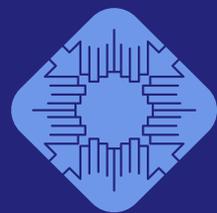


Labor Rights in Iran



QUARTERLY REPORT NO. 18

July - September 2021



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Introduction

This is Zamaneh Media's 18th Labor Rights Quarterly Report. The 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, labor law issues, contractual violations, women's labor, child labor, and labor law. Zamaneh Media monitors these topics daily, and this quarterly report presents the "big picture" of the most critical Iranian labor rights issues over the past three months. The following report covers major labor rights issues, protests, and trends from July through September 2021. The information 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. For all previously published reports, please visit [Zamaneh Media's website](#).

Major Issues

The 13th presidential election was held on June 18, 2021. Ibrahim Raisi, a member of the "Death Committee" during the massacre of political prisoners in the summer of 1988 and former head of the judiciary, was declared the winner in a planned election without a serious rival. During his presidential campaign, Raisi promised to create one million new jobs per year and to reduce inflation to less than 10% within the next two years. He also promised to build one million new housing units per year to solve the housing crisis, claiming that it would provide favorable conditions for 6% economic growth.

The official annual inflation rate in July, the time of the official handover of the government to Raisi, was 45.2%, and the point-to-point inflation rate was 43.2%. The inflation index for the foodstuffs group, as in previous quarters, was higher than the total inflation index. The point-to-point inflation rate for foodstuffs reached 58.4% in July.¹

Inflation was felt more intensively by the consumer market than suggested by government statistics. Prices for milk and dairy products rose again.² Chicken, eggs, and red meat continued to become more expensive.³ According to the Statistical Center of Iran, the average price of 71% of food items this summer passed an increase of more than 24% in one year.⁴

Rents also rose in the summer, as in previous years. The government allowed landlords to raise rents by 25%. Official institutions such as the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture reported a rent inflation rate of 36%.⁵ Mostafa Gholi Khosravi, President of the Tehran Real Estate Advisors Union, announced, however, a 60% increase in the cost of rent in Tehran and other major cities.⁶

At the same time as the rise in inflation, and after negotiations to return to the JCPOA failed, Iran's currency depreciated against the US dollar and euro. At one point, the value of the dollar reached almost 30,000 tomans and the euro exceeded 32,000 tomans.⁷

1 [Statistical Center of Iran](#), Monthly Inflation Report, August 3, 2021

2 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 27, 2021

3 [Tejarat News](#), September 1, 2021

4 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 4, 2021

5 [Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, and Mines](#), August 31, 2021

6 [Rokna](#), August 31, 2021

7 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 22, 2021

Households Below the Poverty Line

Iran's Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare reports that the population below the poverty line increased by 10% in 2020. The Ministry's report cites the continuous growth of food and housing prices as the two essential factors causing an increase in poverty. The report estimates that 32 million Iranians lived below the poverty line in 2019.⁸ The poverty line income for a family of three in 2019 is estimated at 2,785,000 tomans per month. This figure is inconsistent with official data provided by other government officials on the poverty line.

The head of the Relief Committee, a government charity that covers 2,276 households (5 million people), announced that the monthly income of the poverty line in 2020 was 10 million tomans.⁹ In February 2021, around the same time as wage negotiations were taking place at the Supreme Labor Council, independent trade unions demanded that the minimum wage be set at 12 million tomans.

During their union protests this summer, oil and gas contract workers, social security retirees, and teachers claimed the poverty line's monthly wage at 12 million tomans and demanded an increase in the minimum wage in line with the poverty line.

The continually high prices that have become a constant part of Iranian workers' lives over the past two years have made living conditions difficult for all and impossible for many. Delays in wages and layoffs have led to an increased rate of suicide. Within the last three months alone, at least three workers have attempted suicide. On September 10, 2021, a teacher in Fars province hanged himself due to financial problems.¹⁰ On June 14, a worker at the Sirjan mine committed suicide.¹¹ On June 22, a construction worker in Tehran committed suicide after his employer refused to pay his arrears.¹²

8 [Poverty Monitoring Report](#), Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, July 2021

9 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 15, 2021

10 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 10, 2021

11 [Iran Labor News Agency \(ILNA\)](#), June 13, 2021

12 [Borna](#), July 3, 2021

The Army of the Unemployed Is on its Way

The Statistical Center of Iran, in a census report on labor and the employed population, announced that at the end of spring 2021 the unemployment rate had decreased compared to last year.¹³ The 2021 report put the unemployment rate at 8.8%. The decline in the unemployment rate in recent years is more the result of the exit of job-seekers from the employment market and a reduction in the economically-active population than the result of job creation. In the spring of 2021, the economic participation rate had decreased by 3.3% compared to the spring of 2019. At the beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic the economic participation rate was 44.7%. Despite a small number of people who lost their jobs between spring 2019 and winter 2020 returning to work this spring, the economic participation rate is still only 41.4% according to the Statistical Center of Iran.

