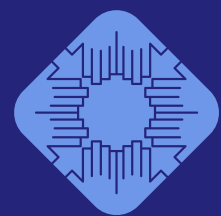


Workers: The Stable Pillar of Resistance

Labor Rights in Iran



Annual Report
Number 6
2023
Zamaneh Media Foundation



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About Zamaneh's Labor Reports

In the past six years, Zamaneh has published 27 labor reports, five special newsletters (on nurses, wage suppression, contract workers in the oil industry, teachers, and suppression of union activities), and five labor yearbooks in both Persian and English.

This report is Zamaneh's fifth labor yearbook, which covers issues related to Iranian workers' rights in 2023.

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

Introduction

In the latter part of 2022, Iran witnessed the profound impact of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement on its labor sector. Key participants in the ensuing street protests included informal and marginalized workers, underscoring the widespread unrest among them.

The state’s harsh response to these demonstrations resulted in the execution of four workers: Majidreza Rahnavard, a fruit vendor; Mohammad Hosseini, a poultry worker; Mohsen Shekari, a café worker; and Mehdi Karami, a construction worker. This crackdown also led to the arrest of numerous workers and teachers’ union activists across various parts of Iran.

Solidarity movements emerged in workplaces, particularly within the oil-rich southern regions and the Esfahan Steel Company, as workers united in support of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protesters. This unity prompted the government to detain dozens of oil workers in Asaluyeh and several employees at the Esfahan Steel Company. Teachers in several cities who showed solidarity with this movement by not attending classes also faced arrest. Despite the government’s efforts to suppress these demonstrations with violence and enhanced security measures, it failed to halt the continuation of widespread worker protests throughout the country.

Soaring inflation rates that significantly diminished the public’s purchasing power and efforts by the Supreme Labor Council to suppress wages were the primary drivers for worker protests.

During the past year, the prices of goods and services have increased by over 40 percent on average, with more pronounced hikes in food and housing. Rent rates in some densely populated areas even doubled.

Devoid of genuine labor representation, the Supreme Labor Council set the minimum wage at less than eight million tomans despite the cost of living being estimated at over 18 million tomans. Independent labor organizations vehemently criticized the council’s action as a declaration of war on workers. (At the time of publication, the exchange rate is one US dollar to 50 million tomans).

Regional tensions escalated confrontational messaging between Iran and the United States concerning Iran’s nuclear program, and European sanctions on human rights grounds have all led to a weaker rial, negatively affecting imports of production materials. Businesses also experienced a downturn in sales due to reduced consumer purchasing power, which in turn led to layoffs.

Immigrant communities, particularly Afghan refugees, faced harsher conditions amid heightened anti-immigrant rhetoric in state media. Attacks on immigrant settlements and government-led expulsions increased, with certain regions banning Afghan settlements altogether.

This growing poverty has caused more children, especially girls, to miss school, which has contributed to the rise in child labor.

Overview

1- Wage Suppression

On March 20, 2023, marking the end of the Iranian calendar year 1401, the Supreme Labor Council (SLC) concluded its discussions which have been criticized as “tripartite theatrics.” This term refers to the supposed equal representation within the SLC of government, private industry owners, and workers. In practice, the workers’ representatives are chosen for security, rather than being representative of the working class. Without true worker representation, the council set the minimum wage at 5,308,274 tomans per month. This decision came at a time when the basic cost of living (“subsistence basket”) was nearly 18 million tomans per month and the poverty line was around 14 million tomans, perpetuating the suppression of workers’ wages for an additional year.¹

The SLC has been criticized for suppressing wages without real worker representation for years. The representatives on the council are typically elected from government-affiliated organizations such as the House of Labor (*Khaneye Kargar*), Islamic work councils, or state-sanctioned trade unions rather than independent labor groups.

Independent labor organizations condemned the SLC’s minimum wage decision as a “war against the working class,” assuring that they would organize significant protests in response. Despite these intentions, actions have been limited to small gatherings and written appeals to government bodies. Members of the government-affiliated labor organizations within the SLC pledged to work towards wage restoration throughout 2023, but the council did not revise the wage policy.

2- Dismissals

In 2023, teachers faced significant risks of both temporary and permanent dismissal for their involvement in protests. The government’s primary reasons for firing teachers included their participation in union protests, their opposition to violence against protestors and the militarization of schools, and their reactions to the use of chemical nauseating and disorienting gases in schools to suppress student protests.

Many oil industry workers from the southern regions were also barred from their workplaces for protesting poor living conditions, which were exacerbated by the prevailing security measures.

In its quarterly reports on the business climate and purchasing managers’ power, the Chamber of Commerce’s Research Center highlighted a decline in the employment index within production units, attributing it to decreased sales and the economic downturn. In contrast, the Statistics Center of the Islamic Republic re-

¹ [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 20, 2023

ported an unprecedented low in unemployment rates over the last two decades, a claim that appears inconsistent with observed economic challenges.

The prevalence of temporary contracts and suppression of unionization largely due to governmental pressure have simplified the process for employers to dismiss workers. The financial and emotional toll of these dismissals has unfortunately led some workers to suicide.

3- Wage Payment Delays

In some regions, workers have faced delays in wage payments for over one year. Municipal employees often bear the brunt of these delays; for example, the Si-sakht municipality workers have experienced up to 13 months of unpaid wages. These protracted delays in wage payments have forced a majority of labor protests into a defensive posture, particularly as many employees across the manufacturing and service sectors are under three-month temporary contracts, leaving them vulnerable to immediate termination.

