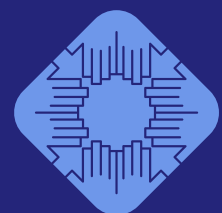


Labor Rights in Iran



QUARTERLY REPORT NO. 28

January - March 2024



Contents

Overview	5
Poverty and Exploitation Drive Worker Fatalities	7
Women Marginalized in the Labor Market	9
Wage Suppression and Hunger Imposed on Workers	10
Immigrant Oppression	11
Labor Repression	13
Protests in Early 2024	15
Healthcare Privatization Drives Iranian Nurses Away	19
Chronic Salary Delays in Public Sector Employment	20
Informal Workers Under Government Pressure	21
Danger in Construction Work	24
Work Safety Overview	25

Labor Rights in Iran

Number 28

January - March 2024

This publication is Zamaneh Media's 28th Labor Rights Report. These reports focus on key issues like workplace health and safety, various types of workplace discrimination, women's labor, child labor, unemployment, deferment or non-payment of wages, labor organization, and labor protests. Zamaneh Media continuously monitors labor news in Iran, and this report provides an overview of labor rights issues there.

The following quarterly report covers labor rights issues, events, and trends from January through March 2024. It is important to note that the information herein does not address all labor-related events and topics. In spring 2024, we published our sixth annual Zamaneh newsletter. Additionally, our latest special report focused on the plight of the [Baluch fuel carriers](#). For all previously published reports related to workers' rights, please visit [Zamaneh's labor page](#).

Overview

According to the Iranian Statistics Center, from January through March the working population decreased by at least 562,000 compared to the previous season, with the economic participation rate dropping from 41.5 percent to 40.8 percent. Notably, 207,000 job seekers or those exiting the labor market during this time were women. Despite these figures, the government reported a decline in the unemployment rate. Out of 64 million working-age Iranians, only 24 million were employed in the first quarter of 2024, representing 37.5 percent of the population. Consequently, 62.5 percent were neither employed nor actively seeking employment at the time of the survey. Female employment decreased from four million to 3,760,000, making up only one-eighth of the working-age women.¹

In February 2024, the government noted a reduced official inflation rate. Food inflation was reported at 25.7 percent point-to-point, and 41.2 percent annually. However, prices of protein, like white and red meat, soared by 90 to 93 percent, causing workers to significantly reduce or eliminate meat from their diets.

Food expenses which usually constitute roughly one-quarter of household budgets have increased to 30-50 percent of household budgets for the lowest income deciles (one to five).

The inflation rate for non-food goods and services was 36.1 percent point-to-point and 40.4 percent annually.²

The Iranian Statistics Center reported an average annual rent increase of 39.4 percent and a point increase of 41.4 percent.

From January 2023 to January 2024, public transportation costs rose by 57 percent and healthcare expenses increased by 44.8 percent.

In February 2024, the US dollar's exchange rate peaked at 60,000 tomans. The outcome of the 12th Islamic Parliament election, which had a 40 percent voter turnout, impacted the US dollar rate. This election, marked by the disqualification of government critics and moderates, led to the victory of radical Islamists. Government critics estimated the participation rate to be below 30 percent.³

The Gaza conflict escalation and the stalemate in negotiations between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency over Iran's nuclear program contributed to the weakening of the toman's value.

The devaluation of the Iranian rial spiked production costs for industries dependent on imported raw materials. According to the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, some sectors have downsized and laid off employees due to financial constraints, although specific figures are pending.

1 [Eghtesad News](#), March 17, 2024

2 [Echo Iran](#), March 25, 2024

3 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 2, 2024

Amid an economic crisis and rising inflation, payment delays have affected workers in various sectors.

The government's refusal to align wage increases with the actual inflation rate has led to widespread strikes. The Iran National Steel Industrial Group (Ahvaz Steel) was the target of the most significant protest, with oil and gas sector workers striking against wage disparities, contract issues, and the lack of welfare services compared to permanent oil industry employees. Municipal workers, social security retirees, miners, contract nurses, and production unit employees were among other protestors, demanding overdue wage payments, wage increases, improved working conditions, permanent contracts, and job classification implementation.

Informal workers faced government crackdowns, with peddlers required to obtain activity licenses, signaling steps to restrict their operations.

This period of time also saw increased violence against immigrants, predominantly Afghans, with heightened expulsions. The government linked the extension of residency, work permits, and immigrant movement to financial deposits.