The female economic participation rate, which was, at best, one-sixth that of the male population before the coronavirus epidemic, has dropped to 13.7%. Between the spring of 2020 and the spring of 2021, more than one million people left the labor market, according to the Statistical Center of Iran reports.¹⁴ In the spring of 2021, 500,000 men returned to work, while the number of working women declined by 100,000. The decline in the population of working women and the female economic participation rate indicate that working women are more vulnerable to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.¹⁵

Officials in Iran have released various statistics on jobs lost or affected during the coronavirus epidemic. However, official reports indicate that at least 1.5 million people have left the labor market. Only a limited number of these individuals were covered by unemployment insurance. In August, a representative of the city of Sari in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (also called the Parliament or the Majles) said that more than two million seasonal workers have been unemployed since the beginning of the pandemic and do not have insurance. The Islamic Parliament Research Center also stated that 60% of workers do not have social insurance.

Between the ongoing pandemic in Iran — the fifth wave of which began at the same time as the presidential election campaign and continued unabated until September — and the economic recession, reducing the number of unemployed persons seems unlikely any time soon.

In a program presented to Parliament, the Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, Hojjat Abdulmolki, put the unemployed and quasi-unemployed population (employed in informal and uninsured jobs) at 5.8 million.¹⁶ The Planning and Budget Organization also estimated that at least one million more job seekers will enter the labor market next year.

13 [Abstract Results of Labor Force Survey](#), Spring 2021, Statistical Center of Iran

14 [Labor Force Survey Report](#), Spring 2021, Statistical Center of Iran

15 [Abstract Results of Labor Force Survey](#), Spring 2021, Statistical Center of Iran

16 [Strategic and Operational Plan](#) of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare of the 13th Cabinet

Protests Continue

Over the last three months, there have been dozens of protest rallies in different parts of Iran. Workers from the oil, gas, refinery, and petrochemical sectors staged the most widespread strike. Farmers and ranchers in various provinces gathered repeatedly to protest the lack of water and the high cost of animal feed. Retirees took to the streets as in previous months. Teachers, known as "Green Karnameh," rallied in Tehran without a break. Municipal workers in different parts of the country, as before, protested most frequently.



Contract workers in the oil sector in the South Pars region

Khuzestan Roars

The leading causes of protests over the summer of 2021 were the COVID-19 pandemic, economic recession, rising inflation, and the drought and water shortage crisis. Khuzestan, Iran's wealthiest province in oil and gas resources, was affected by the water shortage crisis, leading to a cry of protest in June. In Khuzestan province, residents of marginalized and deprived areas took to the streets for at least 10 consecutive nights in Ahvaz, Hamidiyeh, Izeh, and other cities. The government initially pretended to sympathize with the protesters and to address their demands. In reality, at least eight protesters were shot dead and hundreds were detained.¹⁷ The authorities eventually disrupted the mobile internet network in Khuzestan so that it would not be possible to provide news or upload images and clips.

Protests in Khuzestan province spread to other cities in Iran, including: Khorramabad, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Isfahan, Mashhad, Tehran, Gorgan, Rasht, Tabriz, Kermanshah, Karaj, and several other towns. Protest rallies were formed in solidarity with the protesters in Khuzestan and to protest the power outage.¹⁸ Many protesters were arrested in Tabriz and Tehran.¹⁹

17 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 5, 2021

18 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 28, 2021

19 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 20, 2021

Government Budget Deficit and Back Wages: Another Attack on Retirees' Livelihoods

The continuation of the economic recession and the government budget deficit, which, according to MPs, may reach 400,000 billion tomans (400 trillion tomans), has caused delays in the payment of salaries to government employees and retirees covered by state pension and social security funds. At the end of August, local media reported that pensioners were not being paid.²⁰



Retirees of the Social Security Organization

Massoud Mirkazemi, head of the Program and Budget Organization, acknowledged the budget deficit and the government's inability to pay the salaries of government employees. He said his organization would suspend the implementation of the teachers' salary ranking plan because they have not yet determined the funding source for the teachers' salary increase.

