

# Labor Rights in Iran



QUARTERLY REPORT NO. 19

**October - December 2021**



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## Introduction

This publication is Zamaneh Media's 19th Quarterly Labor Rights Report. These reports focus on unemployment, deferment or non-payment of wages and benefits, protests and strikes, freedom of association and assembly, independent unions, workplace discrimination, contract violations, women's labor, child labor, and labor law. Zamaneh Media monitors these topics daily, and this report provides an overview 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 October through December 2021. The information herein 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 as well as an annual report. For all previously published reports, please visit [Zamaneh Media's website](#).

## Overview: Bankrupt Government, Hungry Workers

This fall, Iranian government representatives returned to Vienna to resume the so-called "JCPOA revival" talks after a delay of several months. It is not yet clear whether the current round of talks will be successful, but Iran's economy will face a major crisis if the negotiations fail, and sanctions persist. This summer, a report by the Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) assessed that Iran's economy will be bankrupt within the next three years if sanctions are not lifted.<sup>1</sup> Official estimates indicate that the budget deficit of the Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 21, 2021 to March 21, 2022) will exceed 400 trillion tomans trillion tomans of this budget deficit will be unsecured.<sup>2</sup> The government's debt to the banking system and other real and legal entities will exceed 1500 trillion tomans.<sup>3</sup>

During the negotiations in Vienna, the dollar exchange rate in Iran exceeded 30,000 tomans and the stock market index took a downward turn.<sup>4</sup> The government decided to sell bonds by indirectly withdrawing funds from the Central Bank of Iran for financing. It enforced this decision by requiring banks to buy bonds, which compelled them to borrow from the central bank. This process has resulted in liquidity growth and rampant inflation. The government claimed that it had finally stemmed the rapid rise in inflation in November with a decision by the Supreme Labor Council, but this artificial slowdown in inflation seemed to facilitate wage suppression of workers.

To reduce the budget deficit, President Ebrahim Raisi's cabinet is planning to cut welfare allowances, suppress wages, and enact contractionary economic policies that will endanger the health and livelihoods of employed, retired, and unemployed workers. In the budget bill for next year, the government envisages a 10% increase in state employees' salaries. The Supreme Labor Council is likely to use the same figure as the basis for determining all workers' wages next year.

According to the budget bill, the average retirement age, and the method for calculating pensions have changed to the detriment of workers and retirees.<sup>5</sup> More specifically, the government intends to raise the retirement age by two years and use the average salary over the previous three years of employment as a basis for calculating pensions. Both decisions harm the workers and retirees and occurred without the relevant parliamentary procedure. Meanwhile, the bill for permanent wage equalization for retirees remains in limbo in parliament.<sup>6</sup> (For more information, see Zamaneh's [special report on retirees](#)).

The government has also removed the preferred currency for the import of essential goods and medicine from the budget. At the relatively cheap rate of 4200 tomans, the preferred currency has been the dollar; the government provides dollars to importers for essential goods, especially food items, in order to prevent inflation and sharp fluctuations in the prices of basic necessities. This year, however, the government presented a bill with an "urgency clause" calling for the elimination of the preferred currency. While parliament opposed this clause, the head of the PBO insisted that the government should not use the preferred currency this year.<sup>7</sup> The Deputy Economy Minister previously said that the

1 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 17, 2021

2 [Tejarat News](#), October 15, 2021. Exchange rate at the time of publication: 1 USD = 30,000 Tomans.

3 [Etemad Newspaper](#), November 20, 2021

4 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 13, 2021

5 [Radio Farda](#), December 12, 2021

6 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 24, 2021

7 [ILNA](#), December 13, 2021

government had spent \$8 billion on importing essential goods and medicine in the first six months of 2021 and would need to spend another \$12 billion to import these goods in the second half of the year.

Importers use the preferred currency to buy livestock feed, medicine, medical equipment, and other essential goods. Eliminating this initiative could lead to higher prices for protein, imported pharmaceuticals, and even domestically produced medicines made from imported raw materials. Price increases of essential goods will make living conditions more difficult for the working class. The wage committee at the Supreme Center of Islamic Labor Councils, a governmental organization, estimated the cost of the living basket at 11.5 million tomans in November, a figure almost three times the minimum wage approved by the Supreme Labor Council (SLC). However, the SLC remains silent on wage adjustment.

