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Iran

Brutal repression as social struggles rise in Iran

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Although implicitly authorized by the constitution, strikes and demonstrations by employees have been strictly prohibited in Iran since the war with Iraq (1980-1988). Nevertheless, between 1 May 2021 and 1 May 2022, 4,122 strikes and protest actions by workers, teachers, town hall staff, pensioners, hospital staff, farmers, unemployed young people and so on have taken place.

These were sometimes national actions organized simultaneously in dozens or even hundreds of cities in the case of teachers' struggles, something never before seen in the 43 years of the history of this regime. This means that tens of thousands of activists have been involved in organizing these struggles.

Historic strike in the oil sector

In the past, struggles were focused on the late payment of wages, or blocking closures of work units. But last year the demands were for higher wages, respect for the rules of career development provided for in the statutes, indexation of salaries and retirement pensions to inflation, the parallel increase in pensions and wages, and of course, the right to strike and to form independent organizations.

Among these strikes was the largest in the history of the Islamic Republic: more than 100,000 workers in the oil and petrochemical sector went on strike in more than 12 departments in southern and central Iran. The strike lasted two months and ended only with the satisfaction of most of the demands. The increase of around 115% in teacher mobilizations, compared to the previous year, is the striking phenomenon of this period. Retirees have also organized regular national events.

The water crisis and drought threaten agriculture, and even the supply of drinking water. They are combined with the sudden increase in the prices of basic necessities, following the government's very neoliberal decision to apply the "true prices" of basic products.

Several protests erupted in dozens of cities with overtly political and subversive slogans going as far as "Death to Ayatollah Khamenei!" the most powerful figure in the state. There were deaths and dozens of injuries. The ongoing struggles affect industrial complexes, such as the Hepco steel plant and the Haft-Tapeh sugar refinery, education, as well as retirees.

Hunger strikes

The regime fears the growing solidarity between sectors of activity, as well as their beginning of convergence which shows that a certain threshold of organization and collective consciousness has just been crossed. The authorities have set up a highly sophisticated system of repression and surveillance based on competing security forces and focused on sporadic arrests of known organizers of the mobilizations. Despite this, the Iranian authorities have found that the number of protests and demonstrations has continued to grow.

As arrests and/or warnings to well-known activists had no effect, the authorities decided to strike a blow and take

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action brutally. Taking advantage of a tourist trip by two French trade unionists, Cécile Kohler and Jacques Paris, and their meeting with well-known figures of Iranian trade unionism, the authorities arrested more than ten Iranian trade unionists on charges of "propaganda and conspiracy against the Islamic regime, in collusion with a foreign power". The two French nationals were also arrested and charged with espionage.

Some of those arrested went on hunger strikes, immediately joined by others, already imprisoned, who began "hunger strikes in solidarity". To date, the total number of hunger strikers is 61, an unprecedented phenomenon in Iranian jails. Protest statements in support of the imprisoned activists are pouring in from around the world. The "Collective of French Trade Unions for the Defence of Iranian Workers", with the support of two Geneva trade union structures and components of the Iranian diaspora, organized a rally on 10 June in Geneva, in front of the ILO headquarters.

The economic, social, political, ecological and even moral crisis (with revelations of the theft of public money by state officials) has reached a critical level, which can lead to an open confrontation between the people and the regime.

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).*

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