In a similar statement, Mohsen Zanganeh, a member of Parliament's Program and Budget Commission, said that the government should borrow from the Central Bank of Iran every year to pay employees.²¹

Under the same pretext, Raisi's cabinet and Parliament have decided to remove a bill that would adjust pensions to be in line with current employees' salaries from the

²⁰ [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 23, 2021

²¹ [Tahririeh](#), August 19, 2021

Parliamentary agenda. The bill was presented to Parliament in June 2021. Elias Naderan, a pro-government lawmaker, called the bill “inflationary.”

Matching pensions in proportion to current wages has been one of the main demands of protesting retirees in recent years. Over the summer of 2021, Social Security retirees rallied at least four times in Tehran,²² Khorramabad, Ahvaz, Mashhad,²³ Rasht,²⁴ and Shush. The other chief demands of the retirees are increased retirement pay, free vaccinations, and free comprehensive health insurance. In addition to Social Security, retirees from the Steel Fund,²⁵ Radio and Television of Iran, Islamic Republic Airlines²⁶ and Tehran Bus Company also gathered to protest insufficient salaries, non-payment of wages and bonuses, and payment delays.

Retiree Group	Demands	Protests
Social Security retirees	Implement pension adjustments, Increase pensions in proportion with the poverty line, Provide free health insurance, Reform pension centers, Allow retirees to participate in social security management, Settle the government’s debt to the Pension Fund	Rallied three times in Tehran, Khorramabad, Shush, Ahvaz, Mashhad, Rasht, and Shiraz
Steel retirees ²⁷	Implement pension adjustments	Rallied at least four times in Alborz, Isfahan, and Ahvaz
Airline retirees	Pay back wages	Rallied in Tehran
Retirees of the Radio and Television Organization ²⁸	Implement pension adjustments	Rallied in Tehran
Retirees of Tehran Bus Company	Provide rewards based on years of service	Rallied in Tehran

22 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), June 27, 2021

23 [Telegram Channel of the Social Security Retirees Workers' Council](#), July 18, 2021

24 [Telegram channel of the Social Security Retirees Workers' Council](#) and [here](#)

25 [Social Security Retirees Workers' Council](#), July 4, 2021

26 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), June 27, 2021

27 [Telegram Channel of the Social Security Retirees Workers' Council](#), July 25, 2021

28 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), June 21, 2021

Municipal Workers: Unpaid Hard Work

Delays in the payment of wages has doubled the pressure on workers in many manufacturing and service sectors. Many municipal employees have not been paid for between 1-14 months. These municipal workers include railway maintenance workers, Khuzestan water and sewage workers, nurses and medical staff of the Khomeini Hospital in Karaj and the Tehran Social Security Hospital, Shafa-Roud dam workers, Pagen Car Company workers, Tehran Social Emergency staff, Hashtgerd metro workers, workers of Tehran's Metro Line 5, Saveh firefighters, and rural telecommunications agents in Hamadan province.



Workers of Bostan Municipality in Khuzestan Province

Wages in arrears: municipal and green space workers:

City	Unpaid Back Wages	Type of Protest	Results
Piranshahr ²⁹	Four months' salary	Interview with the media	City officials have remained silent

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[Kurdistan Center for Democracy and Human Rights](#), August 9, 2021

Saland ³⁰	Four months' salary, New Year bonus and service bonus, cost of work clothes, and overtime pay for the previous year	Interview with the media	The employer claims to not have enough money to pay wages
Karaj ³¹	Unknown	Unknown	A member of the Karaj City Council announced a delay in salary payments for sweepers and green space workers
Kut Abdullah ³²	10 months' salary	More than three weeks of sit-ins and meetings with provincial officials	The mayor stated that he is unable to pay the workers' overdue wage claims
Rudbar ³³	Five months' salary	Rally in front of the municipal building	Unknown
Seesakht ³⁴	5-12 months' salary, New Year bonus, and service bonus for 2019 and 2020	Rally in front of the municipal building and an interview with the media	The protesting workers were threatened with dismissal. No contract has been signed with the sweepers in the new year (Persian year 1400)
Ahwaz ³⁵	One to five months' salary	Rally in front of the municipal building and protesting contractual agreements	96 workers were fired
Khorramshahr ³⁶	Six months' salary and 10 months premium pay	City-wide march	Unknown
Bijar ³⁷	Two months' salary and 10 months' overtime pay	Rally and refusal to collect garbage	Unknown
Sadeh ³⁸	Two months' salary	Rally at work	The mayor claimed that six months of workers' back wages had been settled and only one month remains

30 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), August 11, 2021

31 [IRNA](#), August 10, 2021

32 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), July 24, 2021

33 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 31, 2021

34 [Sobhe Zagros](#), September 4, 2021

35 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), July 13, 2021

36 [Radio and Television of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (IRIB News Agency), June 24, 2021

