

Labor Rights in Iran



QUARTERLY REPORT NO. 15
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Brief Introduction

This is the 15th [Zamaneh Workers' Rights](#) newsletter, which will be published quarterly from now on.

The focus of the report is on the following: safety and health at work, types of discrimination, women's work, working children, unemployment, deferral or non-payment of wages, workers' organization, and protests.

Zamaneh Media monitors the above-mentioned labor issues daily and this quarterly report presents the “big picture” about the most important Iranian workers' rights issues over the past three months. The newsletter aims to increase awareness regarding the situation faced by Iranian workers.

The 15th report covers issues that occurred in October through December 2020. The report does not cover all labor issues or events that occurred during this period.

On May 1st every year, Zamaneh Media publishes an annual report examining major labor issues over the past year. You can also get a special labor report on [teachers](#) and the reopening of schools in Iran.

Fall 2020

Unemployment and poverty are rampant in Iran. According to government agencies, about one in four economically active people was unemployed this spring. The year after the 200% increase in gasoline prices in November 2019, the price of essential items has risen by 200% in some cases. The government is unable to control prices and supply essential goods. Workers' wages in state-owned enterprises and oil and gas projects are paid late. Workers' protests continue despite the coronavirus pandemic.



Protesting living conditions by daily wage workers in Mashhad and Sabzevar

The government hopes that with the victory of Joe Biden in the US presidential election, it will return to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (JCPOA) and will be able to control the economic crisis by exporting oil. Government factions, however, disagree on the nuclear deal. The Islamic Consultative Assembly has approved the Law on Strategic Measures to End Sanctions, under which the government is obliged to increase the volume and density of enriched uranium. The assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a senior official in Iran's nuclear program, which Iranian government officials attribute to Israel, facilitated the passage of the law, which could lead to a resumption of Iran's nuclear program and tightening sanctions.

The government is unable to control the rate of coronavirus transmission as the number of people infected increase day by day. In November, as the anniversary of the 2019 petrol price hike approached, the government finally agreed to a two-week closure of areas that were in the red according to the Ministry of Health. The closures, according to the Ministry of Health, have reduced the number of critically ill patients and the death toll. However, fears of a resurgence remain, especially with the reopening of shopping malls in the winter.

Closing some businesses has increased unemployment. The government's promises to support the unemployed have not been fulfilled. Rising unemployment, delays in wages,

rising prices for essential goods, and the government's contractionary policies in the field of social services have led to sporadic protests in various parts of the country.

In November, the government feared a repeat of last year's protests and arrested several students and labor activists and sent them to prison. The government restricted travel due to coronavirus. The families of those killed in last year's protests were told they had no right to hold an annual memorial service. However, the threats did not stop the workers, whose lives are getting harder every day, from protesting.

Unemployment and Inflation

According to the Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center, nearly one in four people was unemployed this spring.¹ The country's Statistics Center had previously announced an unemployment rate of 9.8 percent.

The latest report from the Statistics Center on the official unemployment rate in the first six months of 2020 shows that at least 1.6 million people left the labor market.² In the summer quarter alone, about 700,000 service workers, who suffered the most from the coronavirus pandemic, lost their jobs. On October 1, Government spokesman Ali Rabiee said that the pandemic had caused 1.5 million people to lose their jobs.³ Most of them were service workers who were not covered by unemployment insurance. According to Massoud Babaei, director general of job protection and unemployment insurance at the Ministry of Labor, only 730,000 unemployed people have been paid unemployment insurance.⁴ In another statement on November 9, the same official put the number of people receiving unemployment insurance at 630,000. The amount of unemployment insurance for people who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic is one million and 50 thousand tomans. According to the Ministry of Labor, this amount is to increase to two million tomans.⁵ (Exchange rate at the time of this report: 1 USD ~25,000 tomans)