This silence on wage adjustment and the lack of government welfare support have increased the number of hungry and poor people in Iran. According to the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, at least one-third of Iran's population is below the poverty line. The head of the Social Security Research Center has said that 31.8% of the people in urban areas and 50% of those in rural areas fall below the absolute poverty line.<sup>8</sup> The director general of nutrition improvement at the Ministry of Health also reported food insecurity in eight provinces as well as an increased number of children under the age of five suffering from malnutrition.<sup>9</sup>

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8 [ISNA](#), November 14, 2021

9 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 17, 2021

## Fourteen Million Unemployed and "Quasi-Unemployed"

As inflation rises, so does the number of unemployed people in Iran. The Statistics Center of Iran announced that the unemployment rate at the end of the summer was 9.6%, which is higher than the previous season.<sup>10</sup> The real unemployment rate, however, is estimated to be at least twice the official rate. In November, the Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare announced on television that 14 million people were unemployed or "quasi-unemployed."<sup>11</sup> Survey results show that in 2020, , about 13 million people<sup>12</sup> , more than half of the working population held informal jobs, meaning they lacked a specific employment contract, social security insurance, or approved wages.<sup>13</sup> As the recession continues to intensify with the global COVID-19 pandemic, the number of informal sector workers is estimated to have increased this year.

A drop in the formal employment rate means an increase in the informal sector and what government officials refer to as "unreal jobs."

The table below displays the difference between the economically active, employed, and unemployed populations. As indicated in the table, the participation and employment rates have decreased both seasonally and annually. According to the Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center, at least three million job seekers have exited the labor market due to frustration with finding a job.

| Percentage / year         | Spring 2021 | Summer 2021 | Seasonal Difference | Summer 2020 | Annual Difference |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| <b>Participation rate</b> | 41.4        | 41.1        | -0.3                | 41.8        | -0.7              |
| <b>Employment rate</b>    | 37.7        | 37.2        | -0.5                | 37.8        | -0.6              |
| <b>Unemployment rate</b>  | 8.8         | 9.6         | 0.8                 | 9.5         | 0.1               |

The government's inability to contend with the ongoing pandemic has increased the number of unemployed people in Iran. Government agencies have not yet released exact figures of those who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic, but it is estimated that at least one million formal and over two million informal employees have lost their jobs due to COVID-19.

While Raisi's cabinet has promised to create at least one million new jobs per year, this promise requires funding and seems unrealistic. The government's plan to reduce the unemployment rate hinges on changing labor and social security laws to the detriment of workers. This bill, which intends to set regional wages and enact reforms to "improve the business environment," actually seeks to dilute social security laws. These plans are part of the government and parliament's anti-labor actions.<sup>14</sup>

10 [Abstract Labor Force Survey Results](#), Summer 2021

11 [IMNA](#), November 30, 2021

12 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 3, 2021

13 [Detailed Report on Formal and Informal Employment in the Iranian Calendar Year 1398-1399](#) (March 20, 2019 - March 20, 2020)

14 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 2, 2021

The government has also attacked social security laws in the budget bill. For example, the basis for calculating pensions has changed from the average wages over the last two years to the average salary over the last three years of employment, and the retirement age has increased by two years. The retirement age for teachers has also increased from 60 to 65.

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## Poverty Kills Workers

The spread of poverty in recent years has led to increased suicide attempts in Iran. Government agencies do not publish clear statistics on the overall occurrence of suicides. However, some reported statistics include a November 2021 announcement by the head of the Social Security Research Institute of a 35% increase in suicides with rice pills.<sup>15</sup> The Ministry of Education also revealed an “increase in suicide rates and violence” among students in a report the same month.<sup>16</sup>

According to Social Security Research Institute estimates, more than three million students have dropped out of school due to an inability to access virtual learning. The Ministry of Education estimates the number of children who will drop out of school in the 2022 academic year at 970,000.<sup>17</sup> Economic poverty is a primary reason that students drop out of the education system, and as a result a large portion of children who do so will turn to harmful work to help their families.

In the past three months, Iranian news outlets have published numerous reports regarding suicide attempts in different parts of the country. The following are examples of suicides or suicide attempts by workers and their families due to economic problems:

- Self-immolation of a Dehdasht municipal worker’s wife of due to poverty<sup>18</sup>
- Suicide of a worker in Assaluyeh<sup>19</sup>
- Attempted suicide of two workers in Ilam due to wage disputes<sup>20</sup>
- Self-inflicted burns of a 55-year-old worker in Qazvin due to pension problems<sup>21</sup>
- Self-immolation of a worker in the Arak Labor Office in protest of the decision by the Dispute Resolution Board<sup>22</sup>
- Suicide of a teenage koolbar (border cargo porter) in Paveh<sup>23</sup>
- Suicide of a worker in Ilam<sup>24</sup>
- Suicide of a family of three due to poverty in Mahabad<sup>25</sup>
- Suicide of Zanjan Social Security Officer<sup>26</sup>
- Suicide of a ranch worker in Bahmai County<sup>27</sup>
- Attempted suicide of a worker in Ahvaz<sup>28</sup>
- Suicide of a young man in Yaftabad, Tehran<sup>29</sup>
- Suicide of a man in front of Mosalla neighborhood of Tehran<sup>30</sup>
- Suicide of a construction worker in Mehmanshahr<sup>31</sup>