4- Discrimination and Inequality

The prevalence of temporary contracts and layered contractor hierarchies has exacerbated inequality and discrimination in the workforce. Workers in diverse sectors, including oil fields, healthcare (nurses and medical staff), education (teachers), mining, and municipal services, have called to eradicate wage disparities and unfair working conditions. Notably, nurses and energy sector workers face the most pronounced disparities. For instance, contract workers in the energy sector earn between 20 to 30 million tomans less per month compared to their permanently employed counterparts.

5- High Rate of Exploitation

Workers in refineries, oil and gas field development projects, hospitals, and mines face harsh conditions, including long hours, low pay, elimination of job benefits, inadequate amenities, poor accommodations, and substandard food. These difficult conditions have sparked protests among workers in these industries. The exploitation rate in oil-rich regions is notably high, which has led to increased demonstrations. Additionally, medical staff are compelled to work overtime for meager compensation, prompting a significant number of young nurses and doctors to emigrate from Iran in search of better opportunities.

6- Suppression of Worker Organization

The Iranian government actively obstructs the formation of independent worker organizations despite the legal recognition of labor assemblies and trade unions under the country's labor law. Independent groups such as the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (SWTSBC), the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-Industrial Complex Labor Syndicate, the Council for Organizing Protests of Contract Oil and Gas Workers, the Assembly of Representatives of the Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Company, the Free Union of Iranian Workers (FUIW),

and various teachers' unions across Iran have faced arrest, imprisonment, and the outlawing of their activities by the government. This crackdown further suppresses workers' rights to organize and advocate for better conditions.

Labor Protests

Pensioners

In 2023, social security pensioners were the most active group in terms of protest frequency. This group included government retirees, military pensioners, and former employees from various sectors, such as telecommunications, health and medical services, State Radio and Television (IRIB), and the Ministry of Oil and Steel Industries. They participated in street protests.

The primary grievance fueling the protests by social security and military pensioners, steel industry retirees, and government employees was the need for wage adjustment and optimization. In 2021, the thirteenth cabinet halted the legislative process for the pensioners' wage adjustment bill in parliament, citing budget constraints. Subsequently, a bill proposing an annual bonus based on years of service was introduced in the seventh development plan and passed in November 2022.²

The below table presents a selection of pensioner protests in 2023. In addition to the groups listed in the table, pensioners from state and quasi-state banks, Azad University, and the State Radio and Television (IRIB) also organized protests at least once.

Table 1 – A Selection of Pensioner Protests in 2023

Protest group	Type of protest	Demands	Outcome
Social Security	Weekly protest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases Implementation of salary optimization and adjustment plan Right to free medical treatment Retiree participation in companies' board of directors Non-interference of the government in retirement centers 	The Islamic Parliament approved the optimization and adjustment of pensioners' wages. ³
Steel industries ⁴	Weekly protest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases Implementation of salary optimization and adjustment plan Non-transfer of the fund's assets 	
State and army personnel ⁵	Weekly protest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases Full health insurance Approval and implementation of salary optimization and adjustment plan 	
Ministry of Petroleum ⁶	Rally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposition to the merger of pension funds 	

2 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 19, 2023

3 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 21, 2023

4 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 5, 2023

5 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 30, 2023

6 [The Free Union of Iranian Workers \(FUIW\)](#), November 12, 2023

Telecommunication company ⁷	Weekly protest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintained obligations to retirees after sale of the telecommunications company • Payment of previously-eliminated benefits 	
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Approximately seven million retirees are covered by various pension funds, with the Social Security Organization, the Military Personnel Fund, and government institution retirees enjoying the most significant insurance coverage. However, several reports from government institutions have indicated that government and semi-government pension funds, including the Social Security Organization, the Military Personnel Fund, and the Steel Industries Fund, are nearing a financial crisis due to a decreasing coverage ratio and insufficient income. The failure of the government to settle its debts to these funds, particularly the social security fund, is a critical factor in the fiscal imbalance faced by Iran's largest public pension fund.

Energy Sector Workers

Oil, gas, and petrochemical sector workers can be categorized into two main groups: official and contract employees.

Official workers employed by Iran's Ministry of Petroleum earn significantly more than contract workers. However, in recent years these employees have seen a reduction in welfare services, a government-imposed cap on their wages and bonuses, and increases to their income tax rates. As a result, protests by official oil sector workers peaked in the latter part of 2023.

Contract workers are employed under various temporary contracts, including project-based, three-month, and daily agreements, often with third-party contractors. The scope of protests among these workers, ranging from those in cleaning and welfare services to specialists and technicians, has broadened over time. During spring 2023, contract workers initiated a new wave of protests. A significant strike began on April 21, 2023, with contract workers in the oil, gas, and petrochemical sectors demanding the following⁸:

- Immediate 79 percent salary increase;
- Work/rest schedule of 20 days on, ten days off per month;
- Enhanced quality of dormitories, transportation, and food services;
- Elimination of intermediary contracting companies;
- Removal of 15-day unpaid trial period in employment contracts;
- Abolition of contract clauses that prohibit labor protests;
- Prompt salary payments.

This strike spread widely, leading to their exit from over 100 workshops across

⁷ [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 19, 2023

⁸ [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 21, 2023

various projects. The regions of Asaluyeh in Bushehr province, with its plethora of oil and gas projects, and Khuzestan province, home to numerous refineries and petrochemical facilities, became the strike's epicenters.

Since 2022, security agencies have intensified their efforts to secure project sites and curb labor unrest. On May 3, 2023, they reported the detention of several contractors in order to end the protests.

