

# Workers in the Year of the Uprising

## Labor Rights in Iran



Annual Report No. 5

**2022**



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Zamaneh Media Foundation

## Introduction

In the last five years, Zamaneh has published 23 labor reports, five special newsletters (about nurses, wage suppression, contract workers in the oil industry, teachers, and suppression of union activities), and four labor yearbooks in Persian and English.

This report is Zamaneh's fifth labor yearbook, which covers issues related to Iranian workers' rights in 2022.

To receive labor reports and newsletters, visit [Zamaneh's Labor Rights page](#).

## The Year's Overview

2022 was one of the most challenging years for workers. From the beginning, Ebrahim Raisi's cabinet set the agenda for an all-out attack on the livelihood and security of workers and retirees.

In the last days of the winter of 2022, it became clear that the negotiations to revive the nuclear agreement would not come to fruition. After that, despite several rounds of direct and indirect talks, the widespread protest uprising of "Jin, Jiyan, Azadi" (woman, life, freedom) in Iran slowed the continuation of negotiations. The failure of the nuclear talks, and the continuation of sanctions by the United States and its allies provided an opportunity for the Iranian government to advance the policies of price liberalization faster. The impact of these policies was shown in the continuous fall in the value of the national currency (rial). The rial lost nearly 60% of its value in one year. The dollar as a standard commodity reached the range of 40 thousand tomans (400 thousand rials). Despite promises, the government could not control the currency market.

The 13th cabinet, which had previously opposed two bills to improve the condition of workers and retirees under the excuse of the budget deficit, included a series of poverty-producing policies in the budget for the Iranian calendar year 1401 (March 21, 2022-March 21, 2023). The removal of the preferred currency (cheaper subsidized government dollar), or more clearly, the liberalization of food and livestock prices in the spring of 2022, raised food inflation to around 100%. In the spring of 2022, one of the most unprecedented food price surges was recorded in Iran.

The average food inflation rate did not fall below 60% until the end of 2022, while the table of wage earners shrank further, and poverty became more widespread. The Ministry of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare revealed in a report that the per capita poverty line increased by at least 50% and further estimated another 70% growth by the end of the Iranian calendar year 1401 (March 2023).

In short, the result of the government's policies has been the spread of poverty and the prevalence of malnutrition in Iran as reported by The Nutrition Management Office of the Ministry of Health and Medicine which announced the prevalence of malnutrition in several provinces and cellular starvation amongst poor families.

In the spring of 2022, the government increased the price of medical services by 19%-40%. Housing prices and rent rose steadily, and in December 2022, the monthly housing inflation rate reached around 10%. Officials reported housing and rent inflation at 40%. This situation caused the departure of many families to more deprived and marginalized areas. The density of students increased in some peripheral towns, and new phenomena such as container living, renting warehouses for residences, and sleeping buses became more visible and widespread in Tehran. The government's promise to provide cheap housing remained fruitless, and in the end, the president said that it was not the duty of the government, but rather the private sector's, to build housing.

In such a situation, the government prevented the increase of workers' wages based on the subsistence basket. The government ignored the request of the workers to revise the minimum wage, so the gap between the salary and the cost of living in the first half of the year reached 8 to 10 million tomans (1 USD ≈ 40,000 tomans).

In the past year, the government continued to crack down on labor protests, which became more widespread after the end of the Covid-19 restrictions. Dozens of teachers got arrested and jailed during union protests which began from September 2020 and continued until May 2022. Hundreds of teachers were summoned to judicial, security, and other governmental regulatory institutions and were punished through the reduction of their salaries, suspension from work, and lowering of job rankings.

Workers, union activists, journalists, civil activists as well as teachers were also targeted. The widespread arrests of labor union activists in the spring and summer of 2022 aimed to prevent protests against the liberalization of the prices of essential goods. The scope of these protests did not expand, but a few months later, in September 2022, the murder of Zhina (Mahsa)

Amini by the government marked the beginning of protests that continued until the end of the year. During these protests, more than 500 people were killed by government agents. The police and security agents arrested over 20,000 people and sentenced dozens of those detained to death. Four individuals, named Mohammad Mehdi Karami, Majidreza Rahnavard, Mohsen Shekari, and Mohammad Hosseini, who were all workers, were executed.

## Labor Protests

The Iranian government does not publish exact statistics on Iran's oil exports. According to media reports, Iran's oil exports increased at points in 2022 due to the impact of the Ukraine war. Still, Iran sold oil at a price lower than the world rate to maintain its oil customers, mainly Chinese refineries.

The return of currency from oil exports is still facing challenges. The continuation of sanctions has created a large budget deficit for the government. As a result, the government has resorted to borrowing from the central bank to provide liquidity. Despite the growth of liquidity, which raises the inflation rate, manufacturing companies faced liquidity shortage and raw production material scarcity.

The lack of liquidity and the budget deficit have caused a reduction in production capacity, delays in the payment of wages, closure of production units, and widespread unemployment of workers.

According to published reports, in 2022, 1,289 union rallies and 229 union strikes were formed. Correspondingly, there were an average of 4.2 strikes or trade unions/workers gatherings daily.