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15 [Iranian Students News Agency](#), October 15, 2021  
16 [Iranian Students News Agency](#), November 6, 2021  
17 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 28, 2021  
18 [Iranian Students News Agency](#), September 26, 2021  
19 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), October 19, 2021  
20 [Young Journalists Club](#), September 26, 2021  
21 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), September 28, 2021  
22 [News Agency of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), November 15, 2021  
23 [Iran Watch](#), November 17, 2021  
24 [Iran Watch](#), November 21, 2021  
25 [Iran Watch](#), November 23, 2021  
26 [Iran Watch](#), November 16, 2021  
27 [Iran Watch](#), October 4, 2021  
28 [Rokna](#), November 19, 2021  
29 [Rokna](#), November 14, 2021  
30 [Rokna](#), October 17, 2021  
31 [Rokna](#), November 7, 2021



## Protests: Numerous and Non-stop

The budget deficit in the governmental and non-governmental sectors increases daily. The non-provision of budgeted resources due to the sharp decline in oil exports has made it difficult for the public sector to pay salaries and finance development projects. The effects of this reality on workers' livelihoods include delays in receiving wages, wage cuts, and layoffs, all of which are primary motivators behind protests in the workplace.



Workers of the Asminon mine blocked the Hormozgan-Kerman road

Municipalities, the most important provider of city services, have lost a large part of their revenue due to the recession. Income decreases and widespread corruption in contracts transferring municipal services to the private sector have made conditions more difficult than ever for workers, who often work for low wages and under temporary contracts. One example of a reaction to these trying circumstances happened in October 2021, when the wife of a Dehdasht municipal worker set herself on fire due to economic hardship. The workers of Dehdasht Municipality have arrears of wages going back at least five months, and municipal workers in other cities are in a similar situation.

Over the past three months, municipal workers, especially those in Isfahan, Khuzestan, Kurdistan, Kohgiluyeh-and-Boyer-Ahmad, Gilan, and Qazvin, have rallied to protest wage arrears.

Islamic Azad University staff across the country protested because of delays in receiving their salaries. Additionally, workers for Ardabil Sabalan Fabric, Rezvanshahr Shafarood Dam, Manjil Freeway, Jask oil tanker, Global Petrotech drilling in Kish, Kish municipal

services, and health care networks also experienced delayed wage payments, which resulted in these employees' organizing rallies and sit-ins in protest. It is worth noting that the number of workers with wage arrears is higher than the statistics reported by official news agencies.

Inequality between formal and informal workers in various sectors has also fueled labor protests. Following the example set by the oil and gas contract workers, the mine contract workers demanded an end to the exploitation of informal workers by protesting in several cities.

After a period of widespread protests, the oil and gas workers achieved some of their demands in the summer of 2021: a reduction of consecutive work days from 24 to 20, an increase of the rest period from 6 days to 10, pay raises, and improvements in the quality of food and accommodations. However, they stopped working again after the contractors refused to fulfill these obligations.

As in the past, teachers and retirees were among the most prominent protesting forces. They organized several large rallies in different parts of the country.

Farmers in Isfahan, Khuzestan, and Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari also participated in protests in the fall of 2021.

The municipal workers' situation is still dire, as most of them have not been paid for several months. In the previous quarterly report, Zamaneh described the conditions of municipal workers in detail.

## Teachers: The Glory of Solidarity

The Teachers Ranking Bill was submitted to the Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament) in the last days of Hassan Rouhani's cabinet. While the initial bill proposed 80 trillion tomans (about \$2.7 billion at the current exchange rate) for the implementation of a teacher ranking system, the parliament ultimately entered the bill on its agenda with a credit ceiling of only 12.5 trillion tomans (about \$417 million) for the second half of the year. Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf stated that despite the new cabinet's request to withdraw the bill, parliament intends to approve the ranking plan for the second six months of the current year.



Teachers on strike

On December 11-12, 2021, teachers went on strike to protest the reduction of the ranking budget. In at least 60 cities, they refused to attend classes for these two days, according to the NGO Coordinating Council (NGOSCC). While the teachers' sit-in occurred, security forces violently arrested Rasoul Badaqi, the union's inspector, at his home and summoned Amanj Amini, a member of the Kurdistan Teachers' Union.<sup>32</sup> After his arrest, Rasoul Badaqi told his wife in a phone call that he was being held in solitary confinement but did not know the prison in which he was detained.

