



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 daily. 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 **Feb-March 2019**. The newsletter does not claim to be inclusive of all labor events that took place during this period.



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Major Issues of Recent Months

A bargaining chore to determine the minimum wage was the most important worker issue in the final months of the Persian calendar year (March 2019). Government reports indicated a decline in purchasing power and real wages throughout 2018 and the beginning of 2019. But the Supreme Council of Labor refused to approve an increase of 800 thousand tomans for workers' wages to compensate for part of the wage gap and eventually imposed a wage suppression for another year.

The recession has led to the expulsion of more workers. In some economic sectors, workers are easily dismissed. Only about 20 percent of enterprises in Iran with a capacity of more than 70 percent continue to operate. The government made it a requirement that the budget of state-owned companies to be reduced by 10% of the current workforce capacity. A law that could lead to a wave of unemployment.

The government insists on the continuation of its privatization policy and, in the same vein, the [Moghan Agro-Industry & Livestock Company](#) in Ardabil province and [Tabriz Machinery Manufacturing Company](#) were put up for sale. The workers of these two companies, however, wanted to stop the process and warned against repeating the fate of Arak's [HEPCO](#) and [Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-Industry Co.](#) These warnings and protests were ignored.

The delay in paying wages continues as in previous months. Workers in various sectors went on strike to protest this situation. The employers and the government continue to threaten and suppress the protesters.

Wage Suppression

In March, The Supreme Council of Labor (SCL) finally set the minimum wage. Independent labor organizations have already called for a minimum wage of seven million tomans in a joint statement. The SCL, however, ignored these demands and set the minimum wage below the amount of the livelihood basket estimated at the council's wage committee.

According to the SCL resolution, this year's minimum wage for workers will be 1,516,882 tomans (equivalent to 137.9 USD, based on the rate 11,000 ≈ 1 USD). The council also increased other wage levels by 13% plus 261 thousand tomans increase to monthly wages.

Table: Daily minimum income

Type	Amount
Minimum daily wage of the workers	505,627.00 Rials (≈ 4.6 USD)
Minimum monthly wage of the workers	15,168,822.00 Rials (≈ 137.9 USD)
One child allowance	1,516,882.00 Rials (≈ 13.8 USD)
Two children allowance	3,033,764.00 Rials (≈ 27.6 USD)
Years of service adjustments	700,000.00 Rials (≈ 6.4 USD)
Housing allowance	1,000,000.00 Rials (≈ 9.1 USD)
Base bonus	1,900,000.00 Rials (≈ 17.2 USD)
TOTAL Monthly (two children)	21,802,586.00 Rials (≈ 198.2 USD)

The SCL set the minimum wage and associated benefits for workers at two million and 180 thousand tomans while four independent labor organizations (the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, the Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane Complex Worker's Syndicate, the Coordinating Committee for the Establishment of Workers' Associations, and the Union of Retired Workers), in a joint statement issued on 20 February, called for a minimum wage based on the actual inflation rate and household livelihood basket.

On 13 February, the Wages Committee of the SCL assessed the market price of a 3.3-person households' basket of livelihoods at 3,759,200 tomans.

In November 2018, the parliament's Research Center confirmed that the poverty line income has gone up by 25 percent during summer of 2018. According to this assessment, in the summer of 2018, the poverty line for a four-person household was estimated to be 2,728,000 tomans (about 248 USD), a figure that economic experts and labor activists called "unrealistic."

Based on the annual report of the Statistics Center, the estimated average household living cost in 2017 was 3,500,000 tomans a month. Citing this figure, with the actual inflation rate of about 30%, the independent labor organizations claimed the average household cost in 2018 was close to 5,500,000 tomans monthly (about 500 USD).

These labor organizations stated that the SCL lacked legitimacy for any negotiating and deciding on the amount of the minimum wage. They demanded a minimum wage of 7 million tomans (about 636 USD).

According to Article 41 of the Labor Law of Iran, the determination of the minimum wage is the responsibility of the Supreme Council of Labor (SCL). According to Article 167 of the Labor Code, the SCL members are: the Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Affairs as the Chairman, two experts recommended by the same Minister, one to be approved by the Supreme Council of Industries; three representatives of the employers (one from the agricultural sector); and three representatives of the workers (one from the agricultural sector).

