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EDITORIAL

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MINIMUM WAGE LEGISLATION, "HOUSE OF WORKERS" ACTIVITIES, AND MAY DAY MESSAGE

Earlier this year, the representatives of the Islamic Labour Councils, structures aligned with the so-called "House of Workers", and their Executive Committee member Mr Ali Rabiei, the Minister of Labour, in order to compete with and outmanoeuvre the trade union representatives [from independent syndicates], attended the sessions of the High Council of Labour bragging about their intent to push for a 60% wage increase and made many workers believe that these saints can this time offer a cure! They repeated this in one interview after another.

The unionised workers questioned these so-called and self-appointed representatives of the workers that if they are genuine in representing the workers' demands then they should refrain from signing the annual minimum wage legislation if they could not achieve agreement about a reasonable level of [wage] increase.

This year the ILC representatives repeatedly gave slogans [about adequate wage increase] and on each occasion when it came to action they retreated from their words and uttered that their red line is now that no less than 35% wage increase to minimum wage, and in the final days even claimed that they rather die and not sign an agreement indicating less than 25% minimum wage increase. These people [ILC representatives] not only did not die, but they accepted a 17% minimum wage increase and in return received [from the management] rewards and went to their pilgrimage and desired trips without any

thoughts how the workers and their families would survive the year on the agreed wage.

Mr Rabiei, who in an effort to outmanoeuvre the [independent] trade unions has portrayed himself as a "labourer coming from the poor neighbourhoods of Tehran", since becoming the Minister of Labour has sent the security forces to deal with the strikes and syndicate representatives instead of taking note of the workers plight and their organisational demands. Lashes, prison, and dismissal are the ministerial fruits of the so-called "labourer from the poor neighbourhoods of Tehran". In the latest round of the arrests, the well-known trade union leaders and activists such as Ebrahim Madadi, Davoud Razavi, and Mahmoud Salehi were arrested who were preparing to organise this year's May Day celebration.

The so-called "House of Workers", the organisation that one of its executive members (Rabiei) has become the Minister of Labour in the current neoliberal government, had been given the kiss of life to revive it as a safety valve in order to lower the credibility of the [independent] trade unions. The "House of Workers" declared its version of slogans during the May Day rallies and also in the run up to the High Council of Labour vote on the wage increase for 2015-16.

Over many years the trade unions have stressed the fact that according to the Article 27 of the Constitution which with clarity and without any ambiguity states that those intending to hold May Day rallies need not to acquire permission. But this year, Mr. Mahjoub [executive and parliamentary representative of the House of Workers] all of a sudden remembered the fact that the May Day rally does not need permission and announced that the "House of Workers" will hold the May Day rally and demonstration, although refrained from divulging its details including the route.

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The “House of Workers” boasted that it would proclaim its demands in the May Day rally. But with its full force and in spite of having official branch offices across the country, it ended up with only putting together 20 thousand workers that gathered in front of the “House” building. In the other words, from 20 million Iranian workers, the “House of Workers” has only 20 thousand supporters.

The location of the gathering for the “House” sponsored rally was kept a tight secret, in case the [independent] trade unionists did show up and spoil the rally with their noteworthy slogans. In the rally of the “House of Workers” the racist slogan that urged the bosses to sack Afghan [immigrant] workers proved to be so embarrassing that for several days after the May Day the organisers had to state their regrets and embarrassment. Workers everywhere are [sisters and] brothers and their rights are trampled upon by the bosses. No worker with consciousness would chant such a slogan. Afghan and Iranian workers are both exploited by their bosses' cruelty.

It is indeed a question why has the “House” become so vigorous suddenly? What is embedded in the independent trade unions' slogans that have given the “House” sleepless nights? Is this not about the fact that they are trying to re-position themselves within the working class? Even Hassan Sadeghi [Secretary of the Supreme Association of Islamic Labour Councils] has started to vigorously support the workers demand by appearing on the national television. Now after 30 years that the “House of Workers” has been incapable of protecting any rights of the workers, in this television programme there was talk of cooperation and compromise with the bosses.

The May Day is the day of unity and solidarity for all the working people. The May Day's message is **UNITY**. If the workers are united, they can

demand fair wages for 8 hours of work, receive insurance appropriate to their position, can defend the demands of their fellow brother and sister workers and impose them on the bosses.

Is privatisation only a problem for the workers of Bafgh mines? Are the temporary and time-limited employment contracts only a problem for the workers in Ahvaz petrochemical complex? Are the low wages a problem only for the Tehran bus drivers? Are work place incidents and the high death toll of the workers only occurring in the construction industry? Is it the case that only the bosses of Haftapeh (sugarcane refinery) have not been paying the wages of the workers for several months?

All of the above-mentioned cases are the problems for all workers of Iran and they cannot resolve them individually. Unfortunately awareness amongst the labour activists has not reached a point that they realise the resolution of these issues can only be achieved by the unity and united struggle of all workers. Some in the guild associations of the Chadaramloo, Bafgh, Polyacryl, Albourz Central Mines, Bus Workers, Saipa Group, Haft Tapeh, Albourz Rubber factory, Decorators, South Pars Workers, Petrochemical workers... are of the view that they can achieve their demands from the bosses without the support of the wider groups of workers. These workers do not realise that by contacting and informing the other labour activists about their legitimate demands, and if only other workers rise in their support, if every strike action triggers another workers' strike, then they can win. Capitalism will win as long as the labour activists and Iran's workers do not join their hands in unity. The capitalists are united in not giving in to the workers' demands, so why not the workers unite in campaigning for their rights.