Sekhavat Asadi, the CEO of the Pars Energy Special Zone, issued an ultimatum to the striking workers, threatening them with termination if they did not resume work within a week.⁹ Despite this, the workers persisted in their strike. On May 14, the security deputy of the Bushehr Governorate blamed the strikes on external influence, announcing the arrest of eight participating workers and declaring the strike over.¹⁰ However, the Council for Organizing Protests of Oil and Gas Contractual Workers refuted this claim the following day.¹¹

On May 25, amid ongoing arrests and security measures targeting oil and gas project workers, the Tasnim news agency reported the arrest of "the second in command" strike leader in Asaluyeh, identified as Sajjad Khosravi's.¹² Additionally, the Committee to Follow-Up on Creating Labor Organizations reported the arrest and abduction of several contract workers without disclosing their identities.¹³

Contract worker protests persisted over the subsequent months.

While disallowing the organizational efforts of oil and gas workers in Asaluyeh, authorities permitted a faction of government-aligned workers to form a trade union known as the Bushehr Gas Industry Workers. In other locations, like the Abadan refinery, the government established Islamic Labor Councils. Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, these types of councils have acted as governmental instruments to control and quell worker protests.

Health Workers

Iran's healthcare system is grappling with an intensifying crisis, exacerbated by widespread privatization and outsourcing labor. Wage disparities, the preferential treatment of doctors compared to the disenfranchisement of nurses and medical staff, and high-stress environments have led to psychological distress among nurses and young doctors. A deputy health minister disclosed that in 2023, there were 16 suicides among medical residents.¹⁴

Nurses are particularly affected by mental health issues due to intense pressure they face at work, contributing to the emigration of at least 3000 nurses from Iran

9 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 3, 2023

10 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 14, 2023

11 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 15, 2023

12 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 25, 2023

13 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 28, 2023

14 [Fararu](#), January 14, 2024

within the past year.¹⁵ Primary drivers for their migration include prolonged work hours and inadequate pay. Despite a critical shortage, the Planning and Budget Organization has resisted hiring new nurses. Consequently, hospitals now operate more like commercial entities, employing nurses on short-term contracts of less than three months and frequently requiring them to work extended hours.

The below table presents a non-exhaustive selection of protests by nurses and medical staff in 2023. The actual scope of these protests is broader than the table suggests. Key factors underlying these protests include high levels of exploitation, poor remuneration, and job insecurity.

Table 2 - A Selection of Protests by Nurses and Medical Staff in 2023

Group	Demands	Protest type
Nurses ¹⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversion of contracts from temporary to permanent • Fair wage payment system • Elimination of compulsory overtime • Fair implementation of wage classification and health services benefits 	Rallies in Tehran, Kashan, Aran, Arak, Bidgol, Sanandaj, Fasa, Rasht, Soume Sara, Kermanshah, Islamabad, Saqez, Divandareh, Khorramabad, Ahvaz, Isfahan, Shiraz, and others
Nurses in Kurdistan ¹⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair implementation of wage classification and health services benefits 	Rally and sit-in
Nurses in Qazvin ¹⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair implementation of wage classification and health services benefits 	Rally and sit-in
Nurses in Yasouj ¹⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair implementation of wage classification and health services benefits 	Rally and sit-in
Nurses in Shiraz ²⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair implementation of wage classification and health services benefits 	Rally and sit-in
Sajjad Shahriar Hospital staff ²¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair implementation of wage classification and health services benefits • Payment for work clothes 	Rally and sit-in
Medical interns in Kerman-shah ²²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of wage discrimination 	Rally and sit-in

Industrial Workers

The Iranian industrial sector is facing a downturn, with decreased sales as a significant concern.²³ Biannual reports from the Research Center of the Chamber of Commerce have highlighted a decline in sales and stagnation across various manufacturing sectors. Economic factors such as the devaluation of the Iranian rial leading to higher costs to import raw materials and therefore reduced exports, higher energy prices, soaring inflation, and notably, a drop in domestic sales driven by the reduced purchasing power of workers due to suppressed wages, have pushed several production units to the brink of closure.

15 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 12, 2023

16 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 2, 2023

17 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 24, 2023

18 [ILNA](#), April 17, 2023

19 [Asr Dena](#), June 6, 2023

20 [ILNA](#), April 26, 2023

21 [The Free Union of Iranian Workers \(FUIW\)](#), May 1, 2023

22 [FUIW](#), June 6, 2023

23 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 10, 2023 and [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 11, 2024

At the start of the year, steel industry owners implemented government-backed wage suppression tactics. This led to delayed wage payments in many production units, extended working hours, provision of substandard work tools, and an infringement on fundamental rights. In some instances, the delay in paying workers' insurance premiums resulted in loss of access to medical services.

There was a notable increase in protests among workers in the industrial and mining sectors. The most significant unrest occurred in two major steel companies: the National Steel Industries of Iran (Ahvaz Steel) and Esfahan Steel Company. Esfahan Steel experienced two large-scale strikes in 2023, while protests at Ahvaz Steel continued into 2024.