32 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 12, 2021

On Monday, December 13, 2021, Iranian teachers rallied nationwide.<sup>33</sup> These rallies were held in over 80 cities and became one of the largest and most unique union protests of the last three decades. Despite these efforts, the Islamic Consultative Assembly approved the ranking bill with a reduced budget ceiling two days later. Despite parliamentary approval, the government postponed the implementation of the ranking program to some point this year.

Teacher activists described the bill as "a sham" and threatened to continue protesting if parliament and the government did not approve and implement the original ranking plan.<sup>34</sup>

Services-for-purchase teachers, preschool teachers, and literacy instructors have also rallied several times over the past three months to protest their living conditions, low wages, and job ranking uncertainty.

The table below shows a selection of the teacher groups' protests between September 11 and December 11, 2021.

| Protest Group                        | Demands  | Form of Protest  |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Teachers <sup>35, 36, 37, 38</sup>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve the ranking bill so that teachers' salaries would be 80% of the university faculty members</li> <li>Release imprisoned teachers and stop prosecuting teacher activists</li> <li>Free education</li> </ul> | National rallies in over 60 cities                                 |
| Service purchasing teachers          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Payment of wage arrears</li> <li>Amendment of contracts</li> <li>Increases in salary</li> </ul>   | Rally in Qazvin, Shiraz, Neishabour, Shahrekord                    |
| Preschool teachers <sup>39, 40</sup> | Employment in the public education sector under the Ministry of Education  | Rally in Khuzestan, Golestan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad provinces |
| Literacy movement instructors        | Employment in the public education sector under the Ministry of Education  | Rally in Tehran  |

33 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 13, 2021

34 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 15, 2021

35 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 25, 2021

36 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 3, 2021

37 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 14, 2021

38 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 11, 2021

39 [Asr-e-Jonoob](#), October 2, 2021

40 [Kebna News](#), October 21, 2021

## Miners Against Exploitation

During a visit to the Parvadeh coal mine in September, President Ebrahim Raisi promised to solve the problems of contract workers. Shortly following his remarks, a wave of protests and rallies broke out in the mines of Kerman province and West and East Azerbaijan. For example, in West Azerbaijan, 100 contract workers were fired on the eve of winter, as in previous years. These workers gathered to protest the layoffs and held talks with provincial officials.

Workers at the Sungun copper mine staged sit-ins for several days protesting low wages and temporary contracts. Asminon chromite mine workers also blocked the main road connecting of Bandar Abbas to Kerman once again in the spring of 2021.

In Kerman province, which has many copper and coal mines, miners protested "wage discrimination between official and contract workers, non-implementation of job classification plans, low wages, temporary contracts, and the sale of mining shares to the private sector."

| Protest Group   | Reason for Protest / Demands  | Form of Protest / Results                      |
|---|---|--|
| Seasonal workers at Aq Dareh gold mine <sup>41</sup>        | Dismissal of seasonal workers / Return to work  | Rally  |
| Workers of Rochun Valley Copper Mine <sup>42</sup>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job classification plan not implemented</li> <li>• Low wages</li> <li>• Unequal wages</li> <li>• Temporary contracts</li> </ul>                            | Rally / Meeting with provincial officials      |
| Asminon Jan Faryab mine workers <sup>43, 44</sup>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job classification plan not implemented</li> <li>• Low wages</li> <li>• Temporary contracts</li> </ul>   | Blocking the communication road for three days |
| Kerman coal miners <sup>45</sup>                            | Sale of company shares  | Rally and sit-ins                              |
| Private sector workers in Kuhbanan coal mines <sup>46</sup> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination in the payment of wages</li> <li>• Harsh working conditions</li> <li>• / Cancel privatization</li> <li>• / Eliminate contractors</li> </ul> | Six-day sit-ins                                |
| Workers of Sungun Copper Complex <sup>47</sup>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dismissal of workers</li> <li>• Discrimination in the payment of wages to formal and informal workers</li> <li>• Temporary contracts</li> </ul>            | Rally and sit-ins                              |
| Workers of Midok Shahrabak mine <sup>48</sup>               | Dismissals from work and arbitrary detentions by the police   | Rally  |

41 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 22, 2021

42 [Islamic Republic News Agency](#), November 17, 2021

43 [Dana Information Network](#), November 25, 2021

44 [Islamic Republic News Agency](#), November 25, 2021

45 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), November 6, 2021

46 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 30, 2021

47 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 5, 2021

48 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), September 26, 2021

|                                    |   |         |
|------------------------------------|---|---------|
| Gol Toot coal miners <sup>49</sup> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exploitation of workers</li><li>• Wage discrimination</li><li>• Privatization</li><li>• Contracting companies</li></ul> | Sit-ins |
|------------------------------------|---|---------|

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49 [Rah-e-Arman Kerman](#), October 3, 2021

## Health: Nurses Against Discrimination

The World Health Organization (WHO) and other sources estimate that Iran only has 16.3 nurses for every 10,000 people, a shortage of around 150,000 relative to the country's population of 84 million.<sup>50</sup> Over the past two years, the pandemic has amplified the extraordinary pressure and severe exploitation nurses in Iran already faced. The government has yet to fulfill its promise to eliminate discrimination by implementing the Nursing Services Tariff System, and the difference between the salaries of both formal and informal nurses and nurses and doctors is significant.



