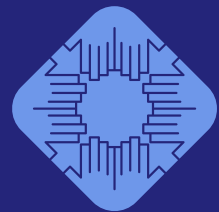


Labor Rights in Iran



QUARTERLY REPORT NO. 29

April - June 2024



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The labor reports focus on critical issues such as workplace safety and health, discrimination in various forms, women's labor issues, child labor, unemployment, wage delays or non-payment, and labor organization and protests. Zamaneh provides persistent and thorough coverage of labor news in Iran, including weekly updates.

This edition highlights events and trends from April through June 2024. While we do not claim to cover every event exhaustively, we aim to present a significant snapshot of the period.

In late winter 2024, we released our [sixth annual Zamaneh report](#), with the latest [special report](#) focusing on Baluch fuel carriers ("sukhtbars"). All our reports and special reports are available on the Zamaneh Labor Rights [page](#).

This edition marks the final publication of our labor report in its current format. The volume of news is overwhelming, and by the time it is compiled into a quarterly or annual gazette, it often needs to be updated. Moving forward, our real-time reporting on the Zamaneh website will keep you informed and engaged with significant events as they occur. Special reports will replace the quarterlies, allowing us to focus on specific issues, trends, and topics in labor affairs.

Thank you for your continued support and readership. We want to reassure you that we remain steadfast in our commitment to shedding light on the pressing issues faced by workers in Iran and advocating for their rights and well-being. Your support is invaluable in this mission.

Overview

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the relentless machinery of execution continues to take human lives with impunity. Reports from human rights organizations indicate a significant surge in executions since the start of the Iranian calendar year 1403 (March 21, 2024), with the majority of those executed being convicted for drug-related offenses or murder.

In a turn of events, Ebrahim Raisi, the head of the 13th administration and a former member of the “Death Committee” responsible for the mass execution of political prisoners in the 1980s, along with his foreign minister, perished in a helicopter crash. This event compelled the Iranian government to call for early presidential elections. Despite the promises made by the six approved candidates regarding workers’ employment and livelihoods, these pledges remain largely unrealistic. Additionally, changes in the composition of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) are not expected to yield positive outcomes for workers who continue to suffer wage suppression and exploitation.

The year commenced with a blow to workers as wage suppression took hold. The Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare unilaterally announced the Supreme Labor Council’s (SLC) decision on the minimum wage, disregarding the consensus of the labor representatives. These representatives, part of government-affiliated labor organizations, demanded a wage increase of 15 million tomans. In response, they initiated an online campaign calling for the impeachment of the labor minister, garnering over 65,000 signatures. However, due to the changing composition of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, the impeachment remains in limbo. Furthermore, the death of President Raisi has delayed the government’s proposed labor law reforms.

Rising inflation rates quickly eroded the modest wage increase at the start of the year in April and May 2024. The Statistical Center of Iran reported official inflation rates of 30.9% and 31% for these two months, respectively. Inflation rates for food and beverages were 23.8% for April and 22.8% for May, while the average price increase for non-food items was estimated at 34.8% and 35.5% for these months.

Despite government claims of a reduction in the official inflation rate, citizens did not experience any tangible relief. The prices of protein-rich food items surged by more than 60%, and the average price index for public transportation soared by over 53%.¹

The ongoing regional tensions, especially the conflict between Iran and Israel in April 2024, have led to a significant depreciation of the Iranian rial against the US dollar and other major foreign currencies. The Central Bank of Iran and the

¹ Consumer Price Index, April 2024, Statistical Center of Iran

government have adopted a policy of “liberalizing” the exchange rate for the dollar and other foreign currencies. In the latest budget law, the government has narrowed the list of goods eligible for subsidized currency, impacting the ability of manufacturing industries to import essential raw materials. This shortage and a decline in market demand in January and February 2024 have resulted in widespread layoffs. Reports from Iranian domestic media indicate that this trend has persisted, with numerous instances of worker dismissals.

