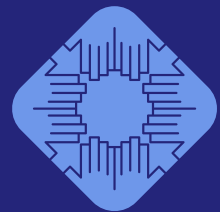


Labor Rights in Iran



QUARTERLY REPORT NO. 16

January-March 2021



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Introduction

This is Zamaneh Media's 16th [Labor Rights Report](#). The reports are now published quarterly. The labor rights reports consistently focus on unemployment, deferment or non-payment of wages and benefits, protests and strikes, freedom of association and assembly, independent unions, discrimination in the workplace, issues of labor law, contractual violations, women's labor, child labor, and kulbars. Zamaneh Media monitors the above-mentioned issues daily and this quarterly report presents the "big picture" of the most important Iranian labor rights issues over the past three months.

The following report covers major labor rights issues, protests, and trends between January and March 2021. The report does not cover all labor-related events and topics.

In addition to the quarterly reports, Zamaneh Media also publishes special reports on specific labor topics and an annual report on May 1 (International Workers' Day) every year. All previously published reports can be accessed on [Zamaneh Media's website](#).

Major Issues

One year after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, a new wave of the disease has begun in Iran. Iran's economy, which has been stagnant due to US economic sanctions and structural corruption, has shrunk even more over the past year. The First Deputy Head of State explicitly stated that no country buys oil directly from Iran. The Iranian government continues to face serious difficulties in accessing its blocked funds from other countries. Despite the end of Donald Trump's presidency in the United States, sanctions continue. The Iranian parliament has passed a law entitled "Strategic Measures to Remove Sanctions" that obliges the government to increase uranium enrichment and to suspend the implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA or the nuclear deal), which guaranteed a temporary suspension of all uranium enrichment. Iran stopped the implementation of the Additional Protocol in February 2021. Consultations are ongoing on what is being called the "JCPOA Revival." The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has said that its condition for returning to its obligations under the JCPOA is the lifting of all sanctions imposed after the nuclear deal.

Coinciding with international negotiations to lift sanctions, the IRI has increased pressure on civil society activists, national and religious minorities, workers, students, and female homemakers. In just two months, more than 40 Kurdish activists were arrested. In Baluchistan, 20 people were executed within a month. Heavy sentences were announced for students and civil and trade union activists. Huda Amidi and Najma Vahedi, two women's rights activists, were sentenced to prison for nothing more than holding workshops. Prisoner of conscience Behnam Mahjoubi was also denied medical treatment in prison and eventually died in hospital from what authorities called "drug poisoning." The health of other prisoners is also at risk.



Protesting retirees gather in front of the Social Security Organization in Tehran

People's living conditions have worsened. Although the government claims that the unemployment rate has decreased, this decrease is due to the exit of discouraged job seekers from the job market. According to the Statistical Center of Iran, between fall

2019 and fall 2020, 1.5 million people lost their jobs. During this period, more than one million women were expelled from the labor market.¹ The population of economically active women has shrunk by about 1.4 million. During the same period, the number of unemployed women increased by 777,000. These numbers only cover formal employees who are subject to labor and social security laws. The continuing economic downturn, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, has resulted in layoffs for many workers in "informal" occupations as well, which are jobs outside the manufacturing and service industries covered by labor and social security laws. The Statistical Center of Iran, however, claimed in its quarterly reports that the unemployment rate has dropped to 9.8%.

The upward trend in inflation has continued in recent months. The average price of goods in January increased by 48.2% compared to the previous year. The index for food and beverage, which accounts for a large share of household spending along with housing, was 66.8%, the highest in a decade. Promises by the governor of the central bank and government officials to control inflation on basic commodities have been in vain. High commodity prices and unemployment have pushed more people below the poverty line. Government agencies have refused to release figures about the number of people below the poverty line, but Iranian media outlets have in recent months repeatedly reported that purchasing power has declined and some food items have been removed from the household basket.

The number of suicide attempts has risen in recent months, according to Iranian media reports. In Marvdasht, a municipal contract worker named Bahram Ebrahimi-Mehr hanged himself on January 9 at work in front of the CCTV cameras due to nonpayment of his salary and other livelihood problems.² On February 1, a child laborer in Mahshahr killed himself due to poverty.³ In the previous month, another child worker, Reza, also committed suicide.⁴

As the gap between household earnings and expenditures widens, resulting in an increase in the number of poor people, the government, as in previous years, is unwilling to adjust workers' incomes commensurate with the real inflation rate and the cost of living. There is no serious social support plan for the low-income and no-income groups.