Poverty and Exploitation Drive Worker Fatalities

In the winter of 2024, reports emerged of at least eight medical workers and residents committing or attempting suicide. A fruit and vegetable market worker in Tehran's Khani Abad area took his own life,⁴ as did a contract worker in Mashhad after his workplace was changed.⁵ In Astara, a ranger committed suicide due to financial struggles, although government officials denied that his death had any connection to his employment situation.⁶ In Sanandaj, a man ended his life over an inability to afford 70 million tomans for eye treatment.⁷ Another tragic incident involved a worker from Chabahar's Fresh Water Project, who initially attempted suicide over unpaid wages but rescinded after receiving payment assurances.⁸

On January 14, 2024, Etemad newspaper highlighted the suicides of three medical residents within one week.⁹ On January 17, Hammihan newspaper reported on official statistics indicating at least 29 suicide attempts and work-related deaths among medical professionals and residents from 2019 to January 2024.¹⁰ A January 20 report from Khabar Online news featured an interview with Nima Shahriarpour, an emergency medicine specialist who noted a five-fold increase in the suicide rate among the medical community, attributing it to the high psychological pressure on medical assistants. He revealed that there is an average of 13 suicides per year within the 14,000-resident population.¹¹ Notably, the suicide rate has surged by 40 percent among male doctors and 130 percent among female doctors compared to the general population, underscoring the greater psychological strain and workplace violence experienced by women.

The spokesperson for the Scientific Association of Psychiatrists of Iran pointed to workplace violence as a significant suicide risk factor, describing the work environment as oppressively high-pressure and demanding with no prospects for improvement, likening it to slavery.¹²

While official suicide statistics are not publicly disclosed, media reports suggest a rise in suicide attempts in 2023. On December 23, 2023, Jam-e-Jam newspaper, citing the National Organization for Civil Registration, identified suicide as the fifth leading cause of death among young people, attributing 8 percent of these suicides to poverty.¹³

On March 6, 2024, sociologist Ardeshir Bahrami confirmed a decade-long increase in suicide rates, particularly in geographically isolated cities with low development, high immigration, unemployment, and poverty rates. He identified the provinces of Kermanshah, Ilam, Khuzestan, Kohgiluyeh-and-Boyer Ahmad,

4 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 7, 2024

5 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 8, 2024

6 [Asr Iran](#), January 8, 2024

7 [ILNA](#), February 14, 2024

8 [Rokna](#), January 2, 2024

9 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 14, 2024

10 [Ham Mihan](#), January 17, 2024

11 [Khabar Online](#), January 20, 2024

12 [Ham Mihan](#), January 17, 2024

13 [Jam-e-Jam](#), December 23, 2023

and towns like Mallard, Quds, Rabat Karim, Shahriar, Qarchak, Varamin, Peshwa, and Pakdasht in Tehran province as having the highest suicide rates, noting migrant and informal workers from other parts of Iran often inhabit these areas.¹⁴

14 [Asr Iran](#), March 6, 2024

Women Marginalized in the Labor Market

Gender equality activists across various Iranian cities commemorated International Women's Day on March 8 amidst increasing violence against women by the Iranian government. Women challenging the mandatory hijab law face systematic harassment from both government entities and unofficial groups linked to religious and military bodies. The state employs tactics like cash fines, car confiscations, job terminations, workplace closures, legal summons, and calls to law enforcement and security agencies to oppress women.

The government's promotion of home-based jobs aims to sideline women from the workforce, instead encouraging them to remain at home. A Ministry of Labor official reported that 80 percent of domestic job permits were allocated to women, with around 130,000 permits issued in 2022. This rise in home business licensing coincides with a drop in women's economic participation and employment rates. Labor force data from fall 2023 showed women's economic participation at 14.4 percent and their employment rate at 12.4 percent.

The Iranian labor market is predominantly male, with women constituting only one-fifth of the workforce. In the industrial sector, women comprise about one-eighth of the workforce, and 62 percent of employed women are in the service sector. The coronavirus pandemic led to the unemployment of at least 770,000 working women, many of whom have remained jobless after the pandemic.¹⁵

The winter 2024 unemployment rate announced by the Iranian Statistics Center was 8.6 percent, while the female unemployment rate was 15.6 percent - nearly double the overall rate and more than twice the male unemployment rate of 7.1 percent. Women's economic activity decreased from the previous fall to 13.8 percent, with the number of working women declining from four million to 3.76 million, reducing the female employment rate to 11.6 percent. Furthermore, the proportion of women in service roles rose by at least one percentage point. The unemployment rate for university graduates increased from 19.4 percent to 20.2 percent, almost triple the rate for college-educated men.¹⁶

Government agencies have also shut down numerous women's hair salons in different cities for "overpricing" and "inappropriate services," further diminishing women's presence in the informal job sector.¹⁷

Women's wages also remain lower than identical roles held by men.¹⁸

15 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 10, 2024

16 [Eghtesad News](#), March 17, 2024

17 [Ensaf News](#), December 25, 2023, [Arman Emoruz](#), January 5, 2024

18 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 10, 2024

Wage Suppression and Hunger Imposed on Workers

The government continued its wage suppression, establishing inadequate workers' wages for another year. The Coordinating Center of Islamic Labor Councils of Tehran calculated the cost of living for a four-member family at 32.85 million tomans in the province and 26.55 million tomans nationwide.¹⁹

To justify lower wages, the government reduced the recommended daily caloric intake and altered the composition of the food basket used to calculate the subsistence level. The Ministry of Health's food basket, presented to the Supreme Labor Council, saw per capita cuts in protein intake, including reducing red and white meat and removing fish entirely.²⁰

Independent labor groups composed of government-approved members lack representation in the Supreme Labor Council, undermining the notion of balanced worker representation in wage discussions. Moreover, governmental amendments to the council's formation and management guidelines in 2008 have effectively weakened the influence of these "labor members."