Nurses demand implementing the Nursing Services Tariff System.

The non-implementation of the law on tariffs for medical services, discrimination between informal and formal nurses, low wages, delays in paying benefits, and job pressures have forced nurses to emigrate from Iran.<sup>51</sup> The deputy minister of nursing at the Ministry of Health reported that he had received 1500 applications to obtain a good performance certificate in 2021, which nurses generally apply for in order to emigrate.<sup>52</sup>

Temporary contracts, low-paying long-hours by contractors, and nonpayment of bonuses and overtime have been the main reasons behind nurse protests in recent years. One year ago, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ali Khamenei, instructed Ministry of Health officials to implement a tariff system for nursing services in a speech on the official calendar's Nursing Day. Despite his reiteration of those instructions this year,

50 [ISNA](#), December 20, 2020, and [The New Arab](#), October 15, 2021

51 [Hamshahri](#), December 11, 2021

52 [Jameh24](#), December 10, 2021

there has been no change in nurses' status in practice. The PBO has opposed the change, citing a lack of funding. This scenario shows that even the words of the country's highest official could be reduced to a mere slogan. In a remarkable statement, the secretary general of Nurses' House expressed that state officials believe that if workers achieve job security, "their tongues will loosen," meaning that they will dare to demand their rights. According to him, Iran's health system currently lacks at least 100,000 nurses but refuses to issue employment permits, but at the same time, more than 100,000 trained nursing students are unemployed.<sup>53</sup>

In the fall, a group of health activists, also known as "health cadres" (Kadr-e-Salamat), rallied in front of the PBO building to protest the non-implementation of a law that would increase the salaries of non-scientific staff.<sup>54</sup> Health staff in Ilam<sup>55</sup>, Shiraz<sup>56</sup>, Isfahan, Yasuj, doctors in Yazd province, and employees at Mofid Hospital in Tehran were among the protesters in the past three months.

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53 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 4, 2021

54 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), November 27, 2021

55 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), November 20, 2021

56 [IRBJ](#), November 14, 2021



## Energy Sector: Demands of Contract Workers

Oil and gas contract workers staged a massive strike in the summer of 2021. They eventually returned to work, with the contractors pledging to accept some of their demands including:

- Reduction of consecutive working days from 24 to 20 days and increase of rest days from 6 to 10
- Wage increase
- Improvement in the quality of sleeping quarters and food rations
- The right to organize
- Elimination of temporary contracts and removal of contracting companies
- An end to arrests, detentions, and political trials for strikers

Some contractors failed to meet their obligations and delayed the payment of wages, which led contract workers at some oil and gas and petrochemical projects to go on strike again.

The government and parliament, which promised to address those demands at the time of the massive strike over the summer, finally agreed to pave the way for the Ministry of Oil to hire a quota of war veterans or "isargars." According to the law, "isargar" refers to "a person who has served to preserve the achievements of the Islamic Revolution and defend the territorial integrity and independence of the Islamic Republic of Iran." However, even the veterans among the contract workers did not receive the "special favor" of the government and parliament.

The below table lists a selection of protests by oil, gas, and petrochemical workers over the past three months.

| Protest workers Group                  | Demands  |
|--|--|
| Bushehr Petrochemical <sup>57</sup>    | Fulfill the contractor's promises to improve the residence, reduce working days, increase wages  |
| Razi Petrochemical <sup>58</sup>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement job classification scheme</li> <li>• Pay deferred wage claims</li> <li>• Improvement the quality of accommodations and food</li> <li>• Provide of complete and free health insurance</li> </ul> |
| Fajr-e- Jam Gas Refinery <sup>59</sup> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate wage discrimination between formal and informal personnel</li> <li>• Reduce working hours</li> <li>• Change shifts</li> </ul>   |
| Persepolis Petrochemical <sup>60</sup> | Improve livelihood assistance  |
| Bandar-e-Emam Petroleum <sup>61</sup>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convert temporary workforce to permanent</li> <li>• Prohibit outsourcing workers to contract companies</li> </ul>   |