The Wage Committee of the Supreme Labor Council (SLC) recently estimated the cost of living at 6,890,000 tomans, which is at least three million tomans less than the previous estimate of government-affiliated labor organizations.

Negotiations to decide the minimum wage for year 1400 of the Iranian calendar (March 21, 2021 to March 21, 2022) were completed on March 13, setting the minimum wage at 2,652,000 tomans.⁵

The basic wage increased by 39% for minimum wage workers and by 26% for other wage levels, i.e., workers with a basic wage above the minimum wage. If the workers' housing allowance is approved by the cabinet, it will reach 450,000 tomans and the household wage base will increase by 300,000 tomans.

1 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 10, 2021

2 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 11, 2021

3 [Iran Labor News Agency \(ILNA\)](#), February 1, 2021

4 [Tabnak](#), January 5, 2021

5 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 14, 2021

According to the SLC's decision, the monthly wage of a minimum-wage worker without work experience and with one child will be 3,769,506 tomans. In the most optimistic case, that figure is estimated to be about three million tomans below the livelihood basket deemed by the Wage Committee of the SLC and 5 million tomans below the poverty line.

Independent worker representatives are not included in the SLC.

Prior to the start of wage negotiations between the government, employers, and government-affiliated labor organizations, the Vice President for Legal Affairs issued a statement allowing employers to terminate contracts at the end of the year without having to pay extra bonuses based on the employee's years of service (known as "sanavat" in Persian). The employers can then offer new "agreements" to the same workers for new salaries at lower rates.⁶

6 [Iran Labor News Agency \(ILNA\)](#), February 7, 2021

Protests

Workers, nurses, teachers, retirees, farmers, and the unemployed have repeatedly rallied over the last three months to protest livelihood issues, poor working conditions, and non-payment of their salaries. The largest protest was held by workers of Pars Tire Co. in Saveh on February 21. They gathered at Pars Tire Co. to protest the non-payment of the workers' loan and the suspended status of the workers' savings fund. Pars Tire Co. was privatized in 2019.⁷

Workers at Heavy Equipment Production Co. (HEPCO) in Arak also rallied to protest the company's promise to clear its debts to the Social Security Organization and banks. After the protest, some of HEPCO's shares were transferred from the private sector to the Social Security Organization.⁸

Wage workers in Sistan and Baluchistan also rallied to protest their poverty and a lack of livelihood support. Day laborers with similar demands also rallied in Tehran, Mashhad, and several other cities.

The wages of municipal workers continue to be paid late. Municipal workers in Abadan, Kot Seyed Naeem in the Azadegan Plain, Tabriz, Sisakht, Yasuj, Mahshahr, and Bushehr gathered to protest low wages, wage arrears, and unfavorable employment contracts.

Railway Technical Lines and Buildings workers, as in previous months, protested against non-payment of wages, temporary contracts, and insufficient pay. The judiciary voted to oust the private sector owner and return Traverse, Iran's largest railway contractor, to the public sector.

In the road, rail, and maritime transport sector, in addition to the Railway Technical Lines and Buildings workers who continue to protest sporadically,⁹ Sirik minibus owners and drivers on Saravan roads protested the fuel cut. Drivers of Tehran Wireless Bus and Taxi Company protested the non-payment of wages and unsatisfactory employment contracts.¹⁰ Drivers of Urumia city buses protested their reduced incomes and a lack of support from the municipality.¹¹ In addition, workers of Tehran Jonoob, an oil and petrochemical industrial equipment company located to the south of Majidiyeh Mahshahr Port, held sit-ins protesting the dismissal of 25 of their colleagues.¹²

Other labor protests over the past three months include: Lorestan Kesht-o-Sanat factory for non-payment of wages and insurance premiums; Negin Nakh of Semnan for wage demands going back to 2013; Yasuj Sugar factory for the company's indecision on expropriation of the private owners; and Iran Khodro car manufacturer in Tabriz for the dismissal of some workers.