In contrast to these developments, the Statistical Center of Iran reported a decrease in the unemployment rate in February. The official unemployment rate was stated to be 8.6%. However, the unemployment rate for women remains disproportionately high at 15%, highlighting a significant gender disparity. Their economic participation rate is significantly lower at 14.2% compared to 63.8% for men. Based on these statistics, out of approximately 64.55 million people aged 15 and above, only 26.63 million are employed. The number of unemployed individuals is estimated at around 2.1 million.

Frustrated by the lack of job opportunities, many unemployed individuals have sought work abroad, migrating to neighboring countries. Although the government does not provide specific statistics on labor migration, labor activists and business owners in the service and manufacturing sectors have raised alarms about the increasing exodus of skilled workers.

The Iranian government has been grappling with the challenge of creating new job opportunities, with ongoing sanctions severely hindering investments in the production sector. Using this as a pretext, the government has resisted adjusting workers’ wages and retirees’ pensions to reflect the cost of living while simultaneously planning amendments to labor and social security laws that favor employers.

In the new Iranian calendar year 1403, the promised increase in social security retirees’ pensions, as outlined in the budget law, still needs to be realized. According to the budget, the government was supposed to increase social security retirees’ pensions by 90% over three years, funded by a 1% increase in value-added tax and the usual annual increases. The intended increase for the first year was set at 40%; however, the government only implemented a pension increase of 22% to 35%. As a result, the pension for social security retirees with children is around 10 million tomans, approximately one-third of the poverty line as calculated by independent experts.²

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

Continued Protests by Retirees

During the first quarter of 1403 (March 21 to May 21, 2024), a significant number of retirees, including those from the Social Security Fund, the Military Personnel Fund, government departments, the Iranian Telecommunication Company, and the Steel Industry Pension Fund, came together in a series of impactful rallies. Their unified voice echoed their dissatisfaction with the current state of their living conditions.

Despite the ongoing protests that began in December 2022, the government has consistently ignored the retirees' demands for better pensions, citing national resource shortages as a reason for refusing to increase their payments. The Social Security Pension Fund, the largest public pension fund, is particularly vulnerable to government policies. The government's debt to the Social Security Organization is estimated at approximately 800 trillion tomans³ (Exchange rate at the time of this report: 1 US dollar = 60,000 tomans).

The Islamic Consultative Assembly recently removed Clause 2 of Addendum 29 from the Seventh Development Plan. This clause required the government to settle and pay its debt to the Social Security Pension Fund. With its removal, the government is now only obligated to pay 10% of its debt annually. This failure to pay has plunged the Social Security Organization into a financial crisis.⁴

Retirees from the Military Personnel Fund, government departments, and the Steel Industry Pension Fund have also staged multiple protests, demanding improved living conditions.

In at least one instance, the government responded to the protesting retirees in Tehran with a crackdown, resulting in the arrest of several individuals, including Esmail Gerami, during the demonstration.⁵

3 [Ettelaat](#), May 8, 2024

4 Ibid.

5 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 5, 2024

Informal Workers in Iran

As statistics from the government and affiliated agencies indicate, a large segment of the workforce in Iran is employed in the informal sector. These informal workers typically lack contracts, insurance, and job benefits such as annual leave. They work in small workshops not covered by labor laws, home-based and family-run workshops, or in service roles such as clerical and secretarial, often earning below the mandated minimum wage.

Kulbars and Sukhtbars: Victims of State Violence

Among the informal workers are street vendors, kulbars (porters), sukhtbars (fuel carriers), and a substantial portion of the agricultural workforce, particularly vulnerable to fatal accidents and violence from government authorities. Kulbars in Kurdistan and sukhtbars in Baluchistan have faced systematic violence from the government. Kulbars carry heavy commercial goods across dangerous western border regions of Iran to avoid detection by border guards, while sukhtbars transport fuel along Iran's eastern borders.