Teachers, retirees, municipal contract workers, energy sector workers, medical staff, public transportation workers, and industrial/manufacturing workers often rallied at work or on the street.

The following tables outline a number of labor protests/strikes by sector, including the demonstrated demands.

### Energy Sector

Branch	Demands	Details
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<p>Contract workers in oil and gas projects and refineries<sup>1</sup></p>	<p>Improvement of food and accommodation conditions</p> <p>The right to assembly and union organization</p> <p>Job security, elimination of contractors/turning contracts into permanent positions</p> <p>Elimination of surveillance and policing tactics in the workplace</p>	<p>The contract workers of oil, gas, and petrochemical projects in different regions started a new round of strikes with the demand for a 58% wage increase, 20 days of work and 10 days of rest per month, and improvement of working conditions.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>.....</p> <p>The workers of oil and gas projects and refineries also went on strike again in the summer of 2022, continuing their struggle against exploitation. This summer, the bad weather conditions and long working hours caused tens of workers to get sick and transferred to medical centers.<sup>3</sup> Sources close to the workers reported the death of at least two workers due to heatstroke.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Contract workers in oil and gas and petrochemical projects went on strike in June and July 2022, protesting poor service, housing and food, inadequate wages, and harsh working conditions. They demanded the reduction of working days to 20 days and increased rest days to 10 days a month.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>In solidarity with widespread protests, the workers of Hengam, Damavand, and Kavian refineries in Asaluyeh and Kangan started a rally. At the same time as the strike, the workers also closed the three-way roads of Asaluyeh as a sign of protest. Following this protest, many security and police forces entered Asaluyeh and arrested many workers.<sup>4</sup></p>
<p>Official employees of the oil industry</p>	<p>Implementation of Article 10 of the Law on Duties and Powers of the Ministry of Petroleum</p> <p>Wage increase</p>	<p>The official and contract workers of the energy sector are still protesting the non-fulfillment of their wage and welfare demands. The official employees of the Ministry of Oil demand a salary increase, more than the 10% approved by the government. They held several rallies in different areas and gave the officials of the Ministry of Oil a deadline to amend the salary approval.<sup>5</sup></p> <p>.....</p> <p>The official workers of the Ministry of Oil also went on a hunger strike in protest the non-implementation of Article 10 of the Law on Duties and Powers of the Ministry of Oil. This protest action was temporarily stopped after some of the demands were accepted.<sup>6</sup></p>
<p>Oil and gas third party (<i>Arkan-e-saales</i>) workers</p>	<p>Implementation of the plan to organize the recruitment of government employees</p>	<p>No details</p>

1 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 31, 2022.

2 [Council for Organizing Protests of Oil Contract Workers](#), April 26, 2022.

3 [Rouydaq24](#), August 12, 2022.

4 [Council for Organizing Protests of Oil and Gas Contract Workers](#), October 10, 2022.

5 [Council for Organizing Protests of Oil and Gas Contract Workers](#), August 11, 2022.

6 [Radio Zamaneh](#), Labor Newsletter No. 21, Fall 2022.



## Manufacturing Industries

Industrial workers' protests were widespread in 2022. Delays in the payment of wages, stoppage of a part of the production line, dismissal of workers, and low wages were the main reasons for strikes and protests held by workers in this sector.

The reason for the strike/protest	Production unit	Description
Wage arrears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rangestan (Rangin Nakh) yarn factory<sup>7</sup></li> <li>• Ahwaz Rolling and Pipe Mills Co. (ARPCO)</li> <li>• Kian Tire<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Iran Tractor Manufacturing Company in Tabriz<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-Industry Co.<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Frico cooking oil<sup>11</sup></li> <li>• Tabriz Aidin Dadsh Baradar Co. (chocolate factory)<sup>12</sup></li> <li>• Abadeh Cement Factory</li> <li>• Pouyan Industrial Group in Kerman<sup>13</sup></li> <li>• Tehran Darugar Co.</li> <li>• Qazvin Tolyers Chemical and Consumer Goods<sup>14</sup></li> <li>• Azar Glass Industry<sup>15</sup></li> <li>• Azar Ab Industries<sup>16</sup></li> <li>• Darugar Holding<sup>17</sup></li> <li>• Narges Shiraz Vegetable Oil Co.</li> <li>• Damash Mineral Water Company<sup>18</sup></li> <li>• Kishwood Industries<sup>19</sup></li> <li>• Iran Ofogh Industrial Development Company (IOID)<sup>20</sup></li> <li>• Jahan Vegetable Oil Co.- Zanzan<sup>21</sup></li> <li>• Pars Oxin Steel Company</li> <li>• Pars Pamchal Chemical Co.</li> </ul>	Most workers' protests took place at the workplace. Workers in some production units rallied several times in a short period.
Low wages/wage discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Butia Iranian Steel Company (BISCO)<sup>22</sup></li> <li>• Kerman Barez Tire Factory<sup>23</sup></li> <li>• Iran National Steel Industrial Group<sup>24</sup></li> <li>• Narges Shiraz Vegetable Oil Co.<sup>25</sup></li> <li>• Sepahan Cement CO. (Dizicheh)<sup>26</sup></li> <li>• Sepahan Cement Co.</li> <li>• Bahman Motor Company</li> <li>• Crouse Industrial Manufacturing Company</li> <li>• Iran Tire Co.</li> <li>• Esfahan Steel Company</li> <li>• Karun Agro-industry</li> </ul>	

7 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), January 2, 2022.