Wage negotiations have remained drawn-out and contentious. On March 19, the eve of the Iranian New Year, the Supreme Labor Council set the daily minimum wage at 238,872 tomans, translating to a monthly salary of 7.182 million tomans. Some labor representatives reportedly walked out of the meeting in protest. Nonetheless, the Deputy Minister of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare stated that the legal majority of the council approved the wage.²¹ As a result, the 2024 minimum wage was set below at 9.482 million tomans for a single worker and 10.892 million tomans for a married worker with children.

Other wage levels experienced a mere 22 percent increase plus a fixed supplement of 697,800 tomans.

The Minister of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare declared these minimum wages partly in the parliament and partly in the Supreme Labor Council, criticizing the disjointed manner of wage determination. He advocated for labor law revisions, hinting at a potential overhaul or elimination of the Council's current tripartite structure.²²

19 [ILNA](#), March 10, 2024

20 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 10, 2024

21 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 19, 2024

22 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 19, 2024

Immigrant Oppression

On February 19, the director of Iran's National Migration Organization disclosed that over one million Afghan nationals were rejected or deported since March 2023, indicating a governmental resolve to repatriate all immigrants.²³ Official figures state that 400,000 Afghans were expelled in October and November alone.²⁴ On March 2, the Interior Minister of Iran announced that illegal residents must return to their homeland,²⁵ hinting at a broader deportation strategy that could include immigrants with residence permits.

In order to restrict residency for Afghans, the largest immigrant group in Iran, the National Migration Organization initiated a policy requiring a 100 million toman deposit. While officially voluntary, Afghans in Alborz province reported compulsory deposits to renew their residency, noting that they faced deportation if they failed to pay.²⁶

Under this scheme, immigrants who deposit 100 million tomans are granted an immediate residency extension, are eligible for social security and banking services, and are prioritized for purchasing incentive shares after four months. Employment permits are renewed based on the "job atlas for foreign nationals." Those who pay in installments and cover 50-70 percent of the total can extend their residency and work permits.²⁷

Given that Afghan immigrants often engage in low-paid, strenuous jobs without legal or government support, accumulating 100 million tomans is exceedingly challenging. The National Migration Organization claims that this policy aims to foster job opportunities for immigrants, collaborating with the Academic Jihad Organization for their alleged education and empowerment. However, the director's remarks about a dignified return to their home countries suggest an underlying agenda to facilitate the organized deportation of immigrants with residence permits.²⁸

The Iranian government's actions extend to the deportation of Afghan minors. On March 15, the head of the National Migration Agency stated that there is a long-term plan to repatriate children of illegal residents. Afghan media reported the deportation of hundreds of children from Iran in 2023, with at least three Afghan minors detained and sent to the Asgarabad Varamin camp under the Collection of Working Children initiative.²⁹

Beyond the Iranian government's systemic violence against Afghans, these individuals also endure aggression from Iranian citizens, fueled by anti-immigrant sentiments promoted by the media, political figures, and government officials. A

23 [Fararu](#), February 19, 2024

24 [Nour News](#), November 29, 2023

25 [Asr Iran](#), March 2, 2024

26 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 31, 2024

27 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 24, 2024

28 [Borna](#), March 5, 2024

29 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 21, 2024

tragic example is the case of Elias Mohammadi, an Afghan laborer in Tehran, who was fatally thrown off a bridge by an assailant who wrongly suspected him of attempting to remove the Islamic Republic's flag. Mohammadi was employed at a fruit shop and also worked as a municipal worker at night, tasked with cleaning the walls along the highways.³⁰ Another harrowing incident in Isfahan involved a 21-year-old Afghan whose decapitated body was discovered; the motive for this murder remains unclear and Iranian authorities have maintained silence on the matter.³¹

30 [Etemad](#), February 27, 2024

31 [8 AM](#), March 8, 2024

Labor Repression

The Iranian government continues to suppress workers through arrests, dismissals, summons, and denials of access to medical care and legal representation for imprisoned labor activists.

Kurdish labor rights activist Sharifeh Mohammadi, who was arrested on December 5, 2023, remains incarcerated without family visitation rights or legal counsel. She faces allegations of affiliating with the Komale Party, a Kurdish group opposing the Islamic Republic.³²

This crackdown has extended to educators. Soleyman Abdi of the Kurdistan and Saqez Teachers' Trade Union Association has been imprisoned for eight months and was sentenced to 74 lashes by a Saqez court on March 3.³³

Labor rights activist Nahid Khodajoo was detained to serve a five-year sentence.³⁴ Nargess Mansouri, from the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, who has been incarcerated again since November 2023, received an additional three-year sentence which compounds her six-year term from 2019. Released on three billion tomans bail in April 2023 for treatment for a short period, she was returned to jail to face the new charges. Her struggle reflects ongoing judicial pressure.³⁵