It should be noted that the three representatives of the workers are elected from the state-affiliated labor organizations, such as the Islamic Labor Council, the Workers' House and others close to the Workers' House or the Islamic Labor Party. There are no independent labor organizations represented in the Supreme Council of Labor. That is why the SCL in its meetings to determine the minimum wage this year did not pursue the workers' demands and imposed on them, as in previous years, wage suppression and poverty.

Continuing Protests by Teachers and Workers

Workers and teachers of Iran continued their protests in February and March this year. The municipal workers engaged in rallies and strikes in several cities. The technical maintenance staff of the railway company of the Islamic Republic also went on strike again in several cities and stopped the movement of trains. For the third time since the start of the school year, teachers also sat in the office for three consecutive days. Retired workers kept on staging protests as in previous months.

Three-day Teachers Strike

On March 3, 2019, the Coordinating Council of Teachers' Trade Unions for the third time since the beginning of last year called on teachers to sit in the workplace. Iran's teachers refused to attend the classroom twice before in September and October 2018, protesting the livelihood costs, delay in implementation of the law on equalization of salaries, teachers' health insurance problems and the privatization of education. In the third round of the strike, which took place from March 3rd to 5th, in addition to the usual trade union demands and opposing the commodification of education, they called for the release of the imprisoned teachers and halting all bogus court summoning of teachers. In addition, they demanded the cancellation of "full hours teacher" plan (which requires longer hours to compensate for the shortage of instructors), a move that was announced by the Minister of Education after the first round of teachers' strike.

Teachers from all provinces participated in the third round of sit-ins, but their participation varied in different regions, according to the Coordinating Council of Teachers' Trade Unions. The Council announced the end of the three-day sit-in where teachers participated in more than 110 cities and villages.

Amir Ali Nematollahi, Deputy Minister of Education, said in response to the protest that the teachers' participation in the strike was "very limited," and "not to be worried about." He claimed that the ministry had done everything in its power to meet the protesters' demands.

According to the Coordinating Council of Teachers' Trade Unions, the special security force (called "*haraasat*") summoned school administrators and tried to intimidate them as a way of making the sit-in protest silent and ineffective. In January, both retired and working teachers gathered in different cities in front of the Education Ministry's buildings. On Jan 24, teachers gathered in front of the education buildings in Isfahan, Alborz, Ardabil, Kermanshah and Lorestan provinces. On February 4, many teachers in Sanandaj, Orumieh, Marivan, Ardebil, Mashhad, and Kermanshah protested their living conditions in front of the education building and suppressing protest teachers.

Labor Protests

Early in 2019, the focus of workers' protests in the manufacturing and services sectors was the delay in paying wages. Rail transport workers, municipal services and firefighters, workers in refineries and petrochemical plants, and manufacturing and industrial units, went on strike to protest delays in wages and the failure to implement a job classification policy in different parts of Iran.

According to two members of the state-affiliated labor organizations - Hassan Sadeghi, chairman of the *Pishkesvatan* unionists and Ali Khodaei, chairman of the Tehran's Labor Council - nearly 100,000 workers faced wage and bonus nonpayments or delays. Sadeghi said 97,300 workers in 400 manufacturing units are facing wage delays; he added that many of these firms do not have the ability to meet the salary demands of the workers. Ali Khodaei, on the other hand, announced 93,000 employees in 900 production units are hit by wage arrears. He claimed to pay off those demands a fund of 400-450 billion tomans (about 40 million USD) is needed.

Workers in production units, rail transport services, energy sector, urban services, manufacturing units, damming and other sectors have held rallies over the past two months to protest delays in paying their wages.

Railway Workers: Contractors Continue Not Paying Wages on Time

The line and technical maintenance workers of the Islamic Republic Railways Company in several cities stopped working in response to the failure to meet the wage demands and bonuses based on years of service. In the province of East Azerbaijan in February and March, railway workers went on strike for several consecutive days. Protesters in Tabriz blocked the train route to the central station of the city. Those protests rapidly spread to the provinces of Hormozgan, Kerman, Lorestan and Semnan. In Andimeshk, Khuzestan Province, protest workers, sitting on the rails, disturbed train traffic.

The technical maintenance workers of the railway company have already been striking for months and the authorities of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and the Railroad Company of the Islamic Republic of Iran promised to solve the problems. The promise was not fulfilled, however, and human capital contractors delayed the workers' salaries in February and March, and the status of their contracts did not change. Approximately 6500 employees of the technical maintenance of the Railway Company of the Islamic Republic of Iran are hired by contractor companies.