7 [Iran Labor News Agency \(ILNA\)](#), March 1, 2021

8 [Student News Agency](#), February 20, 2021

9 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), February 15, 2021

10 [Drivers Syndicate of Tehran Bus Company](#), January 20, 2021

11 [AvayMarz \(The Voice of the Border\)](#), January 4, 2021

12 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), February 14, 2021

Special Energy Zone Workers Tired of Insufficient Wages

Workers in the energy sector, especially in the special economic zones, have rallied several times over the past three months to protest wage inequality, harsh working conditions, temporary contracts, wage arrears, and layoffs. On February 22, the contract workers of the South Pars Gas Complex in Assaluyeh wrote a letter to Parliament stating their dissatisfaction with low wages. The letter revealed that the contractors and the Department of Labor and Employment in the free zones had ignored the protests and had not addressed the workers' complaints.¹³



Gathering of Ilam petrochemical workers

Employees of the Mahshahr Special Energy Zone also gathered to protest the non-implementation of the Job Classification Plan. They are working on temporary contracts and have previously appealed to the Court of Administrative Justice. The Court of Administrative Justice had ruled in favor of the job classification scheme, but the Ministry of Petroleum has refused to implement it.¹⁴ Workers and employees also gathered last December to protest wage inequality and the non-implementation of the job classification scheme under a temporary contract with the Mahshahr Special Energy Zone.¹⁵ Municipal service workers who were hired a year ago to disinfect the area were fired in the final days of the year.¹⁶

Other protests in the energy sector over the past three months include:

Row	Location	Cause
1	Dehdasht Petrochemical	Deferred wage claims
2	Ilam Petrochemical	Dismissal of contract workers

¹³ [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 22, 2021

¹⁴ [Iran Petrochemical News Agency](#), March 2, 2021

¹⁵ [Islamic Republic of Iran News Agency](#), December 23, 2020

¹⁶ [Young Journalists Club](#), March 8, 2021

3	Gachsaran Oil Company	Non-payment of wages
4	Navid Zar Chemistry of Mahshahr	Non-payment of wages
5	Gachsaran Petrochemical	Five months of deferred salary
6	Abadan Oil	Temporary contracts and discrimination in the payment of wages
7	Mahshahr Petrochemical	Discrimination in working conditions and wages, temporary contracts, and non-implementation of the Job Classification Plan
8	Mahshahr Petrochemical Industrial Services	Non-implementation of the Job Classification Plan
9	Takab Sanat of the fifth refinery of South Pars	Dismissal of protesting workers

Repression and Detention of Workers

Employers, along with security and judicial institutions, have cracked down on workers, labor advocates, teachers, and retirees in a variety of ways. Since the beginning of last winter, protesting workers have been fired from at least three production units. At the Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane Company, where the dispute over the expropriation of private owners continues, Ebrahim Abbasi Munjezi, a worker who was active in the protests, was fired on the pretext of his contract being terminated.¹⁷ The company managers have been accused in court of embezzlement. The Iranian Privatization Organization has filed a lawsuit in court seeking their eviction. In January, the managers sued 27 workers for participating in the protests.¹⁸ Five Haft Tappeh workers, including Ebrahim Abbasi Munjezi, Yousef Bahmani, Hamid Mombini, Massoud Hayuri, and Hossein Hamdani, were summoned to court on March 8.¹⁹

In the Tabriz Branch of the Iran Khodro Factory (IKCO), several workers protesting delayed payment of wages were fired. In the fifth gas refinery of South Pars, the managers of Takab Sanat contracting company prevented the protesting workers from entering the workplace. In South Pars, employers started to cut workers' wages by 20% - 30% without prior notice.²⁰

Davood Razavi, Atta Babakhani, and Ali Ghorbanian, members of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, were summoned to the security police by Branch Two of Evin Court.²¹ Tavakol Jamshid, a representative of private sector drivers, was arrested on January 27 and temporarily released on bail from Evin Prison on February 1.²²

Parvin Mohammadi, a board member of the Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers, was tried in absentia²³ and sentenced to one year in prison.²⁴ Security and judicial institutions blocked the bank account of Nahid Khodajo, another member of this independent labor organization, who was arrested during a Labor Day rally in Karaj.²⁵ The Revolutionary Court sentenced her to six years in prison.