37 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), June 29, 2021

38 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), August 24, 2021

Omidieh ³⁹	Four months' salary	Rally in front of Omidieh Municipality and a rally in front of Khuzestan Governor's Office	The municipality does not have the money to pay the wages
Miandoab ⁴⁰	Six months' salary	Rally in front of government buildings and protest attendance at Friday prayers	Protesting workers were threatened
Bostan ⁴¹	More than one year of wages	Rally in front of the municipal building and an interview with the media	City officials say they are unable to pay workers' wages due to a blocked municipal account
Abadan ⁴²	Two months' salary	Rally in front of the municipality and an interview with the media	The new mayor has not yet been appointed
Shahr Ghazi ⁴³	Four months' salary	Interviews with the media	Unknown
Yasuj ⁴⁴	Five months' salary, New Year bonus, 2019 and 2020 service bonus	Protest rally in front of the governor's office	The contractor is unable to pay the workers' wage claims
Nowdeshah ⁴⁵	Seven months' salary	Information shared on social networks	Unknown

Most municipal workers are employed through staffing companies on temporary contracts. Within the last three months, municipal workers have protested in Zanjan, Ilam, Bandar Abbas, Bukan, Mahabad, and Lushan.

In addition to the municipal workers, workers in several production units, railway line maintenance workers, and the public and communications services sector also faced delayed payments and unpaid subsidies. Examples of workers' protests in other sectors include:

- June 23 - Ramin Thermal Power Plant workers in Ahvaz
- June 27 - Workers who wash and disinfect trucks at the Khomeini Port terminal
- July 1 - Drivers of Tabriz trucks that transport human bodies
- July 3 - Fired workers from the Ahvaz Pipeline
- July 3 - Kaveh Float Glass Factory workers in Saveh
- July 6 - Fars Telecommunication Company workers
- July 10 - Rural Telecommunication agents in Khorasan Razavi Province
- July 17 - Pagen Automobile Company workers
- July 18 - Workers at the Sungun Copper mine and Varzeqan mine
- July 27 - Azarkam Food Production Company workers in Urumia

Workers rallied in the following sectors: drivers of public transport intercity buses in Qazvin, Shiraz, and Urmia, taxi drivers in Saqez and Zanjan, Snap Food drivers in Tehran,

39 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), September 1, 2021

40 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), September 1, 2021

41 [Young Journalists Club](#), August 29, 2021

42 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), August 31, 2021

43 [Atrak News](#), September 4, 2021

44 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), September 5, 2021

45 [Mersad News](#), September 2, 2021

truck drivers in Rasht, Zarand Kerman, and Ardakan, and maintenance workers of railway lines and technical buildings in East Azerbaijan, Varamin and Khorasan railways.

Widespread Strike by Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Workers: Anger and Burning Furnaces

The outsourcing of oil and gas field projects and the privatization of refineries and petrochemical industries has made working and living conditions unbearable for workers. Over the summer of 2021, official workers, contract workers, and other temporary workers (so-called "Arkan-e-sales" or "Third Category" workers) of the Ministry of Oil repeatedly staged rallies to protest their living conditions. The most widespread labor strike began in mid-June at the Bidkhoon refinery in the Assaluyeh Special Energy Zone and quickly spread to more than 100 oil, gas, and petrochemical sites across Iran.⁴⁶

The demands of the contract workers, who also went on strike in the summer of 2020, include:

- Eliminate contracting companies
- Reduce working hours
- Reduce monthly work to 20 days and increase to 10 rest days
- Increase the monthly minimum wage to 12 million tomans
- Improve conditions of the overnight sleeping camps and the quality of food and health services
- Allow the workers to form a trade union
- Repeal the rules of the free trade and special free economic zones
- Prohibit the dismissal of workers

In the first days of the strike, employers and contractors threatened to fire the protesting workers. At the Tehran refinery, at least 34 workers were fired. The protesting workers said that more than 700 people had been threatened with dismissal.⁴⁷ Dozens of Gachsaran petrochemical workers were also fired for participating in the strike.⁴⁸

What did the oil workers' general strike achieve?

By the end of September, some workers returned to work after their employers met some of their demands. The Protest Organizing Council of the oil and gas workers shared the following updates:

- The overnight accommodations of workers who had returned to work had improved
- A salary increase had been agreed upon for some of the striking workers
- Some employers accepted worker demands to reduce the number of working days (20) and increase the number of rest days (10)
- The contracts of workers who had returned to work had been amended

It is worth noting that the workers developed a new form of organization during the protests. The formation of the Protest Organizing Council, which coordinates the public rallies of workers in different regions, was one of the achievements of this general strike, which lasted for nearly three months.⁴⁹

During the contract workers' strike, another group of oil and gas workers, known as

46 [Radio Zamaneh](#), June 22, 2021

47 [Radio Zamaneh](#), June 23, 2021

48 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), July 5, 2021

49 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 29, 2021

Arkan-e-sales ("Third Category" workers), staged several sit-ins.