However, there has not been an increase in unemployment insurance. Even before the increased unemployment, the Social Security Administration struggled with a budget deficit to pay pensioners. The increased unemployment, and the non-payment of government debts to this organization, has increased the social security budget deficit. The increased unemployment is both due to the recession and to the coronavirus pandemic, which has led to the closure of some service enterprises, including restaurants, hotels, home services, tourism, hairdressers, and gyms. Most of the unemployed were in so-called "informal" occupations and therefore not covered by unemployment insurance. The table below shows only some of the data related to worker unemployment:

Workshop(s) Title	Sector	Number of unemployed	Cause
Motahari Textile ⁶	Textile	150	End of contract
Damash Mineral Water factory ⁷	Food industry	12	Factory closure
Bidboland Refinery	Energy	Unknown	Unknown
Qazvin Electricity Meter Manufacturing ⁸	Electronics industry	20	Factory closure
Tourist guide firms ⁹	Tourism	13,000	Coronavirus
Sport clubs	Services	102,000	Coronavirus
Zamzam Tabriz factory	Food industry	Unknown	"Adjustment" due to recession

1 [Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center](#), November 17

2 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 11

3 [KhabarOnline](#), October 1

4 [Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Mining and Agriculture](#), October 19

5 [Shahrara News](#), October 9

6 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), November 9

7 [Hrana](#), October 26

8 [Karkhaneh \(Factory\)](#), October 30

9 [Sobhe-no](#), October 13

Unnamed factory in Ahvaz	Detergents	70	Factory sold out ¹⁰
Reception halls, cafes, and restaurants ¹¹	Services	479,000	Coronavirus
Construction firms	Building	700,000 ¹²	Coronavirus and recession
Garment industry ¹³	Production and sales	645,000	Coronavirus and recession
Road and air transport	Transportation	1,434,000	Coronavirus

The data in this table is based on reports in the domestic press, and statements by government officials, trade union officials, and the Research Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly. Some people lose their jobs for a short period of time and some permanently.

In addition, vendors, seasonal farm workers, porters at markets and wharves, workers in small workshops such as tailoring, hairdressing salons, wedding and funeral services are also out of work.

¹⁰ [Hamshahri](#), November 13

¹¹ [ILNA](#), October 13

¹² The vice-president of the Construction Workers' Union said that the coronavirus pandemic laid off 70% of the workers in this sector. The population of registered construction workers is estimated at 1.2 million, of which about 200,000 are not considered construction workers, according to government officials.

¹³ See source 9

Mandatory Guest at the Workers' Table: Hunger

Rising unemployment and inflation have exacerbated the misery index. According to the Statistics Center, the point-to-point inflation rate, which indicates the growth of the average price of the same goods and services, reached 46.4% in November 2020, which was an increase in the cost of living for households compared to November 2019. Inflation for the food and beverage group, which has a larger share of the workers' basket, was reported to be more than 50% in the summer. The latest estimates of the wage committee of the Supreme Labor Council—which is close to the Workers' House, a government labor organization—announced the cost of the subsistence basket to be at least 7,482,000 tomans. This figure has increased by 2,542,000 tomans compared to the figure of 4,940,000 tomans that was announced in February.¹⁴



Foodstuffs became more expensive and the food table became emptier. People must live with the risk of coronavirus in long queues to buy chicken at the government lower rate.

Independent experts estimate the subsistence basket and poverty line to be at about 10 million tomans for a household (=~ 400 USD). However, the increase in the cost of living did not cause the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare to agree to the request to increase the minimum wage. The workers complained to the Administrative Court of Justice and filed suit against the Supreme Labor Council, which had set a minimum wage without their consent, but the court removed the complaint from its agenda.¹⁵ The workers' request to convene a meeting of the Supreme Labor Council to reassess the minimum wage was ignored by the council.¹⁶ The workers' food table

14 [ILNA](#), November 28

15 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 6

16 [Kargar News](#), November 30

shrank further, and some items were removed from their shopping carts.¹⁷

To compensate for the decline in purchasing power in the remaining four months of the year, the government has promised to pay 100,000 tomans a month to a third of the population. The parliament has also required the government to subsidize basic goods to about 60 million people.¹⁸