Municipal Workers: Deferred Wages and Expulsions

Municipalities in Iran are struggling with budget deficits. Municipal executives have declared the main reason for the deficit to be the failure of government agencies to pay their debts and a drastic reduction in issuing building permits, which is another source of income. The municipalities' constant disputes with contractors have caused long delays in the payment of workers' wages. In the last two months, municipal workers gathered in several cities in front of the city hall, the city council and the governorate council to protest this situation.

In Khuzestan province, the municipal workers of Ahvaz, Abadan, Abadan, Abizhdanika, Dasht-e-Azadegan, Shadegan and Andimeshk rallied for several consecutive days. Delays in payment of workers' wages in some areas of Khuzestan province have reached near a year. The Andimeshk municipal workers have about 11 months of suspended paychecks. The city train workers of the Ahwaz, contracted by the Kayson company, are waiting for 18 months of delayed salary. The firefighters in Ahwaz and Abadan have not received wages for four to six months.

Municipal workers in the Kurdistan province –cities of Marivan, Sanandaj, Sarvabad and Baneh, Dehgolan - also protested the delay in paying wages. In Mazandaran, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, Sistan and Baluchistan, Kermanshah, and Fars, municipal workers gathered in protest in front of the municipality or government buildings. In Shiraz, Fars Province, the protest by the urban service workers spread to the Friday prayers.

Workforce Reductions and Layoffs in the Energy Sector

In the final months of the Iranian fiscal year in March 2019, workers of refineries and other workers in the oil and gas sector were faced with non-renewal of their contracts due to the termination or cancelation of projects. A number of workers had already received the notice of termination of the contract before the end of the fiscal year in Iran or were notified that their contracts will not be renewed. A number of oil and gas workers have not received part of their last fiscal year's salary and benefits.

Reinstatements of the US economic sanctions have led to a reduction in oil and petrochemicals exports, withdrawal of international companies from contracts with Iran and has created a state of crisis for the oil and gas industries of Iran. Assaluyeh, the city in which the Pars Special Energy Economic Zone (PSEEZ) is located, has been seeing a decline in projects in terms of production capacity but also ongoing developments. The most important suspended project in PSEEZ is the 11th-phase development of South Pars gas field that was once contracted to Total and has been facing challenges after Total's withdrawal. After Total's withdrawal, China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) was to invest in the development of the 11th-phase of South Pars gas field but in Dec 2018 it was reported that Chinese investors could possibly withdraw as well. A deputy at the Iranian Ministry of Petroleum has confirmed the possibility of Chinese withdrawal but has stated that Iran has not been notified officially of that decision. Many projects are being abandoned in the South Pars gas field starting from summer of 2018 leading to mass layoffs of a large number of workers. In February and March 2019, South Pars workers staged a gathering protesting unpaid wages, benefits, and other demands. Laid-off workers of phase 22 to 24 of Assaluyeh staged a number of gatherings in Feb and March 2019 to protest the wrongful terminations of their contracts.

Termination of workers contracts at the energy sector facilities like refineries in certain areas such as the Petrochemical Economic Special Zone of Bandar-e Mahshahr has led the city's governor to ban companies from firing workers. Despite this, twenty petrochemical workers from the Imam Port of Mahshahr, who were working through a contracting company, were fired in March 2019 under the notice of project termination.

In March, Iranian media announced the closure of the Shahrood's Piroozi Oil and Gas Refinery. News agencies cited authorities stating that the closure was due to "end of providing of supplies" basically meaning that the refinery had faced difficulties in getting oil supplies. With the closure of this refinery in Shahrood, 680 workers lost their jobs.

23 workers from the Azadegan oil field in the Khuzestan province gathered in March in front of local government buildings to protest being laid off. The contracts of these workers were terminated without any notice by the security department at the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC).

At the city of Masjed Soleyman, unpaid wages and passed due wages resulted in workers' protest. The main sub-contractor responsible for these unpaid wages at Masjed Soleyman Petrochemical Company is a Chinese company who came forward after the workers' protests

saying that they have transferred the funds required for the payment of the workers' wages to an Iranian workforce recruitment agency responsible for the contract but that Iranian company has not paid the workers.