Contract workers on strike

What do the "Third Category" workers want?

The so-called Arkan-e-sales or "Third Category" workers are also contracted but have specialized expertise similar to formal workers. As a result, Third Category workers usually enjoy more stable employment. Although they earn better wages than regular contract workers, their earnings are much lower than official employees of the Ministry of Petroleum who have equal specialized experience and skills. Similarly, the Third Category workers do not receive welfare or medical services, unlike Ministry employees.

In 2020 the average salary of official employees of the Ministry of Petroleum and its subordinate companies was 24.4 million tomans. The wages of Third Category workers are, however, based on the minimum wage approved by the Supreme Labor Council rather than the Ministry of Petroleum. The average wage for 2020 of Third Category workers in the oil sector was, at best, 6 million tomans.

Third Category workers want to eliminate this inequality and receive the same salary as official employees. They also want to eliminate contracting companies and reduce working days (Plan 14/14).⁵⁰

Why are formal employees protesting?

Formal workers, who are directly employed by the government, rather than contract companies, also protested in the summer of 2021. They protested in response to

50 [ISNA](#), July 1, 2021

Parliament's approval of 2021 budget law. According to the budget law, the income ceiling for government employees should be no higher than 32.5 million tomans. The implementation of this law would require a salary reduction for official employees of the Ministry of Petroleum. They have repeatedly called for the law to be repealed by holding rallies at work and in front of the Ministry and Parliament buildings.

During the general strikes in June and July, the Minister of Petroleum and lawmakers promised the Ministry's formal full-time workers that they would address their wage problems. In August, a spokesman for the Energy Commission of Parliament said that a new government decree had solved the issue.⁵¹ According to the decree, the basic salary in government institutions should be no more than 15 times the minimum salary. Through this government decree, only "basic salaries" are subject to the 15-fold increase limit. The Energy Commission spokesman said this would not affect the higher income levels of many oil workers.

51 [Mehr News Agency](#), August 9, 2021

Haft Tappeh: The Dismissal of the Owners Is Official

In April, the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-Industry Co. workers' union announced the dismissal of Omid Asadbeigi and Mehrdad Rostami, the company's two owners. The official announcement of the owners' departure, however, was delayed until August. Between the court ruling and its official statement, the owners of Haft Tappeh tried to prevent the workers' demands from being met by making false claims in the media and through their political connections.



Haft Tappeh workers on strike

During this time, the government cut in half the water rights on sugarcane fields,⁵² did not renew the non-sugarcane and pest workers' contracts, fired the security guards, and stopped paying salaries altogether.

Initially, pest workers whose contracts had not been renewed staged a rally at work.⁵³ Their protest spread to other sectors on the twentieth day.⁵⁴

The main demands of the workers in this round of protests, which lasted until the end of August, were:

- Finalize ownership of the company
- Force the departure of the (former) company owners and their affiliated managers from the workplace
- Payment of back wages

52 [Radio Zamaneh](#), June 2, 2021

53 [Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Workers Syndicate](#), July 14, 2021

54 [Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Workers Syndicate](#), July 16, 2021

- Allow all fired workers to return to work
- Renew contracts
- COVID-19 vaccinations
- End the prosecution and incarceration of Farzaneh Zilabi, the lawyer representing the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane workers

On August 21, the judiciary finally announced the court's decision to expel the owners of Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Company.⁵⁵

55 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 21, 2021

Teachers: Suspension of the Ranking System

Privatization and outsourcing have led to the division of teachers working in the Iranian education system into different professional groups, including formal teachers, service purchasing teachers, tuition fee teachers, so-called "*karnameh-sabz*" or "green-certificate" teachers, and teachers of non-profit schools. Each group has been protesting in recent months to improve their living and working conditions, despite the suspension of face-to-face classes since February 2020 due to the pandemic. The green-certificate teachers formed the most significant protest. These are informal teachers who have taught for years but have not been formally recruited by the government. After passing the written recruitment exams and face-to-face interviews, the teachers received a "green certificate" indicating that the government was obliged to hire them. Despite government promises, some Ministry of Education officials do not consider the possession of a green certificate as a guarantee of employment. The green-certificate teachers rallied in front of the Ministry of Education in Tehran for several days in a row in June. They returned to the streets in August.



Teachers' rally

Teachers at non-profit schools have also repeatedly rallied in front of government buildings demanding an improvement in their living and working conditions.