Haidar Ghorbani, a construction worker and member of the Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers, who was arrested in May 2020 and released on bail, was again summoned to court.²⁶

Javanmir Moradi, a worker and member of the Coordinating Committee for the Establishment of Trade Unions, was arrested in Kermanshah and released on bail.²⁷ He was summoned to the Revolutionary Court of Kermanshah on February 22.

Haleh Safarzadeh and Alireza Saghafi were sentenced to one year in prison for

17 [Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Workers Syndicate](#), March 1, 2021

18 [Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Workers Syndicate](#), January 16, 2021

19 [Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Workers Syndicate](#), March 8, 2021

20 [Iranian Students News Agency](#), February 8, 2021

21 [Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company](#), February 11, 2021

22 [Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company](#), February 2, 2021

23 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 26, 2020

24 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), February 28, 2021

25 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), February 27, 2021

26 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), December 26, 2020

27 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), January 12, 2021

participating in a 2019 Labor Day rally in Karaj's Jahan Nama Park.²⁸

Mehran Raouf, an imprisoned labor activist, was interrogated in solitary confinement.²⁹ He is still being held in prison.

The Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced labor activist Arash Johari to 16 years in prison. Johari was arrested on October 6, 2020 at his home by IRGC intelligence forces and transferred to the IRGC detention center in Evin Prison.³⁰

Labor activist Morteza Seidi was arrested and released on the same day for participating in a rally to support the Haft Tappeh sugarcane workers. On February 9, security forces searched his home for no apparent reason.³¹

Ismail Gerami, a retired teacher, Asad Miftahi, a worker, and Kamyar Fakour, a labor activist, were arrested for participating in a March 7 protest rally of retirees. They were released either the same or next day.³² A gathering of protesting retirees in Tehran was also attacked by police on March 7.

Maziar Seyednejad, a labor activist in the southern city of Ahvaz, was sentenced by the Revolutionary Court to three years in prison.³³ Seyednejad was arrested in November 2018 during protests by workers at Ahvaz Steel and Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Company and subsequently tortured in prison for a forced confession.

The Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced Ali Ishaq, a labor activist arrested in November 2019, to five years in prison. Ishaq has been imprisoned since his arrest because he was unable to provide bail.³⁴

Ali Nejati, a retired Haft Tappeh worker, was sentenced to five years in prison. It was previously announced that Nejati, who was arrested during the 2018 sugarcane workers' protests, had been pardoned. Nejati's lawyer said he could not afford to go to prison because of his illness.³⁵

28 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 8, 2021

29 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 5, 2021

30 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 15, 2021

31 [Hrana](#), February 9, 2021

32 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 7, 2021

33 [Hrana](#), December 21, 2020

34 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), February 9, 2021

35 [Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Workers Syndicate](#), February 16, 2021

Retirees: Fighting for Justice in the Streets

The protests by retired workers, which began in December 2020, continue to this day. The primary demands of the retirees are increased pension based on the real inflation rate and living expenses, implementation of the law on the equalization of pensions, full and free health insurance, and payment of the government debt to the Social Security Organization.

In the new year's budget, the government is obliged to provide financial resources equal to 125 trillion tomans for various purposes, such as "helping pension funds, payment of part of the government debt to the Social Security Organization, providing a portion of the end-of-service bonus of government employees, teachers' job ranking, providing part of the war veterans' claims and supplementary insurance, providing end-of-service bonuses and savings for martyrs families and retired veterans subject to the employment status law, equalizing the salaries of faculty members of the academic institutions, and the establishment of a comprehensive social security system."³⁶ This fund is to be provided from the provision of royalties, transfer of shares and property rights, transfer of capital asset acquisitions and investment plans owned by the government and state-owned companies, as well as the transfer of surplus real estate and assets. Of course, only a small portion of this amount will be spent on adjusting or increasing pensions.



Retirees gather in Bojnourd

In addition to social security retirees, retirees from the telecom industry, banks³⁷, the steel industry in Ahvaz and Isfahan³⁸, and the airline industry also rallied to protest their living conditions. From December 21 to March 5, at least 17 protest rallies were held by retirees in different parts of Iran.