The Workers United, Will Never Be Defeated!

Statement of the Union of Project Workforce of Iran

Ever since the end of Iran-Iraq war [1988]; the labour laws steadily under the direction of the IMF have been nullified by all shades of governments including the present one [Hassan Rouhani]. This process included setting up of free trade-industrial zones, excluding workplaces with less than 10 workers from the jurisdictions of the labour laws with consultation and recommendations of the Iranian version of pro USA neoliberal economist the [nullified] labour laws now include anti-workers imperatives that have become operational in Iran with the sole aim of doubling the exploitation of [waged] and salaried workers for the benefits of those that have no productive role in the society, especially the international elements. These "Freemasonry's" have constructed a justification and the officials blindly recite it in removing any obstacle ahead of investment. This lot pose the economic consultants but inherently they are the agents for applying the World Bank's policies. The objective of these neoliberals is not to apply the best economic methods for resolving Iran's socio-economic crisis. The workers have foremost role in social production and they are also well aware of the shackling nature of the imperialist-exploitive arrangements. The workers see the Machiavellian justification for resurrection of reactionary laws [from a century ago] in the name of job creation and deregulation. This is happening while the workers are so intensely entangled in their daily work and financial problems that have lost their senses to understand the progression of this relationship and the deregulation. A large part of the workers only become aware when they have lost all their legal means for defending themselves.

The labour law is part of the legal rights considered for the workers that now is forgotten

and just written on worthless pages of the national constitution. No intuition ought to legally be able to deprive the workers from their legislated rights. However, all the governments since the end Iran-Iraq war to date have bypassed the national constitution using bylaws passed by the parliaments and confirmed by the judiciary. This is the Machiavellian act that shall not ever be forgotten by the history of Iran and the world. The Iranian workers by piecing together the slogans and actions would discover the inherent substance of the capitalist governments. We are now in the neoliberal postmodern era and regressing back towards the [sort of] slavery.

In this abnormal conditions, the Iranian workers have become entangled within an extreme financial crisis and prolonged unemployment, that are painful circumstances and none of the officials pay any attention – instead the workers are treated like criminals whipped and jailed for demonstrations and strikes which the height of their demands is just the wage that is disproportioned to cost of living and safe workplace.

Some people may imagine the workers have embarked on a struggle to increase their rights or medical service and ...But this is not the reality. The fact is that the deceitful middlemen under the banner of religion are holding back the salary payments for the months of work that has been done and the court condemns those workers to "criminal offense" that have been taken to the court by the "Entrepreneurs" and sentences them to lashes and jail.

Brothers, did you know that in slavery social relations the slaves had the right to stay alive? How one can stay alive in the present social relations?

Naser Aghajari

April 17, 2015

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Teachers' Day

By: the *United Labour Association 'ULA'*

On the occasion of the Teacher Day, we the labourers, give our greetings for the Teacher Day, not because it is a historic date, but we greet the educated teachers because they teach the way of life and how to gain rights in the present time.

In life of hardship due to unemployment, rising cost of living, [Unsigned] temporary contracts and while facing all sorts of anti-workers schemes and deprivation arising from unpaid wages and sackings and ...while any of our scattered protests are dealt with means of security-police methods and even on occasions with whip lashes – you [teachers] thought us that in spite of the difference in views and life's geographic differentiations, we ought to define a principle and unit around it.

You thought us that not to only think about our self but consider all people and especially children deprived from education which commodification of education by privatisation of schools has disposed them from learning.

You thought us to establish our own organisations by any means and to be meticulous in their preservation and direction that they take. You thought us to that silence is sometimes as powerful as intense voice. You thought us that life owns its preciousness to the effort of people that sometimes give their precious life to defend the collective interests.

The workers community of Iran is proud to have this kind of teachers and we hope you succeed in

gaining your undisputed rights and also those children deprived of education – we hope the path for seeking justice becomes smoother and your sisters and brothers labourers are also seeking their oppressed rights and would also benefit from your support and experiences.

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UMMI New Site Launched

We are glad to inform workers, trade unions and friends of the labour movement in Iran and around the world that the bi-lingual (Farsi and English) web site of UMMI has been launched. As before, when our Facebook page and weblog was made available to those trade unions that did not have their own site or weblog, the new site is also available to all labour unions. We will translate and publish the materials and statements of labour unions in English in the new web site for fraternal unions outside of Iran to access. This new website is the fruit of labour of the workers whose heart beats for the unity in the labour movement and belongs to all Iranian labour unions.

UMMI New website:

<http://sfelezkar.com>

UMMI weblog:

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UMMI Facebook:

www.facebook.com/Metalworkers



Towards broad union of all workers of Iran against the temporary contracts, elimination of the Labour Law, elimination of workers' insurance plans, wages below the actual inflation rate, privatization of the Social Security Fund and designation of "special commercial and industrial zones" to wreck the lives of the working families.