8 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), February 15, 2022.

9 [Tabriz-e-Man](#), January 31, 2022.

10 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), March 2, 2022.

11 [IRNA](#), February 3, 2022.

12 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), December 22, 2021.

13 [Young Journalists Club](#), April 28, 2022.

14 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), June 12, 2022.

15 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), June 2, 2022.

16 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), May 31, 2022.

17 Rows one to six of the protest table: [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 22, 2022.

18 [Kargar News](#), November 15, 2022.

19 [ILNA](#), August 18, 2022.

20 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), June 27, 2022.

21 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), August 29, 2022.

22 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), January 31, 2022.

23 [Didar News](#), January 25, 2022.

24 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), April 17, 2022.

25 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 25, 2022.

26 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 6, 2022.

Job security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haft Tapeh Pars Paper</li> <li>• Mian Ab Cultivation and Industry Factory<sup>27</sup></li> <li>• Saipa Heavy Dies Manufacturing Co.<sup>28</sup></li> <li>• Motogen Co in Tabriz<sup>29</sup></li> <li>• Ahvaz Pipe Industrial Company<sup>30</sup></li> <li>• Bandar Abbas Zinc Production Company<sup>31</sup></li> <li>• Lorestan Agriculture Company<sup>32</sup></li> <li>• Isfahan Tile Industries<sup>33</sup></li> <li>• Jil Karoon Brick Factory, Khuzestan Province<sup>34</sup></li> <li>• Jahan Vegetable Oil Co.<sup>35</sup></li> </ul>	
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The scope of the production sector workers' protests was broader than shown in the table above. In some production units, employers temporarily or permanently fired several workers. With the onset of winter, and the government's inability to supply fuel to production units, more workers lost their jobs.

## Public and Government Services

In the public service sector, municipal and public transportation workers were the leading group of protestors. The inefficiency of municipalities and the widespread corruption of the human resources contractors contracted with municipalities caused a long delay in the payment of workers' wages in several cities. In some regions, workers' salary arrears exceeded one year.

Public transportation workers including bus drivers in Tehran and Urmia, taxi drivers in several cities, railway line and technical building maintenance workers, and road truck drivers rallied to protest living conditions, wage inequality, and cost increases. In Tehran, the strike of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company drivers led to widespread repression and arrests.

The government's budget deficit, and the imposition of wage suppression on the contractual employees of the public sector, also caused protests by employees in government institutions. Several protests occurred in the Jihad of Agriculture, Judiciary, Ministry of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare.

The following table shows a number of protests that took place in the public service sector.

Branch	The reason for the strike/ protest	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipality employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delay in payment of wages</li> <li>- Temporary contract</li> <li>- Dismissal of contract workers</li> </ul>	Workers in at least 70 municipalities protested the non-payment of wages.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation service employees</li> <li>• Tehran bus drivers</li> <li>• Kermanshah minibus drivers</li> <li>• Urmia bus drivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low wages</li> <li>- Wage discrimination</li> <li>- Delay in payment of wages</li> </ul>	The strike of bus drivers was accompanied by widespread repression and arrest.

27 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 23, 2022.

28 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 9, 2022.

29 [Asr Tabriz](#), February 13, 2022.

30 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), February 10, 2022.

31 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 2, 2022.

32 [IRIB](#), April 6, 2022.

33 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), June 11, 2022.

34 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), August 30, 2022.

35 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), August 29, 2022.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Truckers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction of fuel quota</li> <li>Increased cost of spare parts</li> </ul>	Truck drivers went on strike in December despite a security crackdown. The scope of the strike did not widen, but government officials acknowledged that the road transport system was disrupted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contractual employees of government institutions</li> <li>Agricultural Jihad employees<sup>36</sup></li> <li>Contractual employees of the Ministry of Labor<sup>37</sup></li> <li>Contractual employees of the Ministry of Petroleum</li> <li>Electric company contract workers<sup>38</sup></li> <li>Azad University staff<sup>39</sup></li> <li>Employees of the judiciary<sup>40</sup></li> <li>Temporary employees of water and sewage</li> <li>Temporary electrical workers<sup>41</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low wages</li> <li>wage discrimination</li> <li>Non-implementation of the salary equalization plan</li> <li>Temporary contracts</li> <li>Delay in payment of wages</li> </ul>	Inequality of wages between contract and official workers is one of the main reasons for the protest of public sector employees. The slight increase in the salaries of informal public sector employees in 2022 caused protests.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employees of state banks<sup>42</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low wages</li> </ul>	

## Health

In the health sector, the range of protests was also wide. The following table shows some of the protests in this section.