Energy workers in Gachsaran and Abadan also gathered in protest against delays in wages, layoffs or suspensions, and the failure of the employees to implement the job classification policy. At Abadan Refinery, the repair workers refused to work for several consecutive days. The director of the contractor company's human resources responded to the workers' protest, saying that their annual benefits, unpaid wages and bonuses will be calculated and paid according to the laws of special economic zones. Employees working in special economic zones have 15 days of paid leave per year as well as some bonuses and annual benefits to compensate for incomes lower than the national minimum wage. Abadan Refinery is based in Arvand Special Economic Zone - in the Khuzestan province.

On 15 Feb 2019, Ali Akbar Fatemi, the city of Bushehr representative at the Provincial High Council of Iran, told Iran's Labor News Agency (ILNA) that a large number of contract workers were laid off in Assalouyeh. According to him, some of the dismissed workers have several years of work experience, but employers have no solution but downsizing and have told the employees to go home saying: "whenever we start a new project we will invite you back."

Workers' layoffs did not happen only in the oil and gas sector. Workers of Jahan Cooking Oil Factory in the city of Zanjan gathered on several occasions in protest against termination of their contracts. While the government of HassanRouhani says that it plans to implement the "Comprehensive All-Inclusive Employment Plan" for more job creation, in the most recent budget allocation for all government entities the government is mandating a ten percent workforce reduction.

This is happening at a time that Davood Mohammadi, the chairperson of the Article 90 Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran announced on 12 Feb 2019 that at least 500 workers have lost their jobs only in Qazvin. Another official, the MP from Neyshabur in the Islamic Consultative Assembly, announced that 200 vehicle exhaust manufacturing workers from Khorasan have lost their jobs after the closure of manufacturing unit in Khorasan.

On 18 March 2019, a number of contract workers from the Mashhad Telecommunication Company in Khorasan Razavi province were fired.

In Mahabad, at least 25 workers lost their jobs after the closure of Ronak vaccine-producing company.

Government and news agencies have not published a detailed report on the number of unemployed workers in the last fiscal year in Iran. However, the Iranian Small Industries Organization reported in a report released in early January that only 21 percent of manufacturing units in Iran are active with more than 70 percent capacity of production. More than 42% of industrial units operating in industrial regions are operating with a capacity between

50 to 70 percent. 35.7% of production units are operational with less than 50% of their capacity, which means basically means workforce reduction, suspension, layoffs, and forced leaves for the workers.

Retirees: The Rules Become Harsher

Steelworkers' wages were paid late in Feb and March 2019. In protest, the retired steelworkers in Isfahan and Ahwaz rallied in front of the state buildings. The Government of the Islamic Republic has announced the bankruptcy of pension funds as an excuse for non-payments, at the same time together with the Majlis trying to push the implementation of a plan entitled the "Parametric Reform of the Social Security Laws."

According to the "parametric" plan, the retirement age will increase, more stringent conditions apply to "hard jobs," the method of calculating the average retirement pension will change, and the average of the highest and lowest amount of the received salary replaces the two final years' earnings.

The plan, which was drafted in the Parliament, prompted widespread opposition. Retirees in Tehran and several other cities gathered in protest in front of the Majlis and the Planning and Budget Organization buildings.

Ali Larijani, chairman of the Majlis, deemed the plan as a "necessary surgery" and pressed for its approval. The Rouhani cabinet has also made it mandatory for the retirement funds and social security organizations to surrender their shares and properties.

The Expulsion of Migrant Workers

In February, the deputy Secretary of the Interior Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran announced at a press conference that the conditions of employment of Afghan immigrants, which "illegally" enter Iran, are tightening. According to him, employers who hire these workers will face a heavy financial penalty.

Mr.Zolfaghari the deputy interior minister said the government has returned 740,000 Afghan migrants to Afghanistan in 2018. The Iranian currency crisis and economic downturn, which intensified since last summer, has led to the return of some immigrants.

The government permits Afghan workers to work in a limited number of jobs, and Afghan workers and migrants do not have the right to reside in urban areas. They are transferred instead to camps that government officials call "migrant townships."

Working Children

In February and March, the number of child laborers - street vendors - increased dramatically. On March 4th, Ghobadi Dana, head of the Iranian Welfare Organization, claimed that mafia gangs are seeking the "expansion of child labor." He promised to deal with these gangs through the Judiciary. According to Ghobadi Dana, 56% of the children working in Iran are "migrants."