The 100,000 toman aid is to be paid to about 30 million people, including workers with no fixed incomes, welfare clients and relief committees, and taxi drivers.¹⁹ The financial sources of this livelihood assistance are unknown, but according to the head of the Central Bank, this assistance “loan” comes from a bank credit line to fight the coronavirus pandemic.²⁰

The president, however, refused to announce the law on obliging the government to pay subsidies for basic goods—according to which 60,000 to 120,000 tomans should be paid to 60 million people in the country—and let the speaker of the parliament himself to announce the law.²¹ Once again, the financial resources of this law are also unknown. According to the decree of the parliament, the government must provide the new subsidy budget from the sale of its shares in enterprises. Government spokesman Ali Rabiee said the government has a budget deficit and there is no money in the treasury to pay for new subsidies.

In a best-case scenario, assuming the budget for these two support programs is provided, we can expect that 60,000 to 220,000 tomans per month will be paid to a part of the low-income groups, which is insignificant compared to the increase in costs.

17 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 24

18 The law of [Obliging the Government to Pay Subsidies for Basic Goods](#)

19 [Etemadonline](#), November 27

20 [Islamic Republic of Iran News Agency \(IRNA\)](#), November 18

21 [ISNA](#), December 6

Suicide Among Workers and Their Children

The suicide rate has increased in Iran. Although government officials do not provide specific statistics on suicides, Mohammad Mehdi Tondgooyan, deputy minister of youth affairs at the Ministry of Sports and Youth, said that suicide seems to be on the rise in the country, according to published statistics. Tondgooyan stated, "They occur between the ages of 15 and 35, but this year we also saw the suicide of teenagers under the age of 15, which is unfortunate".²² Since the schools reopened in September 2020, the Iranian media has reported 30 suicides and suicide attempts.

In Ramhormoz, Khuzestan province, six students committed suicide in one month.²³ In Neishabour, three students attempted suicide.²⁴ A girl also hanged herself at a childcare center at the Welfare Organization.²⁵ In Bandar Abbas, two girls, aged 8 and 12, attempted suicide, one of whom died. Earlier, three students had committed suicide due to poverty in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Bushehr²⁶, and Kurdistan. A student in Kurdistan who went to a cross-border smuggling business (kulbari) to get a salary to buy a smartphone also fell from a mountain and died. According to Ministry of Education officials, about 30% of students do not have access to smartphones, tablets, or the Internet, making it impossible to use the Shad online education network, which has replaced in-school education.²⁷



Hamid Reza (Saber) Behboodi, a Rudbari worker, set himself on fire and died in hospital after being denied permission to return to work.

In Esfaryen, North Khorasan Province, a family of four committed suicide.²⁸ In Isfahan,

- 22 [Toseelrani](#), October 28
- 23 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 16
- 24 See source 22
- 25 [ISNA](#), November 28
- 26 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 12
- 27 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 4
- 28 [ILNA](#), November 19

an 18-year-old girl who attempted suicide survived with the help of rescue workers.²⁹ In Tehran, a suicide was reported at a subway station.³⁰

On October 29, Hamid Reza (Saber) Behboodi, a fired worker at the Shabab mine in the village of Ganjeh in Rudbar, Gilan Province, set himself on fire. He died three days later in hospital. According to Saberi's relatives, he was fired for what was called his "addiction." He was unemployed for five months, quit his addiction, but his request to return to work was repeatedly rejected.³¹

A construction worker in Kermanshah also set himself on fire in front of the construction workers' union building.³²

In December, the Haft-Tappeh sugarcane workers' union announced that Massoud al-Kathir, a fired worker at the factory, had committed suicide.

Earlier, Iranian media reported the suicide of a contract worker at the Masjed Soleyman Regional Electricity Company. The worker was not identified, but the reason for his suicide was a delay in payment. On October 17, the representative of Bushehr in the Islamic Consultative Assembly announced the suicide of at least one worker in the city of Jam, due to poverty, and said: "Suicides have already occurred in the industrial cities of the province that have not been reported by the media."³³

This spring, Omran Roshani Moghadam, a worker at the Yadavaran oil field in the city of Hoveyzeh, hanged himself protesting the non-payment of a 500,000 toman grant.

