be fifteen thousand, while welfare organization's estimate was about 7,000. About 70% of the children working in Tehran are Afghan migrants. According to a survey conducted by the Welfare Organization of Tehran province in 2018, the average age for child workers in the capital is 11 years.

*Table: The number of children of labor identified in some cities reported by the welfare authorities since August 2018*

Date	Number of Children	Location
23 August 2018	180	City of Arak
11 October 2018	683	Lorestan Province
28 December 2018	488 <sup>6</sup>	
13 November 2018	53	City of Ilam
16 December 2018	203	Ardebil Province
20 December 2018	142	Qazvin Province

According to IRI's sixth development plan, by the year 2021 the number of child workers would be reduced by 25%. Article 79 of the Labor Law of Iran prohibits the employment of children under the age of 15. However, Iran has not signed the ILO's Minimum Age requirement Convention (No. 138). While the Iranian Labor Law has set the minimum age of 15 years old, ambiguities in the legal provision have led to the use of children under that age.

## **Sistani Children Go to work instead of School**

On 22 December 2018, Ahmad Midri, the Deputy Minister of Co-operation, Labor and Social Welfare, announced the identification of about 130,000 primary school dropouts from all over Iran (in the academic year of 2018-19), according to three ministries' data collections, adding that 30% live in the province of Sistan and Baluchistan, which means about 39,000 children of school age.

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<sup>6</sup>Both figures are announced by Fatemeh Zahra Tavakoli, Director General of Welfare of Lorestan.



About two weeks before, however, Ali Moradi, director of public relations at Sistan and Baluchistan Department of Education, said based on last year's statistics that there are 110,000 dropouts, which is close to 14 percent of children in the province. Moradi said 70 percent of them are girls.

The Ministry of Labor claims it has identified only 13,000 school dropouts but according to a report by the Research Center in Majlis (parliament), in 2016, there were 3,200,000 children who dropped out of the education system. Many of these children have left schools because of early entry into the job market.

According to Article 30 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, "the government is required to provide free education for everyone until the end of secondary school (18 years old)."

While most school dropouts in Tehran are Afghan immigrants, in the province of Sistan and Baluchistan, most of the school dropouts under the age of 18 are children of seasonal workers residing on the outskirts of urban centers in Zahedan, Chabahar and Iranshahr. Children school dropouts in the province of Sistan and Baluchistan leave their homes behind looking for work elsewhere, due to the drought in the villages and surrounding areas.

Sistan and Baluchistan, in the southeastern part of Iran, is the most deprived, poorest and most underdeveloped province in the country. Its population is under the religious-political discrimination of the central Shiite government because the majority of them are Sunni and Baluch, and their borderline situation makes them vulnerable to constant security-police surveillance. In the last two decades, the water crisis has also been added to the province's troubles.

According to Ahmad Ezzatian, Director of Community Nutrition Improvement Program at the Ministry of Health (16 January 2019), 12,000 children in Sistan and Baluchistan province suffer from malnutrition.

## **160,000 Classrooms in Danger of Fire**

On the morning of Tuesday, 18 December 2018, a non-profit primary and pre-elementary girl school in the city of Oswah-Hassaneh, Zahedan Province, succumbed to fire due to the use of non-standard oil heaters, in which four students died of burns.

Seyyed Mohammad Bathaei, the Minister of Education, has said that currently, about 150 to 160 thousand classrooms in Iran have "non-secure heating appliances"; according to him, 30% of schools in the country now need structural reinforcement or complete reconstruction.

The lack of standard heating equipment in schools is not limited to deprived provinces such as Sistan and Baluchistan or Kurdistan; Tehran's Governor Anoushiravan Mohseni Bandpey said more than 1,000 schools in Tehran have no standard heating equipment.

*Table: Fire incidents in Iranian schools since 1997*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Incident</b>
Jan 1998	Bijarsar village, Shaft city, Gilan Province	The second-grade heater caught fire; the class teacher died of burns after 15 years.
Dec 2004	Safilan village, Lordegan city, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province	Oil heater caught fire in fourth and fifth-grade elementary schools, killed 13 students and a teacher.
Nov 2006	Dorodzan, Marvdasht city, Fars Province	Oil heater caused severe burns, eight students affected.
Oct 2010	Chah-Rahman village, Nosratabad, Zahedan City, Sistan and Baluchistan Province	A fire at a student dormitory caused one student death.
Oct 2011	Chabahar city in Sistan and Baluchistan province	A fire led to the death of 2 students and the burning of 3 others caused by decayed electric wiring at a high school affiliated with Chabahar University.
Nov 2012	Village of Shin Abad, the city of Piranshahr, West Azerbaijan Province	Non-standard heater caused one student death and severe burns to 28 other students.
Dec 2018	Zahedan City in Sistan and Baluchistan Province	Oil heater fire at a girls' private school in Zahedan killed 4 students.

The fact that four students were killed in Zahedan triggered the teachers' reaction. A group of Iranian teachers stated in a statement that the school fires "are the product of years of neglect by the factions in power, and the result of policies by those who have privatized 100% of pre-school centers and are trying to spread such disastrous policies to the rest of the public education." The signers demanded "the trial of the main perpetrators of this catastrophe."

The statement alluded to another neglected open letter to the government and judiciary in 2016 and signed by 140,000 teachers in which they demanded "increase in the education budget to secure the schools." They said the arrest of the school principal and a teacher in Oswah, Zahedan and the official apologies of the Minister of Education and the MPs were nothing but efforts "to whitewash the problem," "a populist ploy" that could not "deceive" teachers.

Teachers signing this statement said in another section, "those of us who demanded justice and fairness" have faced "imprisonment, expulsion, and exile in recent years. Covering up the problems by way of prosecution, intimidation and imprisonment is not a solution." According to the statement, at least half of the schools in Iran are unsafe.

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