But Habibullah Masoudi Farid, the deputy head of the Welfare Organization, described the "financial problems" and "economic poverty" as the main factors in the increase in the number of working children. He said, "More than 97% of children work with their families and because of the financial problems and the poverty of those families, children go to the street. "

On February 3, Iranian news agencies reported that at least seven children and teenage workers were injured with burns in a fire at a watchmaking workshop on the outskirts of Tehran. On March 12, a fifteen-year-old *kulbar* (human mule) died due to the fall off the highlands.

Work Related Accidents

The job-related incidents during the past two months killed at least eight and injured at least 35 workers. According to Nahid Heydari, director general of the Social Welfare Agency in the Western Province of Tehran on February 14th, the 2017 statistics indicate that 51 work incidents have been reported to the agency daily. She added, more than 4 million workers in Iran are engaged in "underground" workshops that have "no insurance policies", and nearly 35% of their workers are women and children.

During the first ten months of the last year (Iranian calendar), 118 workers were killed in the west of Tehran province due to work accidents. Director General of the Forensic Medical Organization of North Khorasan Province also said on March 5, the work incidents in the province increased by 60 percent.

According to the representative of the Kerman in the Majlis (Islamic parliament), each year at least 1,000 workers in Iran lose their lives due to work accidents.

Abbas Shiri, an inspector at the Construction Workers' Association, a state-owned labor organization, said on January 27th that 50% of work-related accidents occurred in the construction sector.

Iranian media reported the deaths of seven workers from January 30 to February 19. At the same time, 35 workers were injured during work. Among the injured, there were seven working children and two Afghans. In March, at least six deaths were reported at work. Eight workers were also injured this month.

Failure to observe safety measures at work is a major source of accidents. The inspectors of the Ministry of Co-operation, Labor and Social Welfare are responsible for monitoring the observance of safety precautions and equipment dangers at the workshops.

Kulbars (Human Mules)

The Deputy Secretary of Interior reiterated in a press conference that the phenomenon of "*kulbari*" is illegal and the border guards' firing at *kulbars* is a "legal right" and an act of "border security," adding *kulbars* are only allowed to cross the designated paths.

According to Kurdish media reports, over the past year (Iranian calendar), 75 *kulbars* lost their lives and 180 were injured. Only in February 2019, 11 *kulbars* were wounded and one was killed by direct firing shots of Iranian border guards.

The report shows that 70% of the *Kulbars* were killed and injured by the direct firing of border guards. By firing directly, the border guards killed 43 and injured 135 *kulbars*. Also 24 *kulbars* died due to natural hazards like freezing weather or falling from the mountain heights. The land mines also killed four and injured 15.

Women Workers Can Be Fired More Easily

The advent of the deep recession has become the prime excuse for economic enterprises to dismiss workers. In the meantime, women workers, whose average wages are lower than men, are more at risk of being fired. The Iranian Administrative Justice Court has abolished the law prohibiting the expulsion of women during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

In January, women workers of the Dasht-e-Naz company in Mazandaran province were fired from their jobs. Dismissed workers gathered at the city of Sari's Governor building on March 8 and demanded a return to work. One of the protesters told reporters that the contractor "treats workers like slaves and whenever they protest, he would say Don't come tomorrow." In January, 70 workers of Dashet-e-Naz who were employed in rice and citrus production were branded as unnecessary and summarily dismissed.



Women workers of the Dasht-e-Naz company protesting their collective expulsion

Governmental and religious institutions also demand the return of women to their homes and their employment in home-based businesses. In a report about the number of licenses issued

for domestic jobs, part of the "inclusive employment" scheme, it states that 82% of the licenses issued for domestic jobs are for women. The Islamic Republic of Iran claims that over the past three years it has created more than 150,000 domestic jobs.

In another report from the World Bank on gender equality in labor law, Iran ranked among the last four countries in the list.

The Permanence of Harsh Labor Crackdowns

The repression of workers continued in the past months. Esmail Bakhshi, a worker of the Haft-Tappeh Sugar Cane Company, who was arrested again after being released following forced confessions aired on national television propaganda, is still being held in jail. News sources close to the workers of the Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane Company reported that Bakhshi was under pressure to deny torture during his first detention. The family of Esmail Bakhshi and several workers at the Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane Company have been gathering in front of the Shush court, calling for his release and the release of Sepideh Gholian, a social activist in Khuzestan province, who was arrested on account of her presence at protests. Esmail Bakhshi's lawyer, who has pressed charges against the official state television, and state media, Keyhan newspaper, and Fars news agency, is under pressure to quit the case.

On Feb. 26, the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Workers Syndicate reported that security authorities have ordered Esmail Bakhshi to dismiss his lawyer, Farzaneh Zilabi. Ms. Zilabi was summoned by the Justice Department of Shush and the city's security authorities. According to Ms. Zilabi, the cases of Esmail Bakhshi and Sepideh Gholiyan have been handed over to Tehran's Public Prosecutor's Office.

The long-term arrest and interrogation of Esmail Bakhshi threaten his physical health. According to a report by the Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane Workers Syndicate, Mr. Bakhshi has collapsed and passed out at one of his prison meetings with his family.

Sepideh Gholian's close relatives also described her physical and psychological state as unfavorable on February 3. The two families' request for the two prisoners to be transferred to health centers was ignored by the prosecutor's office in Shush and Ahvaz.

The security forces of the city of Shush also summoned and arrested a number of other Haft-Tappeh sugarcane workers. Ibrahim Abbas Monjesi was summoned to the prosecutor's office following a gathering in front of the Shush court building and was temporarily released after interrogation. Another employee of the factory arrested on January 28, Muhammad Khannifar, was temporarily released with a bail of 100 million tomans. After his release, he posted a mandatory short video that denied any mistreatment at the hands of the security forces during the detention period and voiced support for what he called the "high ideals of the government."

Jafar Azimzadeh, the secretary of the Free Trade Union of Iran Workers, is still being held in jail since his arrest. Iran's Judiciary has condemned Mr. Azimzadeh to 30 lashes. The Iranian judiciary

has already sentenced this labor activist to six years in prison. Mr. Azimzadeh was arrested at his home on January 29 and has been kept in custody ever since.

Parvin Mohammadi, another member of the Free Trade Union of Iran Workers, was arrested at the same time as Mr. Azimzadeh and released on March 4 on bail of 100 million Tomans.

In February, another activist, Behnam Ebrahimzadeh, was sentenced to six years in prison and mandatory transcribing of the Islamic Republic's leader's three books on war and the values of the Islamic Republic. He was arrested last November and kept in solitary confinement for 35 days. Mr. Ebrahimzadeh was charged with membership in illegal groups and propaganda against the regime.

On February 19, Iranian security forces arrested and jailed a Sanandaj bakers syndicate inspector, Iqbal Shabani. Mr. Shaabani was released from prison on bail of 100 million tomans on March 17.

Tawfiq Mohammadi, a labor activist in Sanandaj, was arrested on March 13 by the security forces and moved to an unknown location. Mr. Mohammadi is a member of the Coordinating Committee for the Creation of Labor Organizations.

March 22, Sanandaj intelligence agents arrested a worker activist Reza Amjadi in Hassanabad district of Sanandaj and transferred him to an unknown location. Mr. Amjadi had been sentenced to three months in prison in 2015 for attending the International Labor Day celebrations.

On March 7, Khalid Hosseini, a member of the Coordinating Committee, was sentenced to three years in prison by the Revolutionary Court of Sanandaj to the charge of helping establish labor organizations.

Mokhtar Assadi and Omid Shahmohammadi, two teachers' activists in Kurdistan province, were also arrested and sentenced to jail. Mr. Shahmohammadi was arrested last October, one day before the two-day sit-ins, and sentenced to one year of imprisonment. Mr. Assadi was arrested on February 15 by the Ministry of Intelligence agents and transferred to a detention center. This teacher activist was temporarily released after a week on bail of 100 million tomans. Mohammad Hussein Sepehri, a 44-year-old physics instructor in Mashhad, was summoned to the Khorasan Razavi Board of Administrative Offenses for "participating in the sit-ins."The board condemned Mr. Sephari to six months suspension of his services.

Two workers from the Ahwaz National Steel Group, Meysam Al-e-Mahdi and Ehsan Yousefi, who were once arrested during the protests by steelworkers, were also barred from entering the workplace. Al-e-Mahdi's bank account has also been blocked.

Sanaz Allahyari, Amir Mohsen Mohammadifar and Amir Amirgholi, three members of the editorial board of the Gaam Magazine, who were arrested in connection with the protests of Ahwaz and Haft-Tappeh sugarcane workers, are still being held in jail.

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