On November 20, a woman set herself on fire and died on the outskirts of Bandar Abbas after municipal officials destroyed her shelter. According to a member of parliament, the woman was covered by government support agencies and had repeatedly applied for assistance and permission to build a shelter as her home.³⁴

On September 28, the father of Amir Hossein Moradi, one of the detainees of the November 2018 protests, committed suicide.³⁵ Moradi, along with Saeed Tamjidi and Mohammad Rajabi, were sentenced to death, but their death sentence has been postponed by the Supreme Court.

29 [IMNA](#), November 9

30 [Borna](#), November 30

31 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 1

32 [Rouydad24](#), November 23

33 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 1

34 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 20

35 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 28

Suppression of Workers, Dismissals, and Floggings

Davood Rafiei, a fired worker at Iran Khodro auto plant who had rallied in front of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare three years ago to protest his illegal dismissal, was declared by the court guilty of "insulting government officials". He was sentenced to 74 lashes and subsequently on November 25, he was flogged.³⁶

Rafiei is not the only worker to have been sentenced to flogging this year. This spring, Rasoul Talib Moghadam, a member of the syndicate of the Tehran Bus Company, was flogged for participating in the 2018 Labor Day rally.

Ruhollah Barzin, a baker in the town of Choram in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Provinces, was also flogged because the city's Friday prayer leader had filed complaints against him.³⁷ In previous years, workers at the Aghdareh gold mine and at the iron ore mine in Bafgh, Yazd province, were also flogged.



Davood Rafiei, auto worker, after receiving 74 lashes

³⁶ [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 27

³⁷ [Radio Zamaneh](#), June 7

Arrests

In late October, some labor activists and students were summoned to security and judicial institutions in various locations while others were arrested at their residence.

Shabnam Ashouri (Agahnameh Magazine), Elvar Gholivand (labor activist) Neda Pirkhazranian (labor activist), Loghman Pirkhezranian (labor activist), and Arash Johari (labor activist) were detainees in late October³⁸, who were later released on bail.

Vale Zamani, a member of the Karaj Painters' Union, was arrested in October but released on bail.³⁹ Labor activist Mehran Raouf⁴⁰ and Arman Ismaili⁴¹ were among those detained in October. The court also sentenced Peyman Farhangian, a labor activist in Gilan province, to 38 years in prison. He was arrested in May and tried on charges of "propaganda against the state, inciting people to violence, insulting the prophets, insulting the saints and imams, and insulting the country's Supreme Leader."

Khosrow Sadeghi Boroujeni, a journalist who writes on labor issues and critiques of political economy, was transferred to prison on September 9 to serve his sentence.⁴² Keyvan Samimi, a journalist arrested for participating in the Labor Day protests in 2017, was also arrested and taken to prison after appearing in court.⁴³ He was sentenced to three years in prison.

38 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 6

39 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 7

40 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 19

41 Source No. 39

42 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 13

43 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 7

A Factory is not a Military Barracks

The war over ownership of the Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane Company is raging among government factions. The annulment of the transfer of Moghan Agro-Industrial and Animal Husbandry Company in Ardabil province⁴⁴ , and Railway Services & Technical Construction Co. to the private sector has been confirmed in court⁴⁵ . However, the final decision on the change of ownership and expropriation of the Haft-Tappeh company owners remains with the Privatization Arbitration Council. Ali Nikzad, the deputy speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, said on October 19 that the current owners of the factory would be ousted within the next 45 days.⁴⁶



Police were stationed at the Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane factory to prevent 15 workers from entering. The workers said the factory was not a barracks.