Table 3 - Summary of Significant Industrial Worker Protests in 2023 (Excluding Oil and Gas Workers)

Group	Demands	Protest type	Outcome
Esfahan Steel Company ²⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases Implementation of job classification plan Elimination of wage inequality Increase work safety Conversion of contracts from temporary to permanent 	Two sit-ins	Dozens of workers arrested.
Bandar Abbas Zinc Complex ²⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Payment of arrears Back to work 	Rally for several days	Factory managers fired many workers without pay.
Tabas Coal Mine ²⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases Implementation of job classification plan Elimination of wage inequality Conversion of contracts from temporary to permanent 	Sit-in at work	
Arak Machinery Co ²⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases Conversion of contracts from temporary to permanent 	Sit-in at work	
Iranian Sirjan Steel Company ²⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases Elimination of wage inequality Conversion of contracts from temporary to permanent 	Strike	
Chadormalo Mine ²⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases Implementation of job classification plan Elimination of wage inequality 	Strike	
Shahr Babak Copper Factory ³⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases 	Round-the-clock strike	
Ahvaz Pipe Rolling Factory ³¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases Implementation of job classification plan 	Strike	

24 [The Free Union of Iranian Workers \(FUIW\)](#), February 25, 2023

25 [FUIW](#), November 13, 2023

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Ibid.*

28 [Kerman-e-no](#), February 2, 2023

29 *Ibid.*

30 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 31, 2023

31 [FUIW](#), November 27, 2023

Iran Cardboard Factory ³²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage increases • Reduced working hours 	Strike	
Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-Industry Co. ³³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage increases • Implementation of job classification plan 	Strike	

The extent of workers' protests surpasses what is represented in the above table. In its annual report, the Human Rights Activists Group recorded 320 labor rallies and 111 strikes, many of which focused on unpaid wages and contract worker grievances.³⁴

Public Service Workers

In the public sector, many workers, including nurses, teachers, civil servants, urban public transport employees, road and rail freight personnel, and locomotive and subway operators protested inadequate livelihoods.

The municipal services sector witnessed protests due to prolonged wage delays and the prevalence of temporary contracts that allow for easier worker terminations. Most municipal workers, who are largely unorganized and employed on three-month temporary contracts, have expressed discontent. Radio Zamaneh reported rallies in at least forty cities, with the longest wage payment delay reaching 13 months in the Sisakht municipality.³⁵

Other protesting public servants included Tehran nightshift metro conductors,³⁶ railway infrastructure workers,³⁷ transport sector employees,³⁸ Qazvin bus personnel,³⁹ Mashhad firefighters,⁴⁰ and Bastak water and sewage staff.⁴¹

Within the broader public sector, workers from Kermanshah Governorate, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare staged protests against insufficient salary increases.

Teachers

The government has focused its efforts on suppressing teachers' trade unions. In 2022, teachers' unions held widespread sit-ins across Iran amidst the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. During this period, the Coordinating Council of Teachers' Union Organizations (CCTUO) experienced intense crackdowns, with numerous members summoned and detained. For example, Jafar Ebrahimi and Rasool Bodaghi have been in custody since April 2022, and Ebrahimi's health is reported as a concern.

32 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 20, 2023

33 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 1, 2023

34 [HRANA](#), December 27, 2023

35 Radio Zamaneh's labor newsletters [No. 27](#), [No. 26](#), [No. 25](#), and [No. 24](#)

36 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 2, 2023

37 *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*

39 [ILNA](#), May 28, 2023

40 [ISNA](#), May 13, 2023

41 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 22, 2023

In 2023, teachers repeatedly protested against a series of chemical attacks on girls' schools that led to the poisoning of numerous students. However, the spread of these protests was limited considerably by the harsh repression during the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. Islamic courts across various provinces prosecuted and convicted teachers for their association with what were deemed "illegal" trade unions, unofficially outlawing these organizations.

Many teachers faced permanent or temporary dismissal from their jobs for participating in union activities.

Table 4 - Instances of Teacher Repression in 2023

Name	Status and Sentence	Activity
Mohammad Ali Zahmatkesh	Began five years imprisonment	Member of Fars Teachers' Union
Afshin Razmjooi	Began five years imprisonment	Member of Fars Teachers' Union
Mozhgan Bagheri ⁴²	Began five years imprisonment	Member of Fars Teachers' Union
Iraj Rahnama	Began five years imprisonment	Member of Fars Teachers' Union
Gholamreza Gholami Kendazi ⁴³	Began five years imprisonment	Member of Fars Teachers' Union
Asghar Amirazadegan ⁴⁴	Began five years imprisonment	Member of Fars Teachers' Union
Ahmed Alizadeh ⁴⁵	Began six years imprisonment	Teacher in Abdanan
Mahmoud Malaki	Sentenced to three months in prison, 35 lashes	Member of Bushehr Teachers' Union
Asghar Hajeb	Sentenced to three months in prison, 35 lashes	Member of Bushehr Teachers' Union
Mohsen Omrani	Sentenced to three months in prison, 35 lashes	Member of Bushehr Teachers' Union
Abdolreza Amanifar ⁴⁶	Sentenced to three months in prison, 35 lashes	Member of Bushehr Teachers' Union
Masoud Zainalzadeh ⁴⁷	Arrested	Member of the Tehran Teachers' Union
Mohammad Garavand ⁴⁸	Arrested	A fired teacher
Iraj Tobeiha ⁴⁹	Arrested	Member of Najafabad Teachers' Union
Mahmoud Safdari ⁵⁰	Summoned to court	Member of North Khorasan Teachers' Organization
Kokab Bodaghi ⁵¹	Subjected to home and workplace inspection and confiscation of equipment	Member of Khuzestan Teachers' Union
Massoud Zebardasti ⁵²	Arrested	Teacher in Fanuj
Nowroz Ali Rashidnjad ⁵³	Summoned to court	Teacher in Yasouj