Reports from human rights organizations that closely monitor the conditions of sukhtbars and kulbars indicate a rise in violence against these groups. In 2023, at least 366 sukhtbars lost their lives due to accidents, fires, or shootings by government forces while transporting fuel.⁶ In just ten days in March 2024, 25 sukhtbars were killed and 18 injured.⁷ The sukhtbar population in Baluchistan is estimated to be around 100,000 individuals. Drivers of fuel transport vehicles are the most vulnerable in the fuel transportation chain.

Kulbars on Iran's western borders, particularly in Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and West Azerbaijan provinces, face perilous conditions similar to those of sukhtbars. A tripartite agreement between the governments of Iran, Iraq, and the Kurdistan Regional Government to control borders has exacerbated the dangers for kulbars.

Since April 2024, there has been a marked increase in the targeting of kulbars by border guards. Kulbar News, an agency dedicated to reporting on kulbars, documented that at least 17 kulbars were killed in the border regions of Kurdistan in April and May 2024 alone, with government agents' gunfire being the cause of death for 12 kulbars.

Table 1: Injuries and Deaths of Kulbars and Sukhtbars from April 1 to June 9, 2024

Group	Deaths	Injuries
Sukhtbars	103	72
Kulbars	18	61

6 [Radio Zamaneh](#), June 5, 2024

7 [Halvash](#), March 30, 2024

On April 23, 2024, military officers raided a sukhtbar fuel storage facility in Minab.⁸ Concurrently, a group of citizens gathered outside the governor’s office in Bandar Abbas, protesting the killing and injuring of two fuel carriers by police. They chanted, “We don’t want killer police.”⁹

On May 28, border guards opened fire on a group of fuel carriers, resulting in at least four fatalities and eight injuries. Four of the injured fuel carriers were subsequently arrested by military officers.¹⁰

Tragically, at least five of the fuel carriers who died in the spring of 2024 were children. Severe poverty in Baluchistan forces children to abandon their education and engage in fuel carrying. In Kurdistan, a child kulbar lost his eyesight due to gunfire from border guards.

Baluchistan region, which encompasses significant parts of Sistan and Baluchistan province as well as parts of Hormozgan and Kerman provinces, suffers from the highest poverty rates and the lowest life expectancy in Iran. In this region, the government’s policies for job creation and “deprivation eradication” involve militarizing and securing the labor market through institutions like the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Barakat Foundation, the Mostazafan Foundation, and Astan Quds Razavi.

The Statistical Center of Iran’s 2023 report on employment indicates that Sistan and Baluchistan, and Kermanshah provinces, with unemployment rates exceeding 12%, had the highest unemployment rates according to government standards. Employment rates were reported as 30.9% in Sistan and Baluchistan, 36.7% in Kermanshah, and 38.4% in Kurdistan. Only West Azerbaijan province, where kulbari is recognized as a job in some areas, had an employment rate above 40%.¹¹

Table 2: Unemployment and Employment Rates in Selected Underprivileged Provinces in 2023

Province/Index	Sistan and Baluchestan	Kurdistan	Kermanshah	West Azerbaijan
Unemployment Rate (%)	12.4	10.7	12.2	6.7
Employment Rate (%)	30.9	38.8	36.7	40.5
Industrial Employment (%)	36.5	27.7	23.7	24.3
Agricultural Employment (%)	13.7	20.6	23.4	26.6

Street Vendors: Facing Continuous Violence

The prevalence of street vending in Iran has surged since the COVID-19 pandemic.

8 [Kulbar News](#), April 23, 2024

9 [Kulbar News](#), April 23, 2024

10 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 30, 2024

11 [Econews](#), June 6, 2024

Domestic media, referencing a study conducted by a group of sociology students, reported that “the number of female street vendors has more than doubled due to economic hardships following the COVID-19 pandemic.”¹²

A separate study commissioned by the Tehran Organization for the Regulation of Industries and Occupations reveals that “most street vendors are job-seeking migrants who have moved to Tehran from rural areas and cities across the country. A notable aspect of this population is their relatively high educational attainment, with nearly 69% holding a high school diploma or higher.” This study underscores the importance of understanding the motivations of street vendors, with a lack of sufficient capital and the inability to find a job in the formal sector being the primary drivers of street vending. Another study found that most female street vendors in the urban metro system are between 24 and 35 years old.¹³