57 [Oil Workers' Strike Organizing Council](#), October 19, 2021

58 [IPNA](#), October 30, 2021

59 [ISNA](#), September 20, 2021

60 [Hoor News](#), December 13, 2021

61 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), October 12, 2021

|  |   |
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| Assaluyeh Project Phase 14 <sup>62</sup>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfill the promises of the contractors regarding the plan of 10 days of rest / 20 days of work</li> <li>• Improve wage payment status</li> <li>• Improve the quality of accommodations (following the general summer strike)</li> </ul> |
| Kangan Petroleum                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfill the promises of the contractors regarding the plan of 10 days of rest / 20 days of work</li> <li>• Improve wage payment status</li> <li>• Improve the quality of sleeping accommodations and food</li> </ul>                     |
| IGC Assaluyeh <sup>63</sup>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfill the promises of the contractors regarding the plan of 10 days of rest / 20 days of work</li> <li>• Improve wage payment status</li> <li>• Improve the quality of accommodation (following the general summer strike)</li> </ul>  |
| South Zagros Oil Transportation Unit <sup>64</sup> | Removal from Sapna system in National Oil Company (information system for manpower contractors across the whole oil industry)   |
| Persian Gulf Holding <sup>65</sup>                 | Eliminate wage discrimination of formal and informal personnel  |
| Gachsaran Petrochemical <sup>66</sup>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate wage discrimination between indigenous and non-indigenous workers</li> <li>• Stop threatening to fire indigenous workers</li> </ul>  |
| Abadan Petrochemical <sup>67</sup>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement job classification scheme</li> <li>• Become an independent organization</li> <li>• Pay deferred wage claims</li> </ul>   |
| Kayson workers in Jask oil tanks <sup>68</sup>     | Pay deferred wage claims  |
| Global Drilling of Petrotech Kish <sup>69</sup>    | Pay deferred wage claims  |
| Apadana Petrochemical <sup>70</sup>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement job classification scheme</li> <li>• Increase wages</li> <li>• Gain the right to organize</li> <li>• Fulfill the promises of the contractors regarding the plan of 10 days of rest / 20 days of work</li> </ul>                |

62 [Oil Workers' Strike Organizing Council](#), September 26, 2021

63 [Oil Workers' Strike Organizing Council](#), December 17, 2021

64 [Bamdad24](#), October 7, 2021

65 [Oilmen \(Naftiha\)](#), October 4, 2021

66 [Oil Workers' Strike Organizing Council](#), September 27, 2021

67 [Oil Workers' Strike Organizing Council](#), November 21, 2021

68 [Rah-e-Dana](#), November 9, 2021

69 [Oil Workers' Strike Organizing Council](#), November 16, 2021

70 [Oil Workers' Strike Organizing Council](#), November 30, 2021

## Water Crisis and Unemployed Farmers

The lack of water supply has resulted in the layoff of half of the farmers in Yazd, Isfahan, and Chaharmahal-and-Bakhtiari provinces - a fate similar to that of the Khuzestan farmers who took to the streets in the summer of 2021.



Isfahan farmers

Since early November, farmers have been camping and rallying around the Zayandehrood riverbed in Isfahan. The government initially tried to sympathize with the protesters, but that came to an end when security forces raided the farmers' tents on the evening of November 24 and fired on the protesters the following day. Government sources confirmed that many protesters were injured. While police report that at least 67 people were arrested, a spokesman for the judiciary confirmed the arrest of at least 130 people, and human rights activists have reported that there are more than 200 detainees.<sup>71</sup>

Shahrekord also witnessed protests by farmers and environmental activists on the same dates. The protesters in Shahrekord demanded the suspension of the water transfer to Yazd and Isfahan provinces for the consumption of steel industries.

On November 30, the Minister of Energy announced that the government had approved an emergency plan to solve the water problem in the four provinces of Khuzestan, Isfahan, Yazd, and Chaharmahal-and Bakhtiari. The ministry has not yet released the details of this plan.<sup>72</sup>

71 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 7, 2021

72 [Eghtesad Online](#), November 30, 2021

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## Other Protests

For the past three months, Haft Tappeh sugarcane workers have also continued to protest. The workers demand the return of previously terminated workers, the conversion of temporary contracts to permanent ones, and the transfer of factory ownership to the Sugarcane Development Company. Ismail Bakhshi, a sugarcane worker who was arrested and tortured during the 2018 protests, is still prohibited from returning to work.

Iran Khodro auto workers in the city of Tabriz went on strike for several days to protest wage inequality in various segments of the company.

Workers from Sabalan Fabric of Ardabil, Barez Rubber of Kurdistan, Tabriz Tractor Manufacturing Unit, Nina Sirjan Vegetable Oil Factory, Arak Machine Building, Hadid Mobtakeran Industrial Complex, Marivan Highway, Joven Cement, Line Maintenance and Railway Technical Buildings Azerbaijan, Hashtgerd Metro, Sabzevar and Shiraz Telecommunications, and the Golestan Electricity Distribution Company have also protested during the past three months because of delays in wage payment, temporary employment contracts, discrimination in wages, and working conditions.