42 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 20, 2023

43 [CCTUO](#), October 7, 2023

44 [CCTUO](#), November 12, 2023

45 [CCTUO](#), November 5, 2023

46 [CCTUO](#), November 3, 2023

47 [CCTUO](#), October 29, 2023

48 [CCTUO](#), 29, 2023

49 [CCTUO](#), 26, 2023

50 [CCTUO](#), 23, 2023

51 [CCTUO](#), 23, 2023

52 [CCTUO](#), 18, 2023

53 [CCTUO](#), October 10, 2023

Mansoura Irfanian ⁵⁴	Arrested	Teachers union activist in Khorasan
Hassan Nazarian ⁵⁵	Dismissed from work	Member of the Gilan Teachers' Union
Mohammad Darkash ⁵⁶	Dismissed from work	Union activist in Tehran
Majid Rajaei ⁵⁷	Dismissed for three months	Union activist in South Khorasan
Mahmoud Malaki ⁵⁸	Dismissed from work	Member of Bushehr Teachers' Union
Jafar Ebrahimi ⁵⁹	Dismissed from work	Member of the Tehran Teachers' Union
Abolfazl Rahimi Shad ⁶⁰	Dismissed from work	Union activist in Tehran
Mohammad Habibi ⁶¹	Dismissed from work	Member of the Tehran Teachers' Union
Siamak Chehrazai ⁶²	Summoned to court	Member of Khuzestan Teachers' Union
Hossein Vahedi ⁶³	Summoned to court	Member of North Khorasan Teachers' Trade Union

The extent of repression against teachers surpasses what is documented in the above table. In [Newsletter No. 26](#), we provided a list of teachers dismissed on the eve of the 2023 academic year, highlighting the broader nature of the issue.

- Mihrab Farsad Mokhtari, a Nowshahr teacher, was arrested on September 20.⁶⁴
- Shilan Yusofi from Saqqez was forced into retirement and faces a salary decrease due to his participation in a teachers' rally.⁶⁵
- Mahmoud Malaki, a Bushehr Teachers' Union board member, was arrested on June 25 by security forces.⁶⁶ The Supervisory Board of Administrative Violations (SBAV) later permanently dismissed him.⁶⁷
- Rahman Abedini, Lotfullah Jamshidi, and Gholamali Shahriari faced temporary dismissal in Alborz Province, as decreed by the SBAV.⁶⁸
- Safieh Basim of Karaj was forced into retirement by the SBAV.⁶⁹
- Elaheh Sadeghi from North Khorasan was issued a two-month dismissal by the SBAV.⁷⁰
- Ahmad Alizadeh, an Abdanan teacher, faced forced retirement and was also

54 [CCTUO](#), October 7, 2023
55 [CCTUO](#), October 4, 2023
56 [CCTUO](#), October 1, 2023
57 [CCTUO](#), September 29, 2023
58 [CCTUO](#), September 25, 2023
59 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 26, 2023
60 [CCTUO](#), October 15, 2023
61 [CCTUO](#), September 23, 2023
62 [FUIW](#), October 29, 2023
63 [FUIW](#), October 30, 2023
64 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 22, 2023
65 [Coordinating Council of Teachers' Union Organizations \(CCTUO\)](#), September 12, 2023
66 [CCTUO](#), June 25, 2023
67 [CCTUO](#), August 21, 2023
68 [CCTUO](#), 28 June 2023
69 [CCTUO](#), June 29, 2023
70 [CCTUO](#), 7 July 2023

demoted.⁷¹ The appeals court sentenced him to three years and one day in prison.⁷²

● Aziz Ghasemzadeh, an incarcerated Teachers' Union member from Gilan, was dismissed from his job.⁷³

● Suleiman Abdi, associated with the Kurdistan Teachers' Union in Saqqez, initially received a sentence of eight months in prison and 74 lashes. His sentence was later converted to 720 hours of free teaching at the Relief Foundation, with flogging suspended for two years.⁷⁴

● Security forces targeted the residences of union activists Pirouz Nami, Ali Kroshat, and Siamak Sadeghi Chehrazi, and confiscated their phones following a protest from the Ministry of Information over their acquittal in Ahvaz.⁷⁵

● Sara Siahpoush, from the Tehran Teachers' Union, was sentenced to six years in prison⁷⁶ and fired.⁷⁷

● Farouq Saeedzadeh, an educator and environmentalist in Marivan, was demoted and received a salary reduction.⁷⁸

● Yaqub Mohammadi from Abdanan was forced into retirement.⁷⁹

● Zahra Sayad Delshad, a Bandar Anzali teachers' union activist, faced early retirement and a demotion.⁸⁰

● Abolfazl Khoran, a Markazi Province teachers' union member,⁸¹ was issued a complex sentence: six years and eight months in prison, 74 lashes, a two-year exile to the town of Delfan, and a two-year ban on internet activity.⁸²

● Union activists Lida Esmaili and Alireza Hemati⁸³ faced penalties including early retirement and temporary dismissals.

● Educators Omid Afzalipour and Rahim Daniyali⁸⁴ were given three-month suspensions.

● Mansoureh Sarafra⁸⁵ and Ashraf Farhomay⁸⁶ from Gilan were forced into early retirement with pay cuts.