In April 2024, the CEO of the Tehran Organization for the Regulation of Industries and Occupations, which operates under the permission of the Tehran Municipality, reported that there are 20,000 street vendors in Tehran.¹⁴ He mentioned that these vendors would be relocated to 60 designated centers and that work permits would be issued for up to 5,000. The mandate for street vendors to obtain official licenses from the National Permit Issuance Website is designed to formalize street vending, recognize it as a legitimate occupation, and impose taxes on street vendors. According to this plan, street vendors can only operate in designated areas.

Alongside implementing this plan, urban managers in various districts have announced the continuation of what they term the “regulation of street vendors,” which prohibits street vending in high-traffic areas.

In Tabriz, street vendors held a protest in front of the municipality building in response to the violent actions of municipal officers who had used pepper spray against them.¹⁵ Similarly, in Gorgan, municipal officers violently stopped a street vendor from operating.¹⁶ The Deputy for Urban Services at the Gorgan Municipality stated that “occupying sidewalks for livelihood purposes” is “against the law” and added: “The municipality has implemented measures such as organizing street vendors and providing land in the Agh Qala area for van vendors and night markets to facilitate legal operations for street vendors.”¹⁷

In Bushehr, the mayor described street vendors as “a nuisance for shopkeepers and citizens” and announced plans to relocate them to the city’s coastal strip. He acknowledged the increased number of street vendors due to the economic

12 [Asr-e-Iran](#), June 7, 2024

13 [Hamshahri](#), April 10, 2024

14 [Eghtesad Online](#), April 2, 2024; [Entekhab](#), April 2, 2024

15 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 5, 2024

16 [Fararu](#), April 10, 2024

17 [Shargh](#), April 9, 2024

crisis.¹⁸

The director general of the Organization for the Prevention and Removal of Obstructions at the Kermanshah Municipality labeled street vendors as “offenders” and announced initiating a “street cleaning” plan. Under this plan, street vending in high-traffic areas of the city is prohibited before 5 PM.¹⁹

In Tonekabon, the mayor discussed a “soft approach” towards street vendors, explaining that they cannot operate in urban areas and would be relocated to the fish market.²⁰

The nationwide street vendor removal plan also affects street vendors in the 30-meter market in Ahvaz. The Deputy for Urban Services at the Ahvaz Municipality cited street vendors’ stalls as causing traffic disruptions and announced plans to collect and relocate them outside the city due to insufficient space.²¹

Construction Workers: Main Victims of Workplace Accidents

Construction workers in Iran are disproportionately affected by workplace accidents, with nearly 50% of fatal incidents occurring within the construction sector. Many of these workers operate on a daily wage basis and lack formal contracts, leaving them without insurance. There were hopes among construction workers that insurance law reforms, advocated by labor unions, would make it easier for them to access social security insurance. However, the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) disregarded these hopes. Mikail Sadeghi, a board member of the High Council of Construction Workers’ Associations, criticized the Parliament for fundamentally changing the favorable proposal made by labor unions. These unions had suggested that employers pay one to four percent of workers’ minimum wages, based on the building’s area, as insurance premiums. The Parliament rejected this proposal.²²

Government officials claim that 700,000 construction workers are insured.²³ However, Akbar Shokat, the secretary of the Construction Workers’ Union, noted that the insurance of 300,000 to 400,000 construction workers has been terminated since the 13th administration took office.²⁴

Abbas Shiri, an inspector with the Construction Workers’ Union, refuted the government’s claim about the number of insured construction workers. He pointed out that Social Security Organization inspectors visit construction sites only twice a year and often misclassify workers as nonexistent to secure higher

18 [Khalij Fars](#), May 26, 2024

19 [ISNA](#), June 9, 2024

20 [IRNA](#), April 30, 2024

21 [Khouznews](#), June 5, 2024

22 [Fararu](#), May 21, 2024

23 [IRNA](#), April 29, 2024

24 [Asr-e-Iran](#), April 22, 2024

commissions.²⁵ Shiri explained that workers who are absent during an inspector's visit are removed from the insurance list.