Foad Fathi, sentenced to four years, suffers from illness in prison and has been denied medical leave.³⁶ Other labor activists, including Jafar Ebrahimi, Reza Shahabi, Dawood Razavi, and Reza Aqdasi, face similar denial of medical leave by prison authorities.³⁷

Saeed Yuzi of the Committee for Pursuing the Creation of Labor Organizations was arrested and later released on bail,³⁸ along with Mostafa Zamani, an Isfahan refinery worker.³⁹

Mahmoud Beheshti Langroudi, ex-secretary general of the Teachers' Union of Iran, faced a court summons, and secured release on 100 million tomans bail.⁴⁰ Teacher union activist Loghman Afzali was exiled to Ardabil for two years by administrative decision.⁴¹

In Gilan province, ten board members of The Teachers Union of Iran, including Mahmoud Sedighipour, were each sentenced to two years in prison and a subse-

32 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 13, 2024

33 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 3, 2024

34 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 21, 2024

35 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 24, 2024

36 [Kolbar News](#), January 10, 2024

37 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 29, 2023

38 [Kolbar News](#), February 4, 2024

39 [Shora-ye-Bazneshastegan](#), January 16, 2024

40 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 21, 2024

41 [Coordinating Council of Teachers' Union Organizations](#), February 22, 2024

quent two-year ban on social and political group participation.⁴² Karim Bostanchi, a teacher's union activist in West Azerbaijan, was dismissed for protesting teacher incarcerations.⁴³

Suppression tactics have also involved dismissing or temporarily suspending protesting workers. The Ministry of Education fired or suspended numerous teachers, while the Ministry of Health suspended protesting nurses.⁴⁴ In Borujerd, 110 textile workers lost their jobs for protest participation.⁴⁵

Several protesters were barred from entry at the National Steel Industrial Group of Iran (Ahvaz Steel).

Additionally, nine Aghdareh gold mine workers faced a second trial on January 9 for participating in protests, accused of "deliberate assault" by three police officers who had violently quelled the July 2023 demonstrations. Following the Travertine Mine protests in Aghdareh, over thirty workers were arrested and later released on bail ranging from 600 million to 1 billion tomans. Some resumed work under short-term contracts with stipulations against protest involvement, while others were dismissed without financial settlement.⁴⁶

42 [Coordinating Council of Teachers' Union Organizations](#), March 6, 2024

43 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 1, 2024

44 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 18, 2024

45 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 31, 2023

46 [Emtedad](#), January 11, 2024

Protests in Early 2024

During the first quarter of 2024, at least 500 labor and union protests occurred.

Retirees from social security, steel, telecommunications, and army and security personnel funds were at the forefront of these protests. The primary demand has been ‘wage optimization,’ reflecting a small increase, and retirees have held numerous rallies across various cities since December 2022, marking the highest frequency and broadest geographic spread of protests.

The government has largely ignored the calls for increased pensions, enhanced health insurance, and wage adjustments. Despite ongoing weekly protests, retirees from the Iran Telecommunication Company have been unsuccessful in compelling the company to meet its obligations. The government strategy seems to be to wear down the protests while altering pension laws to adversely affect workers and retirees. The enactment of the Seventh Development Plan by the Cabinet, sanctioned by the Guardian Council, made the retirement age increase official for employees with less than 28 years of service.

Despite widespread retiree protests against impoverishment, Ebrahim Raisi’s Cabinet announced a modest New Year’s bonus of 2.5 million tomans, with additional amounts of 700,000 tomans for wives and children and 300,000 tomans for dependents, far from offsetting the living costs.

To boost retirees and wage earners’ purchasing power, the government offered up to 20 million tomans in bank credit, restricted to purchases at specific stores, which inadvertently indebted them further.

The oil and gas sector experienced significant protests. Contract workers in various locations demanded the implementation of a job classification plan, the abolition of contracting companies, a work schedule of 14 days on and 14 days off, and higher wages. Concurrently, official oil employees staged strikes and rallies against wage caps, increased wage taxes, and bonus restrictions in oil-rich regions.

Table 1: Overview of oil and gas worker protests in the winter of 2024

Protest group	Demands	Location	Outcome
Oil and gas contract workers on a project (so-called <i>Arkan-e-Saales</i>) ⁴⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of job classification plan • Removal of contracting companies • Return to work for fired drivers • Schedule of 14 working days, 14 days off • Welfare benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 5, 6, 9 of South Pars Company • Gachsaran Oil and Gas Company • National Iranian Drilling Company • Mahshahr Petrochemical Terminal and Tanks • South Pars Refinery 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 	Unknown

⁴⁷ [Oil Workers Protest Organizing Council](#), February 24, 2024, and the [same](#), March 16, 2024

Oil and gas official employees ⁴⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of salary cap • Refund excess tax • Removal of bonus cap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aghajari Oil Company • Iran Energy Industries Company • Iranian Offshore Oil Company • Tehran Oil Company 	Unknown
Other oil and gas contract workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment of deferred wages • Salary equal to official workers • Implementation of job classification plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petro-Nar Petrochemical Company • Hegmataneh Petrochemical Company • Jask oil tanks • Farabi Mahshahr Petrochemical Company • Maroon Petrochemical Company⁴⁹ • Lidoma Company, Azaristan, and Rozhin Industries, Jask⁵⁰ • Kangan Petrochemical Company⁵¹ • Ilam Petrochemical Company 	Unknown

Temporary contract workers in the oil sector, often referred to as “*Arkan-e-Salis*,” face significant wage disparities compared to permanent employees and lack access to the benefits and welfare services afforded to their official counterparts.