71 [CCTUO](#), 10 July 2023
72 [CCTUO](#), 17 August 2023
73 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 29, 2023
74 [CCTUO](#), 20 July 2023
75 [CCTUO](#), 6 August 2023
76 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 16, 2023
77 [CCTUO](#), 27 August 2023
78 [CCTUO](#), 10 July 2023
79 [CCTUO](#), 11 July 2023
80 [CCTUO](#), 12 July 2023
81 [CCTUO](#), 7 August 2023
82 [CCTUO](#), 9 September 2023
83 [CCTUO](#), 9 August 2023
84 [CCTUO](#), 10 August 2023
85 [CCTUO](#), 11 August 2023
86 [CCTUO](#), August 14, 2023

- Mohammad Saeidi Abu Ishaghi, a teacher in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, was permanently dismissed per an SBAV decision.⁸⁷
- Gholamreza Akbarzadeh Baghban, Tahmasb Sohrabi Otagwari, Taimur Bagheri Kudakani, and Hossein Mehdizadeh Falakdehi, of the Gilan Teachers' Union, were each sentenced to three months in prison.⁸⁸
- Shiva Amelirad,⁸⁹ Kurdistan Teachers' Union, and Fariba Onami,⁹⁰ Gilan Teachers' Union, were both permanently dismissed.
- Bahareh Askarizadeh, a Khuzestan union activist, faced a four-month suspension.⁹¹
- Gholamreza Asghari, an Ardabil union activist, was detained by security personnel⁹² and freed on bail on September 2, 2023.
- Educators Abdullah Abd al-Maliki,⁹³ Mahmoud Safdari, Amin Minaei,⁹⁴ and Arman Sohrabi,⁹⁵ were all arrested. Safdari was later released on bail.

⁸⁷ [CCTUO](#), 22 August 2023

⁸⁸ [CCTUO](#), 23 August 2023

⁸⁹ [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 23, 2023

⁹⁰ [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 23, 2023

⁹¹ [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 26, 2023

⁹² [CCTUO](#), 29 August 2023

⁹³ [CCTUO](#), 18 September 2023

⁹⁴ [CCTUO](#), 15 September 2023

⁹⁵ [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 17, 2023

Suppression

Governmental suppression in Iran has expanded significantly. In 2023, the government executed at least 722 individuals. Numerous arrests occurred across various regions of the country, with many detainees being temporary workers or labor rights activists. Several labor activists faced lengthy prison sentences.

The below table provides a summary of the crackdown on workers, teachers, and labor activists.

Table 5 - Instances of Repression of Workers, Teachers, and Labor Activists in 2023

	Name	Sentence
1	Hassan Saeedi, Iranian bus workers' union	Prison without visitation
2	Dawood Razavi, Iranian bus workers' union	Arrested, prohibition of treatment in prison
3	Osman Esmaili, labor activist	Arrested
4	Keyvan Mohtadi, defender of workers' rights	Prison – 6 years
5	Samaneh Asghari, child labor rights activist	Prison – 18 years and 3 months
6	Shaban Mohammadi, Marivan Teachers' Union	Prison – 5 years
7	Masoud Nikkhah, Marivan Teachers' Union	Prison – 1 year
8	Mokhtar Asadi, Sanandaj Teachers' Trade Union	Arrested
9	Aziz Ghasemzadeh, Gilan Teachers' Union	Prison – 1 year
10	Mahmoud Sedighipour, Gilan Teachers' Union	Prison – 1 year
11	Anoush Adelipour, Gilan Teachers' Trade Union Center	Prison – 1 year
12	Mahmoud Beheshti Langroudi, Gilan Teachers' Union	Court summons
13	Hossein Ramzanpour, Northern Khorasan Teachers' Union	Arrested
14	Rahman Abedini, Alborz Teachers' Union activist	Arrested and released
15	Mohammad Sadeghi, Center Union of Cultivators	Arrested and released
16	Zainab Hamrang, retired teacher	Arrested
17	Nusrat Beheshti, retired teacher	Court summons
18	Kamal Fekorian, Sanandaj Teachers' Guild Association	Arrested and released
19	Voria Karimi, Sanandaj Teachers' Union	Arrested and released
20	Jabbar Pakzad, Sanandaj Teachers' Union	Arrested and released
21	Bahauddin Maleki, Sanandaj Teachers' Union	Arrested and released
22	Siamak Sadeghi Cheharazi, Khuzestan Union	Court summons
23	Pirouz Nami, Khuzestan Teachers' Union	Court summons
24	Kokab Bodaghi, Khuzestan Teachers' Union	Dismissal from service, court summons
25	Muhammad Ali Zahmatkesh	Arrested and released
26	Gholamreza Gholami Kundzi	Arrested and released

27	Sadegh Samareei, Kermanshah Union activist	Arrested
28	Sulaiman Abdi, Saqqez and Ziviye Teachers' Union	Arrested
29	Mokhtar Asadi, Sanandaj Teachers' Trade Union	Arrested and released
30	Kamiyar Fakoor, a workers' rights journalist	Prison – 8 months
31	Sarvenaz Ahmadi, researcher and child labor rights activist	Prison – 3 years
32	Abdullah Rezaei, teacher in Hersin	Arrested and released on bail
33	Mohammad Ali Arabi, teacher in Bijar	Arrested and released on bail
34	Mohammad Farzan, teacher in Bijar	Arrested and released on bail
34	Sara Siahpour, teacher in Karaj	Prison – 6 years
36	Farhad Sheikhi, labor activist	Arrest
37	Maziar Seidenjad, labor activist	Three years jail
38	Peyman Salem, labor activist	Three years jail
39	Ahmed Alizadeh, teacher in Ilam	Prison – 13 years
40	Sharifeh Mohammadi, labor activist ⁹⁶	Detained, still in prison
41	Jan Mohammad Ahmadi, unionist ⁹⁷	Detained, later freed
42	Reza Aghdasi, labor activist ⁹⁸	Prison – 2 years

Below are the names of other prominent labor activists arrested and sentenced to prison in 2023.