The recession in the construction sector has had a devastating impact, leading to widespread unemployment among construction workers. Lacking unemployment insurance, many have had to find other means of livelihood. Saeed Mohammadi, a board member of the Construction Workers' Association in Baneh, reported that many construction workers have been forced to migrate to the Kurdistan Region due to unemployment.²⁶ Rasoul Gorgij, a labor activist in the construction sector, also confirmed that the economic downturn has caused significant job losses in the industry, underlining the urgent need for intervention.²⁷

Gig Economy: Company Profits at the Expense of Drivers' Hard Work

Startup companies, particularly Snapp (Snapp Food) and Tapsi, have a significant influence on the informal employment sector in Iran. These companies, which offer passenger, goods, and food delivery services, dominate the market. Workers in this sector operate without formal contracts, relying solely on commissions. A portion of their earnings is taken by the company owners. Unofficial estimates indicate that Snapp has generated nearly five trillion tomans in revenue from commission fees.²⁸

In April 2024, drivers from Snapp and Tapsi went on strike to protest low fares and high commission rates.²⁹ The strike continued until at least April 6.

More than two million people in Iran are employed by companies like Snapp, Snapp Food, and Tapsi, highlighting the vast scale of the gig economy and the challenges faced by its workers.

Seasonal Agricultural Workers: Grueling Work Without Insurance for Women

Agricultural workers represent the largest segment of informal employment in Iran. Many workers labor without pay on family farms or as seasonal laborers during planting and harvesting seasons. Many of these workers lack insurance and earn wages below the minimum the Supreme Labor Council sets.

At least two fatal accidents involving seasonal agricultural workers were reported in the spring quarter. In one incident, seven female agricultural workers in Dezfoul were injured and hospitalized when the van transporting them to their workplace overturned.³⁰ In another incident, 17 seasonal workers in Kurdistan province were involved in a road accident on their way to work, resulting in injuries and

25 [Tose-Irani](#), May 13, 2024

26 [Shafaqna](#), May 28, 2024

27 [Tose-Irani](#), June 1, 2024

28 [Mehr News](#), April 16, 2024

29 [Baztab](#), April 10, 2024

30 [Radio Zamaneh](#), June 5, 2024

one fatality.³¹ Additionally, in Dehdasht, a vehicle carrying agricultural workers crashed, killing two female workers and injuring three others.³²

Women make up a significant portion of seasonal agricultural workers. Many endure long hours in harsh conditions, earning as little as 200,000 tomans daily without insurance. Transporting these workers to farms often involves unsafe vehicles, increasing the risk of accidents.³³

In Turkmen Sahra in Golestan province, seasonal chickpea workers face severe exploitation and receive meager wages. Female chickpea workers are paid only 150,000 tomans for a full day's work.³⁴ Similar conditions are found among rice paddy workers in the Gilan and Mazandaran provinces.

The government's strategy to expand small home-based and family businesses in agriculture and livestock through bank loans has forced more agricultural workers to work without insurance. This trend is increasing the number of "self-employed" jobs, further exacerbating the lack of social security coverage for workers in the agricultural sector.

31 [Radio Zamaneh](#), June 6, 2024
32 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 30, 2024
33 [Etemad](#), June 15, 2024
34 [Hyrcani](#), May 12, 2024

Industrial Workers: Facing Economic Pressures and Employment Insecurity

The decline in demand for goods, rising exchange rates, and the consequent increase in raw material costs have significantly impacted sales and production in various manufacturing industries. To offset reduced profits, industry owners have continued the trend from previous quarters by laying off more workers. Although precise statistics on the number of workers dismissed in the second quarter are unavailable, Iranian domestic media have reported nearly 800 layoffs over three months. These reports primarily cover workers in large workshops, while many laid-off workers were employed in smaller workshops not covered by labor laws.

Employers have also