Protesters	Reasons for protest/Demands	Form of protest
North Khorasan medical staff <sup>43</sup>	Unknown	Rally, which coincided with the president's visit to the place
Student interns The staff of Yazd Medical Sciences The staff of Beheshti Medical Sciences, Tehran <sup>44</sup> The staff of Mashhad Medical Sciences The staff of Ahvaz Medical Sciences	Demand for additional wages due to Covid-19 Request to increase the scholarship	Rally
Kermanshah nurses <sup>45</sup>	Dismissal after the outbreak of Covid-19 Temporary contracts	Rally
Tehran Farhangian Hospital <sup>46</sup>	Six months of unpaid wages	Rally
Nurses of Pastor-e-No Hospital in Mashhad <sup>47</sup>	Three months of unpaid wages	Rally

36 [ILNA](#), July 5, 2022.

37 [Asr Iran](#), April 19, 2022.

38 [Barq News](#), May 7, 2022.

39 [Student News Agency](#), June 7, 2022.

40 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 9, 2022.

41 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), February 16, 2022.

42 [Iran Watch](#), June 27, 2022.

43 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), June 23, 2023.

44 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 8, 2022.

45 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), July 14, 2022.

46 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 1, 2022.

47 [ILNA](#), July 5, 2022.

Social Security nurses <sup>48</sup>	Low salary	Rally
The staff of Ali-Nasab hospital in Tabriz <sup>49</sup>	Increase in pensions	Rally
Health defenders of Lorestan	Request to return to work	Rally
89-day nurses <sup>50</sup>	Converting the contract to permanent	Rally in different provinces
Non-contractual employees of the Ministry of Health <sup>51</sup>	Unknown	
Employees of comprehensive health centers of Qom <sup>52</sup>	Wage inequality and discrimination Temporary contracts	Rally in Qom and Tehran
Employees of private treatment centers in East Azerbaijan province	Eight months of unpaid wages	Rally
Several doctors in deprived areas <sup>53</sup>	Wage discrimination Non-payment of the approved salary Asking for more taxes from specialist doctors	Strike in several cities
Several residents and new doctors <sup>54</sup>	Wage discrimination Non-payment of the approved salary of 6 million tomans	Rally in several cities
Assistants in the gynecological department of Isfahan Hospital <sup>55</sup>	Insufficient salary Long working hours	Rally
Mehregan Hospital nurses <sup>56</sup>	Uncertainty after closing of the hospital	Rally

## Teachers

As in the previous year, teachers in 2022 organized mass protests in response to the delay in approving the teachers' salary ranking bill. Simultaneously with the widespread protests of teachers, the security forces arrested dozens of them in different cities.

In the winter of 2022, more than 70 teachers were arrested, and hundreds of teachers were summoned to security and judicial institutions and threatened with dismissal. Rasool Bodaghi and Jafar Ebrahimi, two union activists, are still imprisoned. Several teachers also went on trial for participating in protest rallies. At the same time as the rise of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement, teachers staged sit-ins twice which became recognized as influential forces in this movement. During these protests, at least one hundred teachers were arrested, and hundreds of others were punished with disciplinary orders.<sup>57</sup>

The security and judicial system accused the teachers' union activists of planning to overthrow the regime by cooperating with foreign forces.

The protests of teachers in 2022 can be divided into two sections, unionist and political. Union protests continued until May. Political protests against the crackdowns took place in November and December.

On January 29 and 30, 2022, teachers refused to go to the classroom in more than 100 cities

48 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 30, 2022.

49 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), May 10, 2022.

50 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 29, 2022.

51 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), February 21, 2022.

52 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), February 7, 2022.

53 [Free Union of Iranian Workers](#), February 3, 2022.

54 [Iran Students News Agency](#), February 1, 2022.

55 [Iran Labor News Agency](#), January 25, 2022.

56 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), February 3, 2022.

57 We have previously published the list of arrested teachers in [quarterly newsletters](#).

and held rallies in several cities on January 31.<sup>58</sup> During these rallies, security forces attacked the teachers and arrested some of those participating.<sup>59</sup>

On February 19<sup>60</sup> and 22<sup>61</sup>, teachers across Iran once again rallied in front of the buildings of the Ministry of Education.

On April 21, teachers rallied again in more than 200 cities and districts. Security agents raided the teachers' rally in Tehran, Shiraz, Marivan, and several other towns and arrested several union activists and those present in the rallies. Twenty-two teachers were arrested in Tehran.<sup>62</sup>

On May 1, 2022, coinciding with International Labor Day, the Coordinating Council of Teachers' Trade Unions of Iran called teachers, workers, and students' families to a national rally day. A day before the rally, security agents arrested many trade union activists in Tehran and Kurdistan. They threatened many members of teachers' trade unions with phone calls to prevent the nationwide rally.<sup>63</sup> Despite threats and the security situation, the rally of teachers was held on International Workers' Day.<sup>64</sup>

On May 8, 2022, the teachers of Kurdistan province protested the repression and arrest of their colleagues.<sup>65</sup> On May 12, they rallied for the third time in a month.<sup>66</sup>

On June 16, 2022, teachers held rallies in several cities during which government forces arrested many.<sup>67</sup>

The "teachers of the third shift," who are teachers without an official contract, rallied in Tehran for several days, asking for more stable contracts.<sup>68</sup>

In January 2023, the so-called "Green-Certificate" teachers held a rally in front of the Ministry of Education building. The Green-Certificate teachers (karnameh-sabz) are informal teachers who have taught for years but have yet to be formally recruited by the government. After passing the written recruitment exams and face-to-face interviews, these teachers receive a "green certificate," indicating that the government is 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.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the massive protests of the teachers, the government approved the ranking plan for teachers' salaries, with a decrease of more than 50% of the budget allocated to this work, with a delay of several months. Many teachers were excluded from the rating because they participated in protests and sit-ins.