Nizamuddin Mousavi, Tehran's representative in the Islamic Consultative Assembly, promised on December 6 that a final decision on the Haft Tappeh sugarcane factory would be made within the next two months.⁴⁷ Disputes over the ousting of the company's current owners within the government led to the resignation or removal of the head of the Privatization Agency. In July 2019, Alireza Saleh replaced Mir Ali Ashraf Abdullah Poori Hosseini, who has been arrested on charges of corruption and collusion in the transfer of

44 [Tasnim](#), November 11

45 [Mizan News Agency](#), December 3

46 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 1

47 [Khane-ye-Mellat](#), December 6th

sate-owned companies.⁴⁸

Workers at the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Company, who went on a 72-day strike this summer, are calling for the immediate dismissal of the company's current owners. On November 28, Yousef Bahmani, Ebrahim Abbasi Munjezi, Hamid Mombini, Massoud Hayvari, and four Haft Tappeh workers were arrested after protesting the presence of a representative of the company's owner at the factory. They were released on bail a week later.⁴⁹ On Friday, November 6, police were stationed at the Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane Company to prevent workers' representatives and 15 workers from entering.⁵⁰ The director general of the labor department of Khuzestan province, confirmed the dismissal of these workers and said that the company's management had banned them from entering until the status of the workers was determined.⁵¹ According to the workers and two members of parliament, the governor of Khuzestan has ordered the dismissal of the workers to prevent the eviction of the current owners of the company, who are being tried for embezzlement of currency. The fired workers finally returned to work under pressure from other workers.

48 [Hamshahri Online](#), November 14

49 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 29

50 [Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Workers' Union](#), November 6

51 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 8

Municipal Workers: Helpless during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Municipal workers in some parts of Iran continue to work without protective equipment and with minimal wages and harsh working conditions, while the coronavirus is making more and more of them sick. The increase in municipal waste has increased workers' workload, putting them more at risk of contracting coronavirus.

The CEO of Shahr Salem, a contracting company affiliated with the Tehran municipality, reported that 2,300 municipal employees were infected.⁵² According to him, since the outbreak was officially announced until October, about 2,000 workers of the Tehran municipality have been infected with the disease.⁵³ In Shahinshahr and Maymeh, the governor of the city said that 15 urban transport workers were infected with coronavirus.⁵⁴ Six municipal service workers in the Rudan municipality, two service and fire department workers in Jooibar, Mazandaran province, and eight workers of the Rezvanshahr cemetery in Urumia also contracted the coronavirus.



The workers of Sidon municipality in Khuzestan province have not received their salaries for eight months.

Dozens of municipal workers have lost their lives so far. On December 6, an employee of the Tehran Municipal Waste Management Organization named Reza Hessari died of coronavirus. The 37-year-old worker was responsible for collecting and loading the waste of several Tehran hospitals where coronavirus patients were hospitalized.

52 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 5

53 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), October 10

54 [Iranian Students News Agency \(ISNA\)](#), October 2

Municipal workers who work in difficult conditions continue to receive their salaries several months late. In some areas, workers' wages are delayed by up to 15 months. Those working in the public spaces of the cities are employed on temporary contracts through human resource agencies and are barred from forming a trade union. As shown in the table below, over the past three months, workers in several cities have protested delays in wages, layoffs, temporary employment contracts, and harsh conditions.

Region	Demands
Hmidieh	15 months deferred salary
Qazvin	2 months deferred salary
Loushan	Protective equipment
Dehdasht	8 months deferred wage
Serishanad	5 months deferred salary
Omidieh	5 months deferred salary
Yassouj	3 months deferred salary
Lali	Insurance and rewards of previous years
Ahvaz Second District	8 months deferred salary
Marivan	Deferred wages
Abzhdan Andika	Reinstatement of dismissed workers, 2 months deferred wage, 4 months deferred insurance premium
NikShar	8 months deferred salary
Zanjan	20 months deferred salary
Seidoon	4 months deferred salary

Workers' protests were not limited to municipal workers. In the last three months, at least three protest rallies have been reported in the energy sector and oil and gas projects. Farmers in eastern Isfahan once again rallied several times to protest the failure of the authorities to fulfill their promises and the lack of water for autumn planting.⁵⁵ Jobseekers in Shushtar and Behbahan also gathered to protest the lack of jobs and social support network.⁵⁶ In Mashhad and Sabzevar, day laborers protested against lack of social protection and hunger.⁵⁷ Self-employed couriers working for Snapfood in Tehran went on strike protesting of an increase in commissions deducted from their salaries, lack of insurance, and job security.⁵⁸ On Kish Island, taxi drivers also went on strike over a free trade zone cooperation agreement between their managers and Snap company.⁵⁹