Official government teachers also rallied twice in August in front of the Administrative Court of Justice,⁵⁶ Parliament, and the Program and Budget Organization⁵⁷ to protest

⁵⁶ [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), August 28, 2021

⁵⁷ [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 5, 2021

salary cuts and The failure to implement the Teachers' Professional Ranking bill. The head of the Program and Budget Organization has said that the Teachers' Professional Ranking, approved in the final months of Hassan Rouhani's cabinet, will not be implemented due to the budget deficit and a lack of funding.

Protest Group	Demands	Type of Protests
Official government teachers	Salary increase, stop the commodification of education, enforce the ranking of teachers' salaries, provide free general vaccinations	Two rallies in front of Parliament, the Program and Budget Organization building, and the Court of Administrative Justice, a statement, and an interview with the media
Green-certificate teachers - These are university-educated teachers who the Ministry of Education has temporarily recruited. Their work is conditional on passing the required tests. The teachers have obtained the required score in the written employment tests, and in-person interviews, but the Ministry still refuses to hire them.	Formal employment	24-hour sit-in in front of the Ministry of Education building and a rally in front of Parliament ⁵⁸
Teachers at non-profit schools - The Ministry of Education holds the founders and owners of non-profit schools responsible for their teachers' salaries and employment contracts.	Payment of back wages, conversion to formal contracts	Rally in front of Parliament ⁵⁹
Literacy movement instructors - These are teachers of the Quran from the literacy movement who are excluded from completing the formal employment tests for teachers	Official employment by the Ministry of Education	Rally in front of Parliament
School janitors	Implement the Job Ranking Plan, increase wages, convert temporary contracts into permanent ones	Rally in front of Parliament ⁶⁰

58 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 12, 2021

59 [IscaNews](#), June 29, 2021

60 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 4, 2021

Medical Staff Are Worn Out

The government's inability to control continued waves of the coronavirus has made conditions even more difficult for medical staff. During the summer of 2021, the number of critically ill patients in need of hospitalization increased dramatically in comparison with previous seasons due to the accelerating coronavirus outbreak. The growing number of patients and the filling hospital beds increased the working hours of medical staff and added psychological stress on nurses. Officials at medical universities in various provinces have repeatedly complained about the depletion of medical staff and nurses. Mohammad Sharifi Moghaddam, Secretary-General of the Nurses' House, called the shortage of nurses (per capita) in Iranian hospitals a "disaster."⁶¹ "In the fifth peak of the coronavirus in some provinces, a nurse has managed 25 patients," said the Deputy Director of Development for the Iranian Nursing Organization.⁶² Over the last two years, high work stress and low wages has caused many nurses to try to emigrate. In March 2021, the Chairman of the Board of the Nurses' House in Tehran said that, since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, 500 nurses had emigrated every month.

The deaths of nurses and medical staff have decreased thanks to vaccinations, but health workers are still dying. Mohammad Mirzabeigi, head of the Iranian Nursing Organization, said in August that at least 125,000 nurses had been infected and at least 120 had died from COVID-19 since the pandemic.⁶³

Despite increasing work stress on medical staff, the Iranian government has encouraged the privatization of the health sector and has prevented contract nurses (so-called corporate or "sherkati" nurses) from accessing formal roles.

Work pressure and low wages threaten the mental health of nurses. According to the results of a survey of nurses in Malayer hospitals in Hamadan province, 27.56% of Iranian nurses had "suicidal tendencies" after the onset of the pandemic, and 9.9% were "ready to commit suicide."⁶⁴

Nurses and other medical staff rallied several times over the summer in front of their workplaces and government buildings. Several examples of protests and rallies covered by the media include:

- Staff at Khomeini Hospital in Karaj rallied to protest late payments and uncertainty regarding hospital ownership and management⁶⁵
- Nurses at the Rohani Hospital in Babol rallied regarding late payments⁶⁶
- Social Security Hospital nurses protested against retirement regulations and wage cuts⁶⁷
- Staff from the Khuzestan Health Transformation Project demanded that their contracts be changed from temporary to permanent⁶⁸
- Contract staff of Qom Health Center protested staff dismissals and temporary

61 [Aftab Yazd](#), September 2, 2021

62 [Iranian Nursing Organization](#), September 7, 2021

63 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 10, 2021

64 [ISNA](#), September 10, 2021

65 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 29, 2021

66 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), August 23, 2021

67 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), July 6, 2021

68 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), August 29, 2021

contracts⁶⁹

- Contract staff of Kurdistan School of Medical Sciences protested late payments and low wages⁷⁰
- Shiraz Health Center staff rallied regarding unpaid wage claims⁷¹
- Resident doctors in several cities objected to the pressures of medical internship programs, the profiteering of insurance companies, and the exploitation of resident doctors⁷²

69 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), July 4, 2021

70 [Fars News Agency](#), September 1, 2021

71 [ISNA](#), August 31, 2021

72 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 1, 2021

Detention of Teachers and Retirees

Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Ejei, a former spokesman for the Judiciary, was named the new head of the Judiciary after Ibrahim Raisi won the presidential election. The change of the head of the Judiciary and the executive branch did not, however, change the repression of workers and trade union activists. Workers, teachers, retirees, and human rights defenders continue to be summoned, detained, and sentenced to prison.