To see the list of arrested, tried, and imprisoned teachers, refer to [Zamaneh's quarterly labor newsletters No. 20 to 23](#).

## Pensioners

Social security retirees, steel fund, telecommunication fund, and health sector fund members were amongst the protest groups in 2022.

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58 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 31, 2022.

59 [Coordinating Council of Teachers' Trade Unions](#), February 13, 2022.

60 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 19, 2022.

61 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 22, 2022.

62 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 21, 2022.

63 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 2, 2022.

64 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 1, 2022.

65 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 8, 2022.

66 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 12, 2022.

67 [Radio Zamaneh](#), June 16, 2022.

68 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 26, 2022.

69 [Teachers' union channel](#), February 19, 2022.

At the beginning of 2022, the government withdrew the bill “equalizing the salaries of workers’ pensioners” from the parliament so that the 25% increase in the salaries of workers’ pensioners previously promised was taken off the agenda. While the social security retirees demanded an increase in their retirement pay, the government increased the salary of military and government retirees (official government employees and retired military personnel) in the fall of 2022.

Retirees of the telecommunication company also held rallies in different cities protesting the reduction of benefits.

*Table: pensioners and retirees.*

Protest group	Demands	Method
Social security retirees <sup>70</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equalization of wages</li> <li>• Elimination of discrimination between social security retirees and state and military funds</li> <li>• Increasing the minimum pension to 12 million tomans</li> <li>• Having full and free health insurance</li> <li>• Settlement of the government’s debt to the social security organization</li> <li>• Participation of retirees in the board of trustees of the pension fund</li> <li>• Stop prosecution of pensioners</li> </ul>	Weekly rally in more than 15 cities in the form of protest Sundays
Steel industry retirees <sup>71</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equalization of wages</li> <li>• Elimination of discrimination between steel pensioners and government fund and army pensioners</li> <li>• salary increase</li> <li>• Stopping the transfer of assets of the Steel Employees’ Fund</li> </ul>	Weekly rally in Tehran, Isfahan, Khuzestan, Damghan and Lushan
Health care retirees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equalization of wages</li> <li>• Payment of outstanding claims</li> </ul>	Rally in Gorgan, Ahvaz, and Fars
Retired police force of Ilam <sup>72</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equalization of wages</li> <li>• Wage increase</li> </ul>	Rally in Ilam
Telecom company retirees <sup>73</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment of salary arrears</li> <li>• Payment of insurance premiums</li> </ul>	Rally in at least ten provinces

The government was finally obliged to increase the salaries of social security pensioners under the letter of the Speaker of the Parliament. The Speaker of the Parliament considered the decision of the governing board to increase only ten percent of pensioners’ salaries illegal.<sup>74</sup> After that, the government promised to increase the wages of social security retirees.

The social security pensioners continuously protested the government’s decision in the three months of summer. The security forces arrested protesting retirees in several cities. At least 12 retirees were arrested in Ahvaz.<sup>75</sup> A group of protesting retirees was arrested in Kermanshah. Esmail Gerami, a retired union activist, has been imprisoned since March 2021.

70 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 27, 2022.

71 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 6, 2022.

72 [Pensioners Council](#), January 10, 2022.

73 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 8, 2022.

74 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 20, 2022.

75 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 31, 2022.

## Informal Workers

Peddlers, construction workers, porters, kulbars, and sukhtbars are the main groups working informal jobs. The government's promise to have construction workers insured by the end of the year remained unfulfilled.

### Peddlers

The living conditions of the peddlers became more difficult due to the implementation of the "relocation" plan in different cities.

Tehran municipality implemented the Comprehensive Plan for the Relocation of Peddlers, based on which peddlers were moved to designated places.<sup>76</sup> A similar plan was implemented in Isfahan.<sup>77</sup> In Tabriz, municipal officials beat a peddler.<sup>78</sup> The municipality of this city also announced that it would "organize" peddlers in a distant bazaar. The protesting peddlers held a rally in Tabriz. The authorities implemented the relocation plan in Amol, Borujerd, Qazvin, and several other cities to control and prevent the activities of peddlers.

In Mahshahr, the police and municipal officers attacked the fruit sellers on the side of the street and set their place on fire.<sup>79</sup> In Gorgan and Tehran, agents stationed to prevent roadblock beat peddlers.