## Repression

The spread of trade union protests and the anniversary of the November 2019 nationwide protests led to further repression and a tighter security atmosphere in the country over the past three months. Security agencies summoned, temporarily detained, or threatened many labor rights activists in various Iranian cities. Two of these activists, retired teacher Ismail Gerami and teacher Nusrat Beheshti, are still imprisoned.

Osman Ismaili, labor activist in Saqez, Maryam Sadeghi, member of the Coordinating Committee for the Establishment of Trade Unions in Sanandaj, and Leila Hosseinzadeh, an egalitarian student activist and workers' rights activist, were detained by security forces. Of these individuals, Aziz Ghasemzadeh was released on bail after two weeks.

Security agents also summoned or detained some family members of protesters who were killed in the November 2019 protests in various cities.

| Repression Method | Names   |
|-------------------|---|
| Arrested          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Osman Ismaili, labor activist in Saqqez<sup>73</sup></li> <li>Maryam Sadeghi, member of the Coordinating Committee for the Establishment of Trade Unions<sup>74</sup></li> <li>Aziz Ghasemzadeh, member of the Gilan Teachers' Union<sup>75</sup></li> <li>Asal Mohammadi, labor rights activist<sup>76</sup></li> <li>Hirad Pirbodaghi, labor rights activist</li> <li>Rasoul Bodaghi, inspector of the Teachers' Union<sup>77</sup></li> <li>Leila Hosseinzadeh, student activist defending workers' rights<sup>78</sup></li> <li>Alieh Eghdamdoost, women's rights activist and labor rights defender</li> <li>Sattar Zarei, poet and defender of workers' rights<sup>79</sup></li> </ul> |
| Summoned          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanj Amini, member of the Kurdistan Teachers' Union<sup>80</sup></li> <li>Jafar Ebrahimi, member of the Tehran Teachers' Union</li> <li>Parvin Mohammadi, member of the Board of the Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers</li> <li>Maziar Seyednejad, labor activist</li> <li>Kamyar Fakoor, Amir Abbas Azarmvand, Raham Yeganeh, three workers' rights activists<sup>81</sup></li> <li>Mahmoud Maleki, member of Bushehr Teachers' Union<sup>82</sup></li> </ul>  |

73 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 21, 2021

74 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 24, 2021

75 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 11, 2021

76 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 7, 2021

77 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 11, 2021

78 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 7, 2021

79 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 3, 2021

80 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 12, 2021

81 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 19, 2021

82 [Coordinating Council of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association](#), November 15, 2021

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Received court verdict or execution of the verdict | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asghar Firoozi, labor rights activist</li> <li>• Alireza Saghafi, defender of workers' rights</li> <li>• Parvin Mohammadi, member of the Board of the Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers<sup>83</sup></li> <li>• Kamyar Fakoor, a journalist who defends workers' rights<sup>84</sup></li> <li>• Confirmation of imprisonment and flogging of Ismail Gerami, retired teacher<sup>85</sup></li> </ul>   |
| Dismissed  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mohammad Habibi, Spokesman for the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association</li> <li>• 100 workers of Aq Dareh gold mine<sup>86</sup></li> <li>• Three workers of Karun Cement Factory died due to a work accident<sup>87</sup></li> <li>• 150 Shahinshahr spinning workers</li> <li>• Khomein Petrochemical Workers<sup>88</sup></li> <li>• Ilam milk workers<sup>89</sup></li> <li>• Textile workers of the Foundation for the Oppressed<sup>90</sup></li> <li>• Four protesting workers in Miduk Square, Shahr-e Babak<sup>91</sup></li> <li>• Tesco oil and gas workers in Assaluyeh<sup>92</sup></li> </ul> |

83 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 7, 2021

84 [Hrana](#), November 2, 2021

85 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 21, 2021

86 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 21, 2021

87 [Mehr News](#), October 26, 2021

88 [Oil Contract Workers' Organizing Council](#), October 26, 2021

89 [Fars News](#), October 26, 2021

90 [IRIB](#), December 8, 2021

91 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), September 26, 2021

92 [Shoar-e-sal](#), December 14, 2021

## Asylum Seekers

Since the Taliban overtook Afghanistan, the number of refugees fleeing the country for Iran has increased. However, the Iranian government has made conditions difficult for asylum seekers and will not allow them to remain in Iran. This summer, the Iranian Interior Ministry announced that it will repatriate Afghan refugees after a short stay in camps set up in the three border provinces of Sistan and Baluchestan, South Khorasan, and Khorasan Razavi. Immigration agencies have reported widespread deportations of Afghan refugees from Iran, with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) stating that Iran deported 28,000 Afghan refugees in just one week.<sup>93</sup>



Afghan refugees

As tensions escalated in the border provinces and the Iranian government were detained and deported Afghan refugees, 32 lawmakers also reminded the Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare to ban immigrants from working in stores and workshops.<sup>94</sup>

Iran's Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare has restricted the employment of Afghan immigrants to certain occupational groups.