36 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 28, 2021

37 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), February 28, 2021

38 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), March 3, 2021

Teachers as Daily Wage Workers

On January 19, a makeshift conex (shipping container) functioning both as a teacher's day-to-day workplace and their sleeping place at night caught fire in the village of Kangaristan in Dezful, Khuzestan Province. The teacher and two other colleagues from nearby villages suffered severe burns. One of the teachers died a few days later. Like many rural schoolteachers working far from city centers, this teacher slept in their conex classroom at night due to the long distance between their permanent residence and the village school.³⁹

Iran's education system has a chronic shortage of teachers. According to Ministry of Education officials, the Iranian school system will be short of 197,000 teachers in the new academic year. Independent educators, however, believe that at least 300,000 new teachers should be hired to bring the teacher-to-student ratio up to a minimum standard. The Ministry of Education, however, refuses to officially hire teachers, instead it employs only a limited number of instructors through the recruitment exam by public teacher training Farhangian University, only on a temporary basis. Much of the need for teachers has been met by temporary contracts called "service purchases." According to the Ministry of Education, 21,700 "service purchase" teachers are working in Iranian schools.⁴⁰



"Service purchase" teachers in the city of Yazd

The so-called "service purchase" teachers are hired by HR companies or by non-profit schools. The teachers are hired one day at a time and their pay is calculated based on their working hours at the school. The payment of wages is sometimes delayed by up to one year.⁴¹ Over the past three months, "service purchase" teachers, technical and vocational teachers, literacy movement instructors, and preschool educators⁴² have rallied at least 19 times in various cities. Their main demand is to change their contracts

39 [Tasnim News Agency](#), January 23, 2021

40 [Hamshahri newspaper](#), February 6, 2021

41 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 18, 2021

42 [Mehr News Agency](#), February 16, 2021

from temporary to formal ones.

Parliament passed a bill in February that would renew the hiring exam once for educators in the literacy movement who failed the test due to the coronavirus pandemic.⁴³

The Deputy Minister of Planning and Resource Development of the Ministry of Education said in February that the regulations for hiring "service purchase" teachers would be amended and that the salaries of this group of teachers would increase to 2.3 million tomans per month – still less than the approved minimum wage for formally hired teachers.

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There were several teacher protests over the last three months:

Group Protesting	Demands	Description
"Service purchase" teachers in Tehran, Yazd, Golestan, Sirjan, Aleshtar	Wage increase, formal employment	These teachers work on an hourly basis in areas where the Ministry of Education cannot hire a teacher. The Ministry of Education holds teacher supply companies responsible for paying their salaries. Salaries in some areas are paid with a one-year delay.
Teachers at non-profit schools	Formal employment, full insurance, job security	These teachers work on a temporary and hourly basis. They are paid for the number of days they work. The Ministry of Education holds the founders of non-profit schools responsible for paying the salaries of this group of teachers.
Preschool teachers in Izeh	Formal employment	About 1,440 preschool teachers have been fired after six years of working as "surplus force." The Deputy Director of Primary Education in Khuzestan province said that the law does not allow the use of these instructors. ⁴⁵
Literacy movement instructors	Formal employment	With more than nine years of experience, this group must take the Education Recruitment Test. Many of the instructors failed the test due to the coronavirus. Parliament has obliged the government to renew the employment test for this group only once.
Article 28 teachers	Wage increase, formal employment	According to Article 28 of the statute of the Teacher Education Farhangian University, this group has been employed with a temporary contract and a salary of 2.8 million tomans.

43 [Certificate of Law](#)

44 [Hamshahri newspaper](#), February 3, 2021

45 [Khuznews](#), January 27, 2021

"Hourly tuition fee" teachers	Wage increase, formal employment	"Hourly fee" teachers' wages in the virtual network are calculated based on their attendance time, which is set at 2 to 2.5 hours per day. The Ministry of Education has eliminated the remuneration of this group of teachers for February and March 2020 and has calculated only 40 working days for April and May, of which only 54% has been paid. Teachers' "hourly fee" has not been paid since the beginning of the new school year. ⁴⁶
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46 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), March 2, 2021 and [Teacher Voice](#), February 2, 2021

Nurses: The Coronavirus and Wage Suppression

The persistence of COVID-19 outbreaks in Iran has worn out medical staff and nurses, according to government officials. In his speech at the official ceremony for Nurse's Day, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ali Khamenei, called for the implementation of the Nursing Services Tariff Law. This law was passed 14 years ago and it ranks nursing services and pays nurses different salaries and bonuses at different rates, rather than a fixed salary. Physicians and surgeons make good use of this system, but this law has not been implemented for nurses in many cases. Nurses working in private hospitals and corporate nurses are still dissatisfied with low wages, non-implementation of the tariff law, non-payment of wages and bonuses, and being forced to work long hours.