Several retirees were summoned to court or prison in Karaj, Mashhad, and Shiraz. Three members of the Teachers' Union in Gilan province were the subject of a lawsuit. Amir-Abbas Azarmvand, a journalist defending workers' rights, was arrested in Tehran. Peyman Farhangian was summoned to prison to serve his prison sentence. Kamyar Fakoor, detained during the Labor Day rally in 2019, has been called to court again.

Farzaneh Zilabi, the lawyer for Haft Tappeh sugarcane workers, was arrested and tried. Mustafa Nili, a lawyer representing several detainees of the November 2019 protests, was taken to prison. Police arrested four of his colleagues too.

Employers also fired protesting workers at work. Mehran Raouf, a labor activist, detained for more than eight months, was sentenced to eight years in prison along with Somayeh Kargar, Nazanin Raoufnejad, Nahid Taghavi, and Bahareh Soleimani.

The table below shows some of the repressive measures against workers in the summer.

Type of Repression	Name(s)
Arrest	Amir Abbas Azarmound - Journalist ⁷³ Nusrat Beheshti - Retired teacher ⁷⁴ Asghar Amirzadegan - Retired teacher ⁷⁵ Gholamreza Gholami Kandazi - Teachers' union activist ⁷⁶
Summon	Mahboubeh Farahzadi - Retired teacher ⁷⁷ Peyman Farhangian - Writer and labor activist ⁷⁸ Kamyar Fakoor - Defender of workers' rights ⁷⁹ Jafar Ebrahimi – Member of Justice Seeking Teachers ⁸⁰ Teymour Bagheri Koodakani – Member of the Gilan Teachers' Union ⁸¹ Mahmoud Sedighipour - Member of the Gilan Teachers Union ⁸² Aziz Ghasemzadeh - Member of the Gilan Teachers Union ⁸³

73 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 6, 2021

74 [Teachers' Union Telegram Channel](#), August 6, 2021

75 [Hrana](#), July 28, 2021

76 [Hrana](#), September 8, 2021

77 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 1, 2021

78 [Hrana](#), September 3, 2021

79 [Hrana](#), September 4, 2021

80 [Teachers' Union Telegram Channel](#), September 8, 2021

81 [Teachers' Union Telegram Channel](#), August 9, 2021

82 [Teachers' Union Telegram Channel](#), August 9, 2021

83 [Teachers' Union Telegram Channel](#), August 9, 2021

Issuance of imprisonment sentence	<p>Hossein Hossein-Khani - Sentenced to three months in prison in Mahabad⁸⁴</p> <p>Mehran Raouf - Sentenced to 10 years and eight months in jail</p> <p>Nahid Taghavi - Sentenced to 10 years and eight months in jail</p> <p>Nafiseh Malekjoo - Sentenced to 6 years and nine months in prison</p> <p>Mohammad Hajatinia - Sentenced to 8 years and eight months in jail</p>
Dismissal from work	<p>35 workers of Tehran refinery for participating in strikes</p> <p>Abolfazl Sedighi and Hamed Janeshkar Harzandi, railway and technical buildings maintenance workers in the East Azerbaijan region⁸⁵</p> <p>Dismissal of several Sepahan Isfahan cement workers for participating in union protests⁸⁶</p>

84 [Hengaw](#), July, 10 2021

85 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), June 28, 2021

86 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), June 30, 2021

Immigrants: Forcing Afghans to Leave Iran

The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan has increased the number of Afghan refugees fleeing to Iran. However, Iranian military and government officials explicitly stated that they would prevent new immigrants from entering or staying in Iran for long periods, and that they would be housed in temporary camps in Sistan and Baluchestan, Khorasan Razavi, and South Khorasan.⁸⁷

Government officials in various provinces have said they would bar Afghan migrants from entering, and those who have entered illegally will be returned to the “eastern borders.”