93 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 12, 2021

94 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 15, 2021

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## Increasing Number of Working Children

In the past year the number of school dropouts in Iran has increased. The Ministry of Education has reported 970,000 dropouts, but the Social Security Research Center estimates that more than three million students have left school due to a lack of access to virtual learning.

The increase in school dropouts and immigrants deprived of government support has prompted Malik Hosseini, CEO of the Tehran Municipality's Welfare, Services, and Social Partnerships Organization, to warn of a "new wave of working children."<sup>95</sup> The mayor of Tehran called the working children a "stain" on the city's face, and he left the "organization of working children" to the Revolutionary Guards.<sup>96</sup> In recent years, immigrant children have been arrested, transferred to detention centers, and even deported. Government officials in Iran say that up to 80% of working children are "non-Iranians" and immigrants. In response to the fact that many working children have no job other than picking through garbage, the Municipality of Tehran decided to "lock" the garbage bins under the title of "Preventing Garbage Picking by Working Children."<sup>97</sup> The purpose of this plan is to secure the benefits of waste management contracting companies, rather than to support the working children.

Government officials and municipalities include only children working on the streets in their statistics, which number only half a million. However, the head of the Iranian Social Welfare Association reported that about 7 million child laborers work in places outside the scope of labor laws, such as tailoring, carpet weaving, repair shops, and other small workshops.<sup>98</sup>

The labor laws of the Islamic Republic stipulate that the minimum age for employment is 15, and for this reason, children aged 15 to 18 are not included in child labor statistics.

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95 [ILNA](#), October 13, 2021

96 [Eskan News](#), October 30, 2021

97 [ILNA](#), September 21, 2021

98 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 5, 2021



## Work Accidents: Deadly Autumn

Between September 11 and December 14, 2021, at least 248 workers in Iran were injured or killed in work-related accidents. The peak of these incidents occurred in November 2021, when at least 60 workers were injured or killed.<sup>99</sup>

The Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare reported more than 13,000 work-related accidents and the deaths of 700 to 800 workers over the past year. Since some work accidents are excluded from the labor law and are therefore not registered, this figure is lower than the actual number.

Work accidents have claimed the lives of 108 workers in the past three months. As in previous seasons, construction workers topped the list of fatal accidents. During the harvest season, the number of accidents in the agricultural sector increased compared to previous seasons, but many agricultural accidents are not reported. For example, 150 workers were injured during the walnut picking season in one sample in Hamedan alone.

The number of casualties in the public sector has also increased in recent months. Electrical wiring contract workers, firefighters, and sweepers have also experienced accidents due to the contractors' failure to provide safety equipment.

The below table lists the incidents that resulted in the death and injury of workers in various groups based on news published in the Iranian media.

| Sector                        | Deaths     | Injured    |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Construction and well-digging | 54         | 34         |
| Mining                        | 5          | 3          |
| Small workshops               | 10         | 28         |
| Large units                   | 16         | 42         |
| Public service                | 13         | 29         |
| Agriculture                   | 10         | 4          |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>108</b> | <b>140</b> |

<sup>99</sup> [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 26, 2021

## Koolbars: Deadly Shootings

*Koolbars* are cargo carriers who travel on foot. The increase in border controls and persistence of the pandemic has decreased *koolbars*' activities, but border patrol officials continue to fire on them. Human rights watchdogs in Kurdistan reported that 14 *koolbars* were injured and killed in October and November. As of December 14, 2021, the media had declared at least 14 other *koolbars* dead or wounded. Ten *koolbars* lost their lives during this time due to gunshot wounds, pursuit by border guards, falling from heights, and suicide. For example, Soroush Rahmani, a 15-year-old boy from Paveh, committed suicide after border guards confiscated his mule.

Table: Fall 2021 statistics

| Cause  | Deaths    | Injured   |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Shot by border patrol                          | 6         | 11        |
| Chased   | 3         | 3         |
| Landmine explosion                             | 0         | 3         |
| Falling from a height / freezing from the cold | 0         | 1         |
| Suicide  | 1         | 0         |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>10</b> | <b>18</b> |

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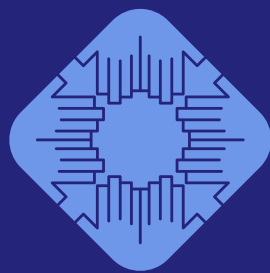
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