- Anisha Assadollahi, an SWTSBC translator, saw her prison sentence executed by security officers. Arrested in April 2022, Tehran's Revolutionary Court sentenced her to five years.⁹⁹
- Labor activist Reyhaneh Ansarinejad, detained in the spring of 2022, received a four-year sentence. Additional penalties included prohibitions on using social media, leaving the country, and affiliating with political or social entities. Ansarinehad's lawyer criticized the Revolutionary Court's president for delivering a judgment solely based on security reports, discounting the lawyer's arguments.¹⁰⁰ Reyhaneh was called to begin her sentence on September 20, 2023.¹⁰¹
- Younes Azadbar, a Telecommunications Company retiree from Gilan province, was detained during a retiree rally on July 19, 2023. The Revolutionary Court charged him with "muhareba" (war against God). Pensioners from the Telecommunications Company of Iran have been protesting for over nine months.¹⁰²
- Osman Esmaili, a worker from Saqqez in the Kurdistan Province who was arrested on International Labor Day in 2022, was issued a 39-month

96 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 5, 2023

97 [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 9, 2023

98 [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 1, 2023

99 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 26, 2023

100 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 27, 2023

101 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 22, 2023

102 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 1, 2023

prison sentence by the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court with a mandatory 16 months to serve. Esmaili secured a temporary release in March 2023 after posting a bail of one billion tomans.¹⁰³

- Kamal Karimi, a Kurdish labor activist, was given a nine-month suspended prison sentence.¹⁰⁴
- Kurdish labor activists received suspended prison sentences: Shadman Abdi (three years),¹⁰⁵ Khabat Mahmoudi (three years),¹⁰⁶ Iqbal Sha'arani (two years, six months),¹⁰⁷ Iqbal Pishkari (one year),¹⁰⁸ and Abdullah Khairabadi (20 months).¹⁰⁹
- Ramyar Dehdar, another labor activist, was taken into custody in Sanandaj.¹¹⁰
- Child rights advocate Fereshteh Sadiq Sefat was arrested in Rasht.¹¹¹

In addition to arrests and judicial actions against labor activists, employers are using employment terminations to pressure workers.

In Tehran, four Metro Ticket Sales department representatives were dismissed after meeting with contractor company managers to discuss wage arrears.¹¹² Similarly, two worker representatives from Nakh Alborz Company in Qazvin's Alborz Industrial Estate were fired for advocating for union rights.¹¹³ In Asaluyeh, many workers faced threats of dismissal for participating in strikes.

At the Raja Rail Transport Company, two employees, Qasim Mamani and Omid Jamal, were suspended for championing union causes.¹¹⁴

In Ahvaz, 17 steel workers, including Mehdi Valipour, Khaled Sharifi, Raeed Obidawi, Tariq Khalafi, Sayed-Rasul Harag, Nader Hardani, Ali Naderi, Mehdi Negrawi, Masoud Heydari, Abdul-Hossein Hamidipour, Mustafa Abiyat, Abdul-Karim Siyahi, Kazem Heydari, Ali Elahifar, Hadi Waelizadeh, Hassan Javed Hamoudi, and Gharib Hawizawi, were fined and sentenced to flogging. However, the execution of their flogging sentence is suspended for three years.¹¹⁵

Police arrested numerous workers from the Isfahan Steel Factory during the strike. In Asaluyeh, five workers were detained and released the following day. At the North Cement Company in Tehran province, at least five workers—Hadi Shekari, Meitham Ebrahimi, Samad Ebrahimi, Masoud Mohammadi, and Mojtabi

103 [Radio Zamaneh](#), August 29, 2023

104 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 18, 2023

105 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 18, 2023

106 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 18, 2023

107 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 19, 2023

108 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 19, 2023

109 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 19, 2023

110 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 19, 2023

111 [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 19, 2023

112 [Etemad Online](#), 21 April 2023

113 [ILNA](#), May 17, 2023

114 [Student News Network \(SNN\)](#), 29 Oct. 2023

115 [Radio Zamaneh](#), September 27, 2023

Nowruzi—were summoned and taken into custody.¹¹⁶

116 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 27, 2023

Migrant Workers

Afghan migrants in Iran are enduring one of the most challenging periods. Calls for their expulsion have intensified, and government-affiliated media, regime critics, Islamic Council representatives, and some high-ranking officials have amplified the perceived issue of Afghan presence in Iran.

In July, the Islamic Republic executed two Afghan migrants on charges of “terrorist acts” at the Shahcheragh shrine in Shiraz.¹¹⁷ During that time, Iranian security forces and state media fueled anti-Afghan sentiment by accusing migrants of terrorism and lacking documentation, leading to their deportation.

Following a deadly altercation involving teenagers in Meibod, Yazd province, local citizens demanded the removal of Afghans during Friday prayers. The city’s security council responded by blocking access to Mehmanshahr, the main boulevard leading to areas designated for refugees. Subsequently, a mob attacked Afghan residents’ homes.

In the aftermath of this incident, the Kermanshah Governorate’s Director General of Foreign Nationals and Immigrant Affairs strictly prohibited the presence, residence, and employment of Afghans in 16 provinces: East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Ardabil, Zanjan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Lorestan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, Gilan, Mazandaran, Sistan-Baluchistan, Hormozgan, and Hamedan.¹¹⁸ This expanded existing residential bans for Afghans in certain areas.