The managers of Tehran Municipality said that with the relocation plan and forcing them to register on the designated website, they have reduced the number of peddlers from about 20,000 to 30,000 to 5,800 in Tehran.<sup>80</sup>

The agents for preventing roadblocks in different regions of Iran deal with peddlers violently.<sup>81</sup> In Ahvaz, the police raided and destroyed the peddlers' market. In Shiraz, a peddler was beaten by the police. The Shiraz municipality and police denied the violence against the worker despite the video evidence showing the beating which went viral on social networks.<sup>82</sup> In Mahshahr and Mulathani, peddlers were not spared from the violence of the government agents. Police officers attacked peddlers in Hesarak of Karaj.<sup>83</sup> The same behavior was repeated in Qazvin<sup>84</sup> and Sanandaj.<sup>85</sup>

Prohibition of peddling and the violent displacement of street vendors to designated bazaars outside the urban limits and high-traffic areas is being implemented in many regions of Iran.<sup>86</sup>

In 2022, the government obliged peddlers to pay a tax of 21% of their income.<sup>87</sup>

### Kulbars and Sukhtbars

In 2022, the killing of Sukhtbars and Kulbars continued in the border areas of Iran. Kulbars are porters who carry heavy cargoes of commercial goods on their backs, crossing dangerous border areas to avoid interception by guards. Sukhtbars carry fuel along Iran's eastern borders.

Iran's agreement with Iraq to hand over the control of the border with the Kurdistan region of Iraq to the Iranian army made the movement of Kulbars on the western borders more difficult. In April, a military official in Kurdistan province called Kulbars "smugglers" and said that the border guards do not allow illegal entry into Iran's borders under the guise of Kulbars.

76 [Borna News](#), February 13, 2022.

77 [Imna News](#), March 13, 2022.

78 [Aftab Yazd](#), February 7, 2022.

79 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), January 30, 2022.

80 [Shargh Daily](#), August 10, 2022.

81 [Khakzadegan](#), September 4, 2022.

82 [IRNA](#), July 8, 2022.

83 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), August 26, 2022.

84 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), August 17, 2022.

85 [Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers](#), August 3, 2022.

86 [Mehr News](#), August 1, 2022.

87 [Radio Zamaneh](#), June 10, 2022.

In Sistan and Baluchestan province, Sukhtbars were also targeted by border guards. According to the report of the campaign of Baluch activists, 105 Baluch Sukhtbars were killed in 2022 due to the shooting of military agents, accidents due to chases, and car fires. A fourth of the Sukhtbars (26 people) were killed by government agents' bullets, and 64 others were victims of accidents or car fires. Out of the 52 injured Sukhtbars, 21 people were shot by border guards.<sup>88</sup>

The number of dead Kulbars in 2022 has been announced as 43 people. More than 67 percent of them (29 people) were killed by government agents with direct fire, and 5 suffered cardiac arrest or other physical complications due to work pressure and died. Freezing from the cold (4), accidents on the mountain path and falling from a height (2), drowning in the river (1), and shooting by Turkish government agents (1) were other causes of the death of Kulbars. 215 Kulbars were also injured. After the shooting, which is the cause of injury of 74% of Kulbars, falling from mountains and heights (17), beatings by border guards (14), accidents on the path (14), and mine explosions (10) are other causes of injuries for Kulbars.<sup>89</sup>

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88 [Baloch Activists Campaign](#), January 2023.

89 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 1, 2023.



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## Gig Economy Workers

Due to severe internet filtering, online businesses suffered a lot in the last season of 2022. Since the beginning of autumn, the government has severely limited the Internet and implemented parts of the unapproved plan known as “protecting the rights of users” to prevent information on social networks. As a result of this decision, many workers in the gig economy suffered losses.

There is still more research needed in order to have accurate statistics on the volume of online businesses on social networks. The former secretary of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace said in the summer of 2022, “2,400,000 businesses in the country operate on Instagram.” The Chamber of Commerce, however, announced the number of businesses using the Instagram platform to be around 9 million.

A survey showed that in the first two months of nationwide protests in September 2022, 50% of online businesses faced a 50% drop in sales.<sup>90</sup> Many online companies were destroyed or temporarily closed. The government promised to compensate part of the losses of this group of workers with a support package.

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90 [Eghtesad Online](#), December 6, 2022.

## Migrant Workers

The number of Afghan immigrants in Iran has increased after the re-establishment of the Taliban. From the very beginning, the Islamic Republic of Iran implemented strict restrictions against Afghan refugees. Newly arrived immigrants were temporarily accommodated in special camps and returned to Afghanistan.

The following table outlines a brief timeline of news related to Afghan refugees in Iran.

Date	Explanation
February 2022	<i>Etelaat</i> newspaper wrote in a report on February 2, 2022, that the process of identifying, arresting, and deporting illegal immigrants has intensified. Many immigrants do not go to their dormitories and rooms at night for fear of being deported. They spend the night in the streets dressed as workers of the municipality cleaning department. In some cases, the forced dismissal of Afghan workers has been accompanied by violence and inhumane behavior. <sup>91</sup>
February 2022	On February 9, the Afghan government officials in Nimroz province, which is the place where refugees cross to Iran, announced that Iranian security forces had killed 100 refugees and injured 640 of them in six months. <sup>92</sup>
April 2022	Media propaganda against Afghan immigrants caused violence and racist behavior in some Iranian cities. <sup>93</sup>
April 2022	The Governorate of Bushehr banned the residence and employment of migrant workers in Asaluyeh, Ganaveh, and Deylam County. <sup>94</sup>
May 2022	The Iranian government plans to implement a census of Afghan immigrants. <sup>95</sup> It is said that the primary purpose of this plan is to identify and deport immigrants without residence cards.
May 2022	Iran settles newly arrived immigrants from Afghanistan in camps without facilities. <sup>96</sup>
June 2022	Migrant workers in Iran say they are being exploited, employers don't pay their wages properly, and police officers violently arrest them. <sup>97</sup>
September 2022	As the school season approaches, Afghan children still face difficulties enrolling in school. It is estimated that around 200,000 school-age Afghan children in Iran are left out of school. <sup>98</sup>
September 2022	In Afghanistan, <i>Hasht-e-Sobh</i> newspaper wrote, "Crossing borders, access to school, renewing visas, buying SIM cards, using the Internet and opening bank accounts" are among the most critical challenges faced by Afghan refugees and immigrants in Iran. <sup>99</sup>