The primary grievance among production sector workers was delayed and insufficient wages.

Government and independent labor organization reports indicate that during winter, workers from at least 19 production and industrial units protested against poor living and working conditions, wage discrimination, and unemployment with rallies or strikes. The most common complaints among industrial workers were inadequate and delayed payments, which were noted as the primary issue in seven units. Other protest demands included implementation of job classification plans, addressing of wage disparities for equal work, and the reinstatement of employment for affected employees.

The National Steel Industrial Group (Ahvaz Steel) saw the most widespread and organized labor protests in December 2023 and January 2024. Steelworkers’ demands included:

- Revision and enforcement of job classification plans.
- Alignment of salaries with neighboring companies, such as Oxin Steel Company of Khuzestan.
- Reinstatement of colleagues dismissed or suspended for advocating for similar demands.
- Ousting of CEO Ali Mohammadi and involvement of workers in the company’s management.
- Conversion of Shafagh Rahian Oxin workers from contract to permanent positions.⁵²

48 [Oil Workers Protest Organizing Council](#), February 2, 2024, the [same](#), January 28, 2024

49 [Oil Workers Protest Organizing Council](#), March 10, 2024

50 [Union of Metalworkers and Mechanics](#), February 15, 2024

51 [Oil Workers Protest Organizing Council](#), March 4, 2024

52 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 16, 2024

Iran’s National Steel Industrial Group management dismissed 28 workers for organizing the strikes in an attempt to quash the protests. On February 26, the workers announced that the suspensions and entry bans for their colleagues were revoked, and the employer pledged to reconsider the job classification plan as a result of the protests. Consequently, they temporarily halted the protest, clarifying that returning to work “does not signify acceptance of the current terms.”⁵³

Similarly, Tazreh coal mine employees in Shahrood staged a seven-day strike to address issues like wage disparity, the absence of a job classification plan, reliance on temporary contracts, and dangerous working conditions—highlighted by the death of five workers during the previous summer. The strike ceased following managerial promises to meet the workers’ demands.⁵⁴

Wage payments are frequently delayed across various sectors. In some workshops, insurance contributions are not made promptly, impacting the workers’ health coverage.

This chronic wage delay, which can extend up to six months in certain firms, prompts protests from workers. Withholding salaries has also become a tactic used by employers to suppress dissent.

In smaller manufacturing businesses, impoverished workers largely protest to recover overdue wages and seek contract renewals at the same low pay rates amid wage suppression and price liberalization policies. Employers often dismiss calls for wage hikes, citing the rates set by the Supreme Labor Council and adverse economic conditions. Despite rallying against delayed wage payments or to advocate for salary increases during the winter months, many workers saw no progress.

Table 2: Overview of production and mining unit workers’ protests from January to March 2024

Production unit	Cause of protest	Form of protest	Outcome
Sabalan Khodro Automobile Company, Ardabil ⁵⁵	Four months of unpaid wages Dismissal of workers	Rally at work	Unknown
Etminan Ice Cream Company, Tabriz ⁵⁶	Low salaries	Sit-in at work	Unknown
Tabas Coking complex ⁵⁷	Low salaries Non-implementation of job classification plan	Rally	Unknown

53 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 4, 2024
 54 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 22, 2024
 55 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 12, 2024
 56 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 5, 2024
 57 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 29, 2024

Shirin Asal Company of Tabriz ⁵⁸	Low salaries Long work hours Lack of a labor council	Rally	Unknown
Diba Shushtar Paper Company ⁵⁹	Dismissal of 500 workers	Rally	Unknown
Pars Haft Tappeh Steel Factory ⁶⁰	Deferred wages Low salaries Non-implementation of job classification plan	Rally	Unknown
Jil Karun Brick Company ⁶¹	Dismissal of workers Delayed wage claim from 2019	Rally	Unknown
Ghazi Tabriz Pharmaceutical Company ⁶²	Low salaries	Strike	Unknown
Caspian Steel Factory (AmirKabir Steel Co), Gilan ⁶³	Closure of the production line and layoffs	Rally	Unknown
Bafgh Iron Ore Factory ⁶⁴	Dismissal of workers	Rally	Unknown
Iran Tire Company ⁶⁵	Non-implementation of job classification plan	Strike	Unknown
Zarand Kerman Coal Washing Company ⁶⁶	Low salaries	Rally by workers' families	Unknown
Tabriz Tile Company ⁶⁷	Low salaries	Rally	Unknown
Saipa Azin Automobile Equipment Manufacturing Company ⁶⁸	Low salaries	Strike	Unknown
Haft Tappeh MDF Company ⁶⁹	Deferred wages Temporary contracts Non-implementation of job classification plan	Strike	Unknown
Tabriz Machinery Manufacturing Company ⁷⁰	Low salaries Deferred wages	Strike	Temporary closure of the factory by the employer
Darou Pakhsh Pharmaceutical Co. ⁷¹	Low salaries Deferred wages	Strike	Unknown