- July 12 - The Political Deputy Governor of West Azerbaijan: “The borders of this province are closed for the passage of illegal citizens who have entered the province illegally from the southeast and east of the country. We enforce the bans at the border. We ask the people of Khoy, Chalderan, Makoo, and Shut not to give them a place to stay.”⁸⁸
- August 17 - Director-General of Citizens and Foreign Immigrants at Isfahan Governor office: “With the planned measures, Afghan immigrants will not enter Isfahan or other central parts of the country from eastern borders.”⁸⁹
- August 22 - Director-General of Foreign Affairs and Immigrants, Fars Province: “Developments in Afghanistan have caused many Afghans to enter Fars Province as a group or as a family through the country’s borders. We identified these individuals in different parts of the province in groups of 200, 300, and even 500 people and transferred them to the designated camps near eastern borders. Given that these people are entering the country illegally, shelter for them by Afghan citizens who are legally present in the province is a violation. Necessary legal action will be taken against the violators.”⁹⁰
- August 31 - Noshahr Police Chief: “Arresting and returning unauthorized foreign nationals to their country is one of our main plans and given the sensitivity of the issue and the negative consequences that these foreign nationals bring in, the governor and members of the province’s Security Council should take this issue more seriously.”⁹¹
- September 1 - Deputy Minister of Social Affairs and Crime Prevention at Kerman Provincial Justice department: “The punishment for immigrants should be increased. People need to be aware of the consequences of marrying foreign nationals, hiring them, and providing homes, places, unregulated financial connections and transactions with them, and so on.”⁹²
- September 4 - Governor of Tabriz: “As soon as we learned of the presence of some Afghan citizens in Tabriz, we returned them to their country with the coordination of the police.”⁹³

87 [Hamshahri Online](#), August 18, 2021

88 [Young Journalists Club](#), July 12, 2021

89 [Young Journalists Club](#), August 17, 2021

90 [Young Journalists Club](#), August 22, 2021

91 [ISNA](#), August, 31 2021

92 [ISNA](#), September 1, 2021

93 [Young Journalists Club](#), September 4, 2021

Death of 104 Laborers in Work-related Accidents

Between June 10 and September 11, at least 104 workers were killed and 145 injured, as reported in the Iranian news media. These deaths occurred at work or on the way to and from work. As in previous seasons, construction workers and well diggers, who often work on daily verbal agreements without a contract or any health coverage, suffered the most. 46 construction workers and well diggers died during this period. At least two were child laborers, and four were migrant workers.

At least five child laborers died in construction, small-scale manufacturing, and technical service workshops in the past three months. Five migrant workers were killed and four injured in this period.

Electricity companies, which contractors operate, also accounted for many work-related accidents, with 15 fatal accidents. Workers guarding electrical wires or telegraph and telephone lines have repeatedly called for their job to be recognized as a “hard and harmful job.” Officials of Tavanir Company (under the Ministry of Energy) and the Ministry of Labor have ignored this request.⁹⁴

The table below shows the death toll and accidents at work between June 10 and September 11. The actual number of deaths and accidents at work is higher than what official reports state.

Occupation	Injured	Died
Construction	17	46
Mine	8	8
Production workshops	8	8
Services	27	21
Large industrial workshops	82	4
Other	3	17
Total	145	104

94 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 13, 2021

Kulbars

Death still casts a broad shadow over the *kulbars*. *Kulbars* carry a cargo of commercial goods on their shoulders and cross dangerous border areas so that border guards do not intercept them.

Iranian border guards regularly shoot at *kulbars* under the pretext of “preventing the entry of oppositional political groups.” Between the beginning of June and September 10, nine *kulbars* were shot dead by border guards, and 31 were injured because of torture or shooting by Iranian military personnel.

During the same period, three *kulbars* died due to natural disasters, and 13 others were killed due to falls from heights and other accidents.

In June, six *kulbars* were killed by Iranian, Turkish, and Iraqi military agents. One *kulbar* died of cardiac arrest, and border guards injured 10.⁹⁵

A group of *kulbars* and many Baneh residents rallied on August 26 at Salahuddin Ayoubi Hospital to protest the shooting of *kulbars* by border patrol agents.

The shootings provoked protests from government officials as well. Baneh’s representative in the Supreme Council of Provinces criticized the firing on the *kulbars*, saying, “Most *kulbars* who were killed in the past ten years were shot inside Iranian borders.”⁹⁶

Kamal Hosseinpour, a representative of Piranshahr, has promised that a bill would be presented to Parliament to organize *kulbars* within a legal framework.⁹⁷ According to government officials, about 80,000 residents of Kurdistan, Kermanshah, West Azerbaijan, and Ilam earn their living through *kulbari*.

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96 [IMNA](#), July 28, 2021

97 [Borna](#), July 26, 2021

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