In the last season of 2022, all social events in Iran were affected by widespread protests against the state murder of Zhina (Mahsa) Amini. But the government did not stop the process of expelling Afghan immigrants.

91 [Etelaat Rooz](#), January 3, 2022.

92 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 9, 2022.

93 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 5, 2022.

94 [Asr Iran](#), April 2, 2022.

95 [Imna News](#), April 28, 2022.

96 [8 AM](#), May 18, 2022.

97 [8 AM](#), May 18, 2022.

98 [Shargh Daily](#), September 9, 2022.

99 [8 AM](#), August 31, 2022.

## Work Safety

The exact statistics of work accidents in 2022 have yet to be published. The Ministry of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare claims that the number of work accidents, and consequently the number of fatal accidents, has decreased. In autumn, Iranian media reported fewer work accidents due to the volume of news related to nationwide protests.

The government's official account of work incidents seems contradictory. The Forensic Medicine Organization announced the registration of 28,000 work accidents in 2021. However, the Ministry of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare announced the number of work accidents at 13,000. Zamaneh Media, based on reports published in domestic media, was able to document the injuries of 816 and the death of 430 workers between January 2022 and January 2023. The number of injuries and deaths due to work accidents is higher than what the domestic media publishes.

Construction workers have the highest rate of fatal accidents, and almost half of all fatal accidents occur in this sector.

The collapse of the Metropol building in Abadan city in May 2022, the fire of the van carrying the Bahar cold storage workers in December, which killed 6 women, consecutive fires in the mine workers' rest area and production units due to the use of non-standard heating devices, and heat exhaustion in Asaluyeh, were among the major incidents that took place in the working environment.

Exclusion of small workshops from the scope of the labor law, employers' refusal to provide standard work safety equipment, and lack of supervision by the inspectors of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare on production and construction units are the main reasons for the occurrence of work accidents.

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## Suppression of Workers

In 2022, workers experienced a lot of economic and police pressure. At the beginning of the year, the government once again imposed wage suppression on workers. As the protests of workers, retirees, and teachers became more widespread, the government started a police crackdown and massive arrests of union activists and workers' rights defenders. On the eve of implementing the government's preferred currency removal plan, the government arrested many labor union activists and teachers. In different periods, Zamaneh was able to document the names of more than 300 trade union activists, workers' rights defenders, and arrested workers based on reports published by the Teachers' Union Coordination Council, a source close to workers and labor organizations.

Due to the extent of their protests, teachers had the highest frequency of experienced repression. Zamaneh has published the list of arrested teachers in its quarterly reports at different times.<sup>100</sup>

During 2022, a large number of members of independent labor organizations, including the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company's Syndicate, the Free Union of Iran Workers, the Coordinating Committee for the Establishment of Labor Organizations, the Kermanshah Electricians' Union, the General Assemblies of Contractual Workers of Oil and Gas were also arrested in different periods.

3 members of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company's; Reza Shahabi, Hassan Saeidi, Dawood Razavi, 2 members of teachers' unions; Jafar Ebrahimi and Rasool Bodaghi, and Keyvan Mohtadi, a translator and researcher defending workers' rights since May 2022 have been imprisoned. In a security scenario, the Islamic Republic has accused these people of cooperating with foreign agents to overthrow the regime and in turn, sentenced them to prison.

HRANA, the Iranian human rights activist's news agency, reported that 36 labor activists and workers' rights defenders were sentenced to 117 months in prison, 510 lashes, and a fine of fifty-one million tomans, and 31 people were summoned to judicial and security authorities. This statistic does not include the teachers currently under prosecution.

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100 See [Zamaneh's labor quarterlies, numbers 20 to 23](#).

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## Defenders of Social Rights' Charter

After the murder of Zhina (Mahsa) Amini by the government in the Morality Police detention center, a wave of widespread protests swept over Iran on September 17, 2022. According to HRANA, at least 1,280 rallies took place across 165 cities and 144 universities in the protests. An estimated 530 people were killed during the protests, and at least 19,763 were arrested.<sup>101</sup> The statistics of those killed and arrested show that the workers were active in the protests.

In the political atmosphere arising from the protests, 20 independent trade and civil organizations created and presented a joint charter on February 14, 2023, under the title "Minimum Demands of Independent Trade and Civil Organizations of Iran," which included the following 12 main demands:

1- Immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, prohibition of criminalizing political, trade union, and civil activities, and the public trial of those responsible for suppressing popular protests.