58 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 29, 2024

59 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 9, 2024

60 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 9, 2024

61 [ILNA](#), January 17, 2024

62 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 19, 2024

63 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 26, 2024

64 [The Free Union of Iranian Workers](#), March 14, 2024

65 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 29, 2024

66 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 12, 2024

67 [ILNA](#), March 11, 2024

68 [The Free Union of Iranian Workers](#), March 7, 2024

69 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 12, 2024

70 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 4, 2024

71 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 22, 2024

Healthcare Privatization Drives Iranian Nurses Away

The privatization of healthcare in Iran has jeopardized the livelihood and well-being of nurses. To address the nursing shortage, hospitals often mandate excessive overtime for meager wages ranging from 16,000 to 25,000 tomans per hour. This practice contradicts the Ministry of Health's assertions of a fair medical service pricing system. The employment landscape for nurses is marred by contract diversity and wage discrepancies and discrimination, prompting increased job abandonment and emigration among nurses.

The Iranian Nursing Organization acknowledged that around 3,000 nurses emigrated during the Iranian calendar year 1402 (March 20, 2023, to March 20, 2024). In Tehran alone, 216 nurses resigned within the first nine months of the year, citing the arduous nature of their work and the imbalance between their workload and compensation.⁷² The head of the Nursing Organization has cited a figure of 10,000 nurses leaving the profession, though he did not specify the exact timeframe for this number.⁷³

In the absence of an independent nurses' union, nursing professionals across various cities have held demonstrations against their severe exploitation. Their demands include:

- Proper enactment of pricing for treatment services.
- An end to mandatory overtime.
- Secure and direct employment contracts.
- Timely payment of wages and bonuses.
- Eradication of pay inequality.

The Secretary-General of Nurses' Home reported that the Ministry of Health has suspended or dismissed nurses engaging in protests. Notably, in cities like Kashan and Tehran, nurses faced up to six-month suspensions or terminations for participating in demonstrations. The Secretary-General indicated that summons to disciplinary boards and workplace policing have instilled fear and anxiety among nurses, compelling many to leave the profession.⁷⁴

Women constitute at least 76 percent of the nursing workforce in Iran.⁷⁵

⁷² [Mehr News](#), February 24, 2024

⁷³ [Khabar Online](#), December 22, 2024

⁷⁴ [Nurses' Home \(Khaneh-ye-Parastar\)](#), February 18, 2024

⁷⁵ [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 12, 2024

Chronic Salary Delays in Public Sector Employment

Public service workers are experiencing prolonged delays in salary payments, with municipal employees facing the most significant backlog. In Sisakhet, municipal staff have endured 12 months of unpaid wages,⁷⁶ receiving only one month of arrears following their protests. Workers in various cities, including Sanandaj, Iranshahr,⁷⁷ Rudbar,⁷⁸ Tabriz, Anar, Noushabad, Zahedan, Urmia, Yasuj,⁷⁹ Ilam,⁸⁰ Saravan, and Kut Abdollah, have reported wage delays ranging from one to eight months.

Similar issues plague Railway Technical Line and Building Maintenance employees across several regions, often employed under temporary contracts via third-party companies. These workers have repeatedly called for the elimination of contractor mediation, timely wage payments, and the right to organize. During the winter months, they staged rallies and strikes in cities like Qom,⁸¹ Azarbaijan, Lorestan,⁸² Tehran,⁸³ and Yazd.⁸⁴ Their protests also targeted specific contractual terms with new employers.

Additionally, various groups, including Tehran bus drivers,⁸⁵ Tehran city train employees, water and sewage workers in Shush⁸⁶ and Behbahan,⁸⁷ temporary employees of Gharb Regional Electric Company,⁸⁸ high-voltage electricity operators,⁸⁹ Refah chain store employees,⁹⁰ and Ahvaz metro security personnel have demonstrated against low pay, wage delays, pay inequality, and precarious contractual conditions.

Firefighters, staff of the Sports and Youth Organization of Ilam, and workers on the Ilam Road Construction, Chabahr Water Pumping, and Tarood Road Construction Projects in Semnan Province also protested, demanding overdue wages or raises in pay.

76 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 29, 2024
77 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 12, 2024
78 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 12, 2024
79 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 12, 2024
80 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 26, 2024
81 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 12, 2024
82 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 26, 2024
83 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 29, 2024
84 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 22, 2024
85 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 19, 2024
86 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 12, 2024
87 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 19, 2024
88 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 12, 2024
89 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 19, 2024
90 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 12, 2024

Informal Workers Under Government Pressure

At best, workers' salaries meet only half of their monthly living expenses, leading many to take on second jobs due to the government's suppression of wage increases through the Supreme Labor Council.