From late December to mid-March, nurses staged at least 15 protests in various cities. Among their primary demands were reforming employment contracts and eliminating intermediary contractor companies, increasing wages, paying bonus arrears, and reducing working hours. The nurses protested in Shiraz, Babol, Tehran, Isfahan, Yazd, Tabriz, Karaj, Tehran, Ahvaz, Mashhad and Yasuj. They gathered at work or in front of government buildings.

The Iranian Nursing Organization also protested that new nurses were not being hired. According to the Ministry of Health, the number of nurses per capita in Iran is less than one per hospital bed. According to the head of the Nursing Organization, at least 70,000 nurses have been infected with COVID-19 in the past year.⁴⁷ The head of the Supreme Nursing Council also confirmed the death of 110 nurses due to the coronavirus.⁴⁸ Two of them were pregnant.⁴⁹ Government officials and the nursing system attribute the lack of manpower to the employment of pregnant nurses in the intensive care units, a practice that is against the law.⁵⁰

47 [Etemadonline](#), January 5, 2021

48 [Nursing System Organization](#), February 27, 2021

49 [Mehr News Agency](#), February 23, 2021 and [Tasnim News Agency](#), February 13, 2021

50 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 4, 2021

Baluch Sukhtbars and Kurdish Kulbars: Receiving Bullets Instead of Bread

Sistan and Baluchistan is the most deprived province of Iran. In this province, economic participation is reported to be 32.9% and the employment ratio is reported to be 29.9%, which are the lowest figures in the Iranian provincial ranking. In the south of the province, where the ethnic Baluchis live, the unemployment rate in some cities is as high as 60%, according to the province's representatives in Parliament. Widespread unemployment and deep poverty have made smuggling fuel shipments (*Sukhtbari*) from Iran to Pakistan a major "occupation" for many poor people in the region. Exact statistics on the number of *sukhtbars* has not been released, but according to the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, the province has the highest rate of informal employment at 64%.⁵¹

The government's approach to *sukhtbars* is remarkably similar to its fight against Kurdish human cargo carriers (*kulbars*) on the Iran-Iraq border. For a limited number of residents, the government has issued traffic licenses and permits to transport fuel within a 20-kilometer radius outside Iran's borders. The project, called Razzaq, is carried out by the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC). IRGC agents only allow permit card holders at border crossings, and other fuel users are forced to cross informal and unsafe routes. In 2020, at least 46 Baluchis were killed by gunfire from border guards or in car accidents while being chased by security forces.

On February 22, Iranian troops fired at a large group of *sukhtbars* on the Shamsar border crossing near the city of Saravan. The Baluch Activists Campaign has identified by name at least 10 people killed and five injured by Iranian military gunfire.⁵² The incident sparked widespread protests in Baluchistan, leading to the arrest of at least 16 people. To prevent the spread of the news, government officials blocked access to the internet and mobile phone network in Saravan and other cities in Baluchistan.⁵³

Sukhtbars in Baluchistan have the same fate as *kulbars* in Kurdistan. Since the coronavirus outbreak, *kulbars* cross the border into Iraq less frequently. The government's promises to support *kulbars* have been in vain. Border patrols continue to fire directly at *kulbars*. In mid-January, five *kulbars* disappeared in the border highlands. Their bodies were recovered a few days later.⁵⁴ In 2020, 52 *kulbars* were killed on the western border by direct gunfire, falling from height, frostbite, or other incidents; 147 were injured.

In January and February 14 *kulbars* died on Iran's western border. Four individuals were shot directly by border guards and the other 10 *kulbars* died from frostbite, falling from a height, or a stroke caused by their heavy loads. During the same period, 17 *kulbars* were injured, including 12 who were shot by border guards.⁵⁵

51 [A Look at the Development Indicators of Sistan and Baluchistan Province](#), Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, PDF document.