In October, locals vandalized Afghan homes, burned possessions, and clamored for large-scale expulsion in Iqbaliya, Qazvin province.¹¹⁹

The Iranian government’s detainment and deportation of Afghan migrants is on the rise. While exact figures of those deported remain undisclosed, reports from news agencies referencing military sources in Sistan-Baluchistan and Khorasan Razavi provinces indicate that over 400,000 Afghans were deported in the first half of the year.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ [Radio Zamaneh](#), July 8, 2023

¹¹⁸ [Radio Zamaneh](#), December 3, 2023

¹¹⁹ [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 6, 2023

¹²⁰ [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 14, 2023

Working Children

The increased poverty within Iran has led to a growing number of children without an education. The Research Center of the Islamic Parliament of Iran has acknowledged this rising trend. A report from the center estimated that working children constitute 15 percent of the country's child population (under 18 years old), with 10 percent not attending school.¹²¹

Sudeh Najafi, a member of the Tehran Islamic City Council, highlighted the daily rise in the number of street children, noting that there are approximately 70,000 child laborers in Tehran alone, many of whom suffer from various forms of abuse. She claimed that around 80 percent of these children are not Iranian.¹²²

In April 2023, Mohammadreza Heydarhaei, who leads the Socially Disadvantaged Affairs Office at the Iran Welfare Organization, reported 120,000 child laborers in Iran. Of these, 14,500 were identified, and about 10,500 received services from the Welfare Organization, while the others reportedly declined such assistance.¹²³

The economic downturn leading to rampant poverty is a critical factor behind the surge in child labor. The head of the Victim Affairs Office at the Welfare Organization cited poverty as the primary cause of children's presence on the street, noting that many are Afghan nationals whose families lack income, compelling the entire family, including children, to work.¹²⁴

Despite Iran's labor laws banning child employment under 15 years of age, contractors associated with Tehran Municipality continue to employ children in strenuous jobs.¹²⁵

Fatemeh Daneshvar, CEO of the Mehr Afarin charity, reported a decrease in the age and an increase in the number of child laborers, particularly following the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan. Children as young as 11 to 12 have been found working in underground workshops and brick factories. She also raised concerns about the heightened risks of sexual exploitation and accidents for child laborers, with her organization receiving numerous reports of street-based child sexual abuse.¹²⁶

Girls are more deprived of education than boys. Towards the end of 2023, the government announced plans to round up working children, a strategy previously criticized as harmful due to the violent methods employed by the responsible institutions.

121 [Tabnak](#), July 30, 2023

122 [Radio Zamaneh](#), June 11, 2023

123 [Khabar Online](#), April 17, 2023

124 [Entekhab](#), May 2, 2023

125 [ISNA](#), May 8, 2023

126 [Ham Mihan Online](#), June 12, 2023

Informal Workers

The Iranian Statistics Center's report on employment highlighted that in 2020, approximately 58 percent of the workforce (13.5 million individuals out of 23,263,047) were engaged in "informal jobs." These jobs are characterized by unregistered companies, fewer than ten employees, or employment that is not subject to standard wage regulations.¹²⁷

Accurate data on informal employment and second jobs are scarce. However, in October 2023, the Tasnim news agency relayed a statement from Hamid Haji Esmailli, a member of the Assembly of Labor Representatives, estimating that nearly 60 percent of the population held a second or third job. This trend is driven mainly by economic hardships and rising costs, pushing many to juggle multiple jobs for adequate earnings.¹²⁸

In December, Hadi Abawi, secretary of the Supreme Center of Labor Unions, noted that the average income does not cover workers' living expenses, reinforcing that around 70 percent of workers supplement their income with secondary employment.

Informal laborers are particularly vulnerable to violence. These workers include those without formal contracts or insurance working in small-scale workshops, retail stores, and restaurants, as well as specific groups like *kulbars* (human cargo carriers) in Kurdistan and *sukhtbars* (fuel couriers) in Baluchistan, who engage in smuggling and peddling,

Kulbars and *sukhtbars* operating along Iran's eastern and western borders navigate perilous routes for their livelihood. These individuals frequently face lethal actions from border guards.

In 2023, Iranian border guards fatally shot at least 19 *kulbars*, contributing to a total of 29 *kulbar* fatalities, which included two children.¹²⁹ An additional 228 *kulbars* sustained injuries.

The year saw at least 214 *sukhtbars* killed or injured. Forty-two suffered injuries from shootings, accidents, or fires initiated by governmental forces, with nearly half of these incidents (19) attributed to government gunfire. Furthermore, 40 *sukhtbars* were fatally shot or killed by obstructions placed by government agents. Accidents and fires claimed the lives of another 132 *sukhtbars*.¹³⁰

127 [Radio Zamaneh](#), October 9, 2021 and [Statistics Center report](#)

128 [Tasnim](#), October 14, 2023

129 [Radio Zamaneh](#), January 23, 2024

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

Work Safety

The Iranian Legal Medicine Organization (ILMO), which compiles work accident statistics, noted an increase in fatal workplace incidents during the first half of the Iranian calendar year (March 21 to August 21, 2023). The data revealed that 1,077 workers died in job-related accidents during this timeframe, a 15.7 percent increase compared to the previous year.¹³¹

The report identified 498 falls from heights, and 246 impacts from blunt force, making them the most common causes of fatal work accidents. These two factors are primarily responsible for construction worker fatalities, with nearly half of all work-related deaths occurring in the construction industry.

Furthermore, Hrana, the news agency associated with Iranian human rights activists, reported in its annual summary that work accidents resulted in at least 1,252 fatalities and 4,018 injuries among workers.¹³²

¹³¹ [Radio Zamaneh](#), November 5, 2023

¹³² [Hrana](#), December 27, 2023

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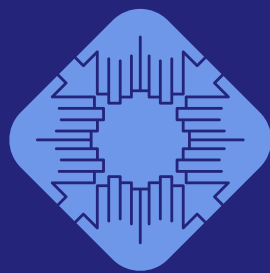
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