2- Unrestricted freedom of opinion, expression, thought, press, partisanship, local and national trade union and people's organizations, assemblies, strikes, marches, social networks, and audio and video media.

3- Immediate cancellation of the issuance and execution of any death penalty, religious retribution (ghisas), and the prohibition of mental and physical torture.

4- Immediate declaration of full equality of women's rights with men in all political, economic, social, cultural, and family spheres, unconditional abolition of discriminatory laws and forms against sexual and gender relations and tendencies, recognition of the rainbow society of LGBTQIA+, decriminalization of all gender relations and preferences, and unconditional adherence to women's rights over their bodies and destiny, and preventing any patriarchal control.

5- Religion is a private matter of individuals and should not be involved in the country's political, economic, social, and cultural destiny and laws.

6- Ensuring work safety, job security, and immediate increase in the salaries of workers, teachers, employees, and all working and retired workers with the presence, involvement, and agreement of elected representatives of their independent and nationwide organizations.

7- Eliminate laws and any attitude based on discrimination and national and religious oppression and create appropriate support infrastructures and fair and equal distribution of government facilities for the growth of culture and art in all regions of the country and provide the necessary and equal facilities for learning and teaching all common languages practiced in the society.

8- Dismantling the organs of repression, limiting the powers of the government, and the direct and permanent involvement of the people in the administration of the country's affairs through local and national councils. The dismissal of any government and non-government official at any time should be among the voters' fundamental rights.

9- Confiscation of the property of all natural and legal persons and government, semi-government and private institutions that have taken the social wealth of the Iranian people by direct looting or government rent. The wealth obtained from these confiscations should be urgently spent on the modernization and reconstruction of education, pension funds, the environment, and the needs of those regions that were deprived and had fewer resources during the two regimes of the Islamic Republic and the monarchy.

10- Ending environmental destruction, implementing policies to restore the ecological infrastructure that has been destroyed over the past hundred years, and publicizing those privatized parts of nature (such as pastures, beaches, forests, and foothills) that belong to the people by right.

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101 [Hrana](#), February 21, 2023

11- Prohibition of children’s work and provision of their life and education apart from their family’s economic and social status. Creating public welfare through unemployment insurance and solid social security for all people of legal age ready to work or unable to work. Free education and healthcare for all people.

12- Normalization of foreign relations at the highest levels with all world countries based on fair ties and mutual respect, banning the acquisition of nuclear weapons and striving for world peace.

Charter signatories	Coordinating Council of Teachers’ Trade Unions of Iran Free Union of Iranian Workers Union of Student Organizations Center for Human Rights Defenders Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Company Workers Union Council for Organizing Oil Contract Workers Iranian Teachers’ House <i>Bidarzani</i> , the call of Iranian women The Independent Voice of Ahvaz National Steel Group Workers Kermanshah Electrical and Metal Workers Union Coordinating Committee to Help Build Labor Organizations Union of Retirees Iran Pensioners Council Organization of Progressive ( <i>Pishro</i> ) Students Council of Free-thinking Students of Iran Painters Syndicate of Alborz Province Follow-up Committee for the Establishment of Labor Organizations in Iran Council of Retirees of Social Security Organization
Partial list of the charter supporters	National Committee of Kurdistan Students Organization of Revolutionary Students of Tehran A group of student activists of Tarbiat Modares University Isfahan University of Technology Association Kharazmi University Freedom-loving Students Organization A group of activists and students of Sanandaj Girls Technical University A group of activists and students of Yazdan Panah University of Kurdistan A group of Kurdistan University activists and students A group of activists of Jundishapur University Aftab Girls Group of Urmia Tehransar Revolutionary Women and Youth Group Students of Noshirvani University of Babol A group of activists and students of Beheshti University Student Movement of Shahre Quds University Freedom Seekers of Tehran University Kurdistan Women Against Gender Discrimination Freedom-seeking Youth of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad . . .

The Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company’s Syndicate, while initially having said to have reservations about the text and the process of drafting it, agreed with most of the demands proposed in the charter. Many organizations and political organizations have also declared their support for the charter.

Thirteen years ago, four labor organizations (Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company’s Syndicate, Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Company’s Workers’ Union, Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers, Kermanshah Electrical and Metal Workers’ Union) signed a similar document under the title “The Manifesto of Minimum Demands of Iranian Workers.” The Charter of Minimum Demands of 2022 is considered more radical in tone and content than the Manifesto of Minimum Demands of 2009. The most important point is the symbolic position and the influence of the discourse of trade unions and civil institutions that defend social rights in 2022.

In 2009, when Iran was the scene of protests known as the Green Movement, the manifesto of workers’ demands did not attract much attention and was on the sidelines of the news. The recent charter of labor and union organizations has been on top of the news. It has become the focus of the agreement between social forces and currents to establish a future Iran.



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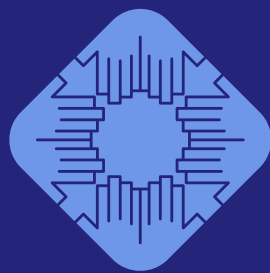
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