The Capital opinion polling center revealed that a mere 7.8 percent of surveyed individuals could cover costs of living with their wages, prompting 56 percent to seek additional employment.⁹¹ Ali Dehghan-Kia from the Tehran Social Security Pensioners' Center noted that many pensioners have resorted to informal jobs, often working double shifts to support themselves and their families.⁹² Morteza Afgheh, an economics professor, observed that the wages for educated and other workers are generally insufficient for a decent living, forcing many into multiple jobs.⁹³

The Director General of the Monitoring and Coordination of Entrepreneurial Projects at the Ministry of Cooperative, Labor, and Social Welfare has also acknowledged the increase in informal employment and stated that half of Iran's workforce is engaged in informal jobs.⁹⁴

Amid these discussions, there has been a reported increase in the number of peddlers in Tehran, with the city's municipality estimating their presence at around 30,000. Economic researcher Hossein Raghfar disputed this estimate, suggesting a higher count, and remarked, "About 65 to 70 percent of the country's employment is in the informal sector; these are jobs without insurance, with low wages, and that lack stability, including peddling, driving for rideshare apps, sewing, and others."⁹⁵

Tehran's municipal authorities have aimed to regulate peddlers, mandating license applications submitted through a designated website, which could be seen as a step towards formalizing peddling and imposing taxes.⁹⁶

The head of the Islamic Parliament's Employment Committee supported formalizing and taxing peddling, arguing that the growth in informal jobs could diminish government revenues.

Tehran's municipality and Islamic City Council have blamed peddlers for tarnishing the city's image.

In various locales, municipal officers have targeted peddlers. In Gorgan, an officer assaulted a peddler,⁹⁷ while in Shiraz, municipal forces aggressively detained

91 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 13, 2024

92 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 5, 2024

93 [Fararu](#), March 16, 2024

94 [Khabar Online](#), February 12, 2024

95 [Tejarat News](#), February 19, 2024

96 [Radio Zamaneh](#), February 21, 2024

97 [Daneshjoo](#), March 10, 2024

a female peddler, leading to the municipality designating peddling as illegal.⁹⁸ In Islamshahr, a municipal deputy reported the roundup of 200 peddlers,⁹⁹ and Tehran's Shahrban Company CEO announced the removal of peddlers' mobile vans across 22 districts.¹⁰⁰ Other cities have implemented Tehran's approach, imposing similar measures to restrict and displace peddlers.

Kulbars in Kurdistan and *sukhtbars* in Baluchistan are informal workers who have been subjected to systematic violence by the government. *Kulbars* carry heavy commercial goods on their backs across Iran's perilous western border areas to evade border guards. Similarly, *sukhtbars* transport fuel along Iran's eastern borders.

While there are no precise statistics on *kulbars* and *sukhtbars*, parliamentarians' estimates suggest that at least 80,000 people earn their livelihood as *kulbars* and nearly 100,000 as *sukhtbars*.

Violence against *kulbars* has intensified following the 2022 security agreement between Iran, Iraq, and the Kurdistan Region. In the winter months alone, border guards in Iran and the Kurdistan region reportedly killed at least nine *kulbars* and injured 163 others. Additionally, three *kulbars* died due to landmines or falls, and 16 others were wounded from similar causes, including accidents. Notably, at least six of the targeted *kulbars* were children.¹⁰¹

According to *Kulbar News*, 444 *kulbars* were injured or killed in 2023, with border guard violence resulting in 34 deaths and 372 injuries.¹⁰²

In Baluchistan this past winter, at least 103 *sukhtbars* suffered injuries or were killed, primarily due to military fire, pursuit by military forces, or road accidents. Incidents involving vehicle fires, road mishaps, and military shootings resulted in the deaths of 59 *sukhtbars*, while unidentified assailants killed two. Media sources close to Baluch activists reported that accidents, fires, and shootings by military agents injured at least 44 *sukhtbars*.

Security forces also detained at least five *sukhtbars*, with three arrests on February 3,¹⁰³ and two on March 11, coinciding with a *sukhtbar* rally protesting the closure of the border and traffic restrictions in front of the Saravan governorate.¹⁰⁴

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) blocked the Kalegan route in Saravan City in January,¹⁰⁵ leading to conflicts between citizens and military forces after military agents shot at fuel carriers' vehicles and arrested some in Dehak

98 [IRNA](#), February 21, 2024

99 [Sepideh News](#), February 21, 2024

100 [Hamshahri](#), March 15, 2024

101 [Kurdistan Human Rights Network](#), January 21, 2024, [the same](#), February 20, 2024, and [Kulbar News](#), March 12, 2024.