52 [Baluch Activists Campaign](#), February 23, 2021

53 Ref No. 9 and [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 27, 2021

54 [Kurdistan Human Rights Network](#), January 25, 2021

55 Hengaw News Agency, [February 1](#), and [March 1](#), 2021

Street Vendors: Tables are Empty, and Work is Prohibited

The coronavirus pandemic has doubled the pressure on vendors. On the eve of the Persian New Year (March 21), the Ministry of Health banned peddler activities in cities marked as orange and red (in terms of the pandemic).⁵⁶ The activities of peddlers in at least 43 cities have been banned, while support for them has been entrusted to the Mostazafan Foundation since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. So far, this government foundation has delivered vouchers worth one million tomans in two stages to a limited number of vendors in Tehran.⁵⁷

Support for vendors in other cities is also limited to necessities packages distributed once or twice by government foundations and charities.



Sanandaj peddlers

Not only has the government not provided adequate protection to peddlers, but in many cities, it has resorted to violence against them. In Ahvaz, the peddlers' market was destroyed overnight.⁵⁸ In Sanandaj, peddling on the commercial Froudsi Street was banned.⁵⁹ In other Iranian cities, on the eve of Nowruz (Persian New Year), government officials announced that they were "organizing" vendors by relocating them to designated locations away from busy streets. Exact statistics on the number of people who make a living through peddling have not been announced, but Iranian media reports state that the increase in unemployment has caused the number of peddlers to grow quickly as well.⁶⁰

56 [Iranian Students News Agency](#), February 4, 2021

57 [Mashreq News](#), January 30, 2021

58 [Islamic Republic News Agency](#), January 4, 2021

59 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 13, 2021

60 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 8, 2020

Immigrants

Immigrants in Iran, most of whom are cheap laborers, are not entitled to any subsidies, even meagre government support packages. Since the coronavirus pandemic, the number of migrants forced to leave Iran due to poverty and unemployment has increased. On February 24, the head of Herat's refugees and returnees in Afghanistan announced the "voluntary" return, in fact a de facto deportation, of 500,000 Afghan refugees from Iran during the Iranian year 1399 (March 2020 to March 2021). According to him, 150,000 Afghans were deported from Iran.⁶¹ In Iran, the parliament is pushing for a tougher law against immigrants. Violence in Iran against Afghan immigrants, even without the passage of this law, continues.

An official in Alborz province announced the arrest and "expulsion" of 5,000 Afghan refugees who he said were staying "illegally" in the province.⁶² The director general of the Foreign Nationals Office in Yazd province also called for the resettlement of immigrants, or, according to him, "foreigners" in controlled settlements outside the city.⁶³ The secretary of the Commission for Organizing Foreign Citizens said, "those entering the country illegally" are "border trespassers." He added that the government had implemented a "self-presentation of illegal immigrants" program, under which immigrants who do not have a residency card must go voluntarily to "self-presentation camps" to be repatriated in an orderly manner.⁶⁴

Iranian banks froze Afghan immigrants' accounts in December. The Tehran City Train Company also made the purchase of a city train ticket conditional on having a national identity number, of which Afghan immigrants are deprived.

61 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 24, 2021

62 [KhabarOnline news](#), January 24, 2021

63 [Young Journalists Club](#), January 9, 2021

64 [Iranian Students News Agency](#), January 13, 2021

Work Accidents

In the first eight months of the Iranian calendar year 1399, the Forensic Medicine Organization recorded the death of 1,258 workers due to work accidents.

Falling from height, which often occurs for construction workers, has been a major cause of death in work-related accidents. 538 victims of work accidents lost their lives due to falls from heights, which accounts for 42.8% of the total casualties.

Hits to the body from hard objects caused 304 deaths, accounting for 24.2% of all casualties from work accidents.

During the same period, 17,398 injuries due to work accidents were registered by the Forensic Medicine Organization.

Reports published in the Iranian media only cover accidents in factories, workshops,¹ and other workplaces covered by labor and social security laws.

1 [IMNA](#), January 11, 2021

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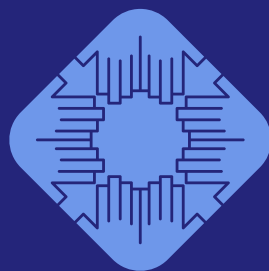
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