Location	Reason for protest
National Drilling Company	Six months deferred wage
Zamzam Tabriz Company	Dismissal of workers
Zarrinpour Ardakan Company	Dismissal of workers
Fanavaran Petrochemical Company	Unknown
Karun Agro-industry Company	Job insecurity
Tabriz Machinery Company	Production line closure, CEO incompetence

55 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 9

56 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 9

57 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 2

58 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 2

59 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 9

Farmers of East Isfahan	No irrigation water supply
Snapfood motorbike couriers	Deductible commissions, job insecurity, lack of insurance
Kish taxi drivers	Occupational insecurity
South Pars Company	Change of working conditions, 14 working days, 14 days rest
Iran Polin Rasht Company	Job insecurity
Iran Khodro Tabriz Company	Wage delays
Damash Mineral Water Company	Wage delays and dismissal of colleagues
Khuzestan Water and Sewerage Company	Job insecurity, deferred wages
Isfahan Steel Company	Insufficient wages
Unemployed youth of Shushtar and Behbahan	Unemployment
Mashhad wage day workers	Lack of social support
Sabzevar daily wage workers	Lack of social support

Free Trade Zones: More Exploitation

On November 23, the Executive Secretary of the Workers' House in Imam Khomeini Port, Khuzestan Province, announced the dismissal of at least 15 workers in this special economic zone.⁶⁰ Special economic zones, like free trade zones, are excluded from the labor law and therefore workers have more difficult conditions.

In November, the Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, responded to an objection by a Dashtestan representative in the Islamic Consultative Assembly and blamed the Ministry of Oil for dismissing large numbers of workers in the South Pars Special Economic Zone.⁶¹

Article 12 of the Law on the Establishment of Free Trade Zones and Special Economic Zones⁶² entrusts the regulations related to employment, insurance, and social security in these zones to the regulatory measure ratified by the Cabinet.

In turn, the Cabinet has entrusted the supervision of compliance with the regulatory measures to the Organization of Free and Special Zones (OFSZ). According to these measures, only OFSZ can receive the necessary guarantees from employers to fulfill their obligations to workers. The authority to receive this guarantee, which is not mandatory, is vested in the directors of the regional branches of OFSZ.

Article 3 - Supervision of the implementation of this resolution's provisions and the observance of the rights of employers and workers and the fulfillment of the anticipated obligations in relation to the job contracts shall be the responsibility of the regional organization.

The organization in each region can obtain the necessary guarantees to fulfill the obligations of the employers to their employees, and in case of non-fulfillment of the mentioned obligations by the employers, by relying on the guarantees obtained, the organization can undertake or execute those obligations.

Article 35 - The Secretariat of the Supreme Council is obliged to prepare a sample bylaw of labor discipline for implementation, in coordination with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the local OFSZ of each region.

Article 36 - The employer of each workshop located in the region will prepare the disciplinary regulations specific to that workshop, and after the approval of the regional organization, will implement the steps.⁶³

The resolution of labor-employer disputes and the handling of workers' grievances in free zones is entrusted to the Board of Inquiry. The members of this board are made up of a worker or a representative of the workers, the employer or his representative, and a representative of the relevant free zone organization. The drafting of disciplinary regulations has also been entrusted to the Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free Zones in coordination with the employers.

60 [Iran Labor News Agency \(ILNA\)](#), November 23

61 [Iran Labor News Agency \(ILNA\)](#), November 28

62 [Law on How to Manage Free Trade and Industrial Zones](#), Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare

63 [Employment, Insurance and Social Security Regulations in Free Trade Zones](#)

The Pensioners

After several years of delays, the Civil Servants Pension Organization (CSPO) implemented a new and “modified” version of the Pension Adjustment Law. According to CSPO, the salaries of pensioners covered by this organization, who were employees of the public sector, have increased by an average of one million and 500 thousand tomans.

Officials at the Social Security Administration have said that the adjustment of pensions will take effect in November. However, retirees covered by this organization are dissatisfied with the incomplete implementation of the law. In a letter to the speaker of the parliament, a group of retirees called on the legislature to intervene in the implementation of the adjustment law and the application of Article 96 of the Social Security Law.⁶⁴

Article 96 of the Social Security Law

The Social Security Organization is obliged, with the approval of the Cabinet, to increase all pensions, total disability, and survivors' pensions at intervals of not less than once a year, according to the increase in the cost of living.

On November 7, Social Security retirees wrote another letter to the Speaker criticizing discrimination between state and military retirees. They called the increase of only 90,000 tomans an "injustice".

The government has allocated 18 trillion tomans (about 720 million USD at the current rate) to the Civil Servants Pension Organization, which covers about 1.5 million people, while the budget of the Social Security Organization is only 16 trillion tomans to cover 3.5 million pensioners. This budget is to be provided not in cash, but from the sale of government shares in industrial and commercial enterprises, and a discount on petrochemical feedstock.⁶⁵

64 [Shahrara News](#), November 4

65 [Iran Labor News Agency \(ILNA\)](#), November 7

Nurses' Struggle with Death

Coronavirus has severely victimized the Iranian nursing community. According to official reports, nearly half of intensive care unit nurses have COVID-19.



Half of the nurses working in the intensive care unit became infected with coronavirus. 85 nurses died.

Alireza Zali, head of the Coronavirus Control Headquarters in Tehran province, confirmed the deaths of 300 nurses and medical staff, saying that more than 20,000 nurses in the country have been infected with coronavirus.⁶⁶ In October, the Deputy Minister of Health stated, "The medical staff is worn out, each day 70 to 130 of them go on sick leave."⁶⁷ Mohammad Sharifi Moghaddam, secretary general of the Nurses' House, put the number of nurses infected with coronavirus at 35,000. He said some of the nurses were quarantined for two weeks, but others could not return to work for several months because of lung and respiratory problems. As of November 10, he said, 70 nurses had died of coronavirus.⁶⁸ The number of nurses who died of coronavirus reached 85 in late November.⁶⁹ Mohammad Pakmehr, the deputy chairman of the Health Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, also reported that 32,000 of the 110,000 nurses working in Iran were infected with coronavirus. According to him, 6,000 sick nurses are still in quarantine.⁷⁰

66 [Young Journalists' Club](#), October 1

67 [Rouydad24](#), October 24

68 [Khorasan News](#), November 10

69 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 29

70 [Tasnim News](#), November 5

The number of nurses per capita in Iran is 19 per 10,000 people and according to other statistics, 1.6 per 1,000 people.

Mohammad Mirzabeigi, head of the Iranian Nursing Organization (INO), said that there are 0.7 nurses per bed in 24 hours in Iran, while the government estimates that the minimum standard in Iran should be 2.5 nurses per 24 hospital beds.⁷¹ This minimum standard is one nurse below the set global average.⁷²

The secretary general of the Nurses' House said that according to standards, there should be minimum 50 nurses per 10,000 people, but that figure is 62 percent lower in Iran. This means that there are 19 nurses per 10,000 population.⁷³ In another report released in August, the number of nurses per hospital bed was 1.01. Mohammad Reza Zafarghandi, head of the Medical Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Nizam-Pezeshki), also said that nurses in public hospitals had unpaid arrears of about four months.⁷⁴

The government promised to pay the nurses' wage arrears. However, the secretary general of the Nurses' House denied any news of back wages, saying that he had paid nurses overtime for only one month instead of four months and that these payments were only for 115,000 public sector nurses, not for those who work in private sector. According to Maryam Hazrati, the Deputy Minister of Nursing at the Ministry of Health, the average arrears of nurses is seven months. She added that the reduction in nurses' overtime was due to lower hospital incomes caused by the coronavirus pandemic.⁷⁵

Hard working conditions and delays in paying wages and benefits led to protests by nurses at several hospitals. Nurses at the Rouhani Hospital in Babol protested non-payment of benefits⁷⁶, contract nurses in Ahvaz protested pay cuts⁷⁷, and nurses in Bushehr province rallied in October and November to protest the non-payment of deferred wages and benefits.⁷⁸ The board of directors of the Iranian Nursing Organization (INO) and Nurses' House also wrote an open letter to President Rouhani asking him to follow up on the demands of nurses.⁷⁹

71 [INO website](#), November 7

72 [KhabarOnline](#), October 29

73 [Iran Labor News Agency \(ILNA\)](#), October 31

74 [Science and Technology News Agency](#), October 7

75 [Hamshahri Online](#), October 14

76 [Iranian Students News Agency \(ISNA\)](#), September 28

77 [Iran Labor News Agency \(ILNA\)](#), October 11

78 [ILNA](#), November 4

79 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 29

Occupational Safety: Job Accidents Claimed the Lives of 79 Workers

The construction industry in Iran is stagnant due to the coronavirus pandemic. Construction workers are trapped at home, but the limited number who continue to work are not safe from fatal accidents. According to reports in the Iranian media, between September and December 10, 79 workers were killed and 98 were injured in accidents at work or on their way to work. As in the past, construction workers are at the forefront of work-related deaths. 30 construction workers have died and 20 injured over the past three months.

Since the beginning of the fall season alone, 15 deaths and 24 injuries have been reported. During the same period, 16 public service workers—garbage collectors and road cleaners, firefighters, and public transportation drivers—were killed in work-related accidents. Injuries to at least two working children were also reported during the same period.

Sector or Type of Worker	Deaths	Injuries
Construction	30	20
Mines	7	2
Industrial Workshops	15	24
Public Service	16	13
Other	11	37
Working children	0	2
Total	79	98

Public service workers include firefighters, municipal service workers, road builders, and public transport drivers. Miscellaneous workers: Workers in small factories including those in the agricultural sector. Building workers include construction workers, building technical services (welding, electrical), and well diggers.

Kulbars

In November, Iranian border guards injured at least six *kulbars* (border couriers who are often called "human mules"). Two *kulbars* were also killed by officers. According to the Kurdistan Human Rights Network, in November, six *kulbars* were killed by Iranian military personnel and seven injured in the border areas between Iran and Turkey.⁸⁰ Earlier in October, border guards killed two *kulbars* and wounded 10 others.⁸¹

80 [Kurdistan Human Rights Network](#), November 21

81 [Kurdistan Human Rights Network](#), October 22

Shooting Migrant Job Seekers Becomes Law

Immigrants and refugees in Iran, the majority of whom are Afghans, do not enjoy government support to compensate for the decline in their purchasing power. They are not covered by unemployment insurance and do not receive any subsidies. The Iranian government has announced that Afghan refugees will receive free treatment if they become infected with COVID-19. In Iran, the cost of treatment of insured COVID-19 patients in public hospitals is 2.5 to 5 million and 400 thousand tomans, of which 350 thousand to one million and 300 thousand tomans must be paid by the patient.⁸² The cost of coronavirus testing in public clinics for people with insurance is 69 thousand tomans. The coronavirus test costs 350,000 tomans for uninsured people. Most Afghan workers in Iran are uninsured. With the closure of workshops and the economic downturn, their incomes have dried up and they are unable to pay for testing and out-of-pocket contributions.

The Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran has proposed a plan that would make it more difficult for immigrants and job seekers to enter Iran. In this plan, immigrants and asylum seekers who enter Iran illegally will be tried in the Revolutionary Court. Border and police officers inside the city can shoot at the vehicles carrying the migrants. If any of the migrants are killed, no compensation will be paid to their families and the shooters will not be prosecuted.⁸³

82 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 15

83 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 28, the text of the plan of the MPs is available on the [website](#) of the Parliamentary Research Center.

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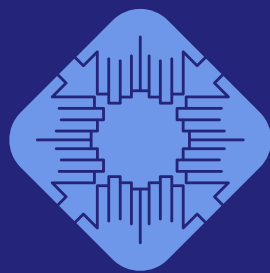
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