102 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 21, 2024

103 [HalVash](#), February 3, 2024

104 [HalVash](#), March 11, 2024

105 [HalVash](#), January 24, 2024

Minab village.¹⁰⁶

On January 19, residents of Rimdan protested the shooting of sukhtbars at the Rimdan border guard post by military forces, threatening to block the border bazaar if such shootings were to occur again.¹⁰⁷

106 [HalVash](#), January 25, 2024

107 [HalVash](#), January 19, 2024

Danger in Construction Work

The Iranian Statistics Center reported that 548 workers died in work-related accidents in the fall of 2023, following 511 fatalities in the summer of that same year.¹⁰⁸ The Forensic Medicine Organization of Iran had earlier indicated that 1,077 workers perished due to occupational accidents during the first six months of the Iranian calendar year 1402 (March 21, 2023, to September 21, 2023). Combining these figures, at least 1,625 workers died from March to the end of December 2023.

The primary causes of these fatalities were falls from heights and impacts from hard objects, which together accounted for the deaths of 744 workers in the first half of the year. Construction workers notably face the highest risk, as many are without insurance and under precarious one-day contracts. According to the head of the Construction Workers Trade Union Association, although construction workers constitute only six percent of the working population, they account for half of all fatal workplace accidents. He criticized recent amendments to the Construction Workers' Insurance Law made by members of the Islamic Parliament, arguing that these changes favor developers at the expense of the workers. As a result, insurance coverage was terminated for 300,000 workers over three years, with an additional 500,000 awaiting coverage.¹⁰⁹

108 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 14, 2024

109 [Tasnim](#), December 27, 2024

Work Safety Overview

From March to December 2023, at least 1,625 workers fell victim to work-related accidents. While statistics for the first three months of 2024 have yet to be officially released, preliminary reports suggest that at least 92 workers have died due to workplace incidents during this period, reflecting only a fraction of the total work accidents in Iran.

Discrepancies among data from the Ministry of Cooperation, Labor and Social Welfare, the Social Security Organization, and the Iranian Legal Medicine Organization (ILMO) indicate that many work accidents occur in settings that are not fully covered by social security or labor laws.

In 2022, the Social Security Organization recorded 38,734 insured workers who suffered occupational injuries, whereas the ILMO noted 260,741 cases related to occupational injuries. During the same period, the Ministry reported 7,950 injured workers but confirmed only 455 work-related fatalities. In contrast, the ILMO reported 1,900 fatalities from work-related accidents that year while the Ministry confirmed 711 worker deaths.

Table 3: Comparison of work accident statistics in 2022

Government organization	Deaths	Injuries	Discrepancies between reported statistics of various organizations
Iranian Legal Medicine Organization (ILMO)	1,900	260,741	The ILMO's figures for the injured and deceased are 6.7 times and 4.2 times higher, respectively, than those reported by the Social Security Organization.
Ministry of Cooperation, Labor and Social Welfare	711	7,950	According to the ILMO, the number of injuries and fatalities is 32.8 times and 2.67 times higher, respectively, than the figures provided by the Ministry of Labor.
Social Security Organization	455	38,734	The Ministry of Labor's fatality count is 1.56 times greater than that reported by the Social Security Organization, while the number of injuries reported by the Social Security Organization is 4.8 times that of the Ministry of Labor's figures.

On February 18, 2024, the Kar-and-Kargar newspaper, published by the Workers' Chamber, highlighted a concerning trend: 76 percent of workers who died in occupational accidents lacked social security coverage.¹¹⁰

On February 6, the Deputy of Labor Relations at the Ministry of Cooperation, Labor and Social Welfare, claimed a 14 percent decrease in work-related accidents compared to 2021, attributing 380 of the 711 reported deaths to construction site accidents.¹¹¹ However, this assertion is contradicted by the ILMO, which registered 1,077 work-related deaths from March 21 to September 21, 2023—an increase of 15.7 percent compared to the same period in 2022, which saw 931 fatalities.

Ehsan Sohrabi, a former member of the Higher Council for Labor Safety and Pro-

¹¹⁰ [Kar va Kargar](#), February 18, 2024

¹¹¹ [ISNA](#), February 6, 2024

tection, reported on January 6, 2024, that in Khorasan Razavi province alone, 104 workers died over a nine-month period, differing significantly from the Ministry's figure of 44 deaths. He accused the Ministry of intentionally underreporting work accidents to fabricate an improvement in workplace safety.¹¹²

112 [IWNA](#), January 6, 2024

Previous Quarterly Reports

[Report 27](#)

[Report 26](#)

[Report 25](#)

[Report 24](#)

Annual Reports

[Annual Report no. 5](#)

[Annual Report no. 4](#)

[Annual Report no. 3](#)

Special Reports

[Poverty and Exploitation: Looking at Baluchestan and the Sukhtbars](#)
[Special Report on Iranian Pensioners](#)

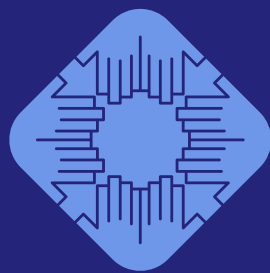
Visit Zamaneh Media Labor Rights Page:

English

<https://en.radiozamaneh.com/labor/>

Persian

<https://www.radiozamaneh.com/tag/labor-reports/>



Labor Rights in Iran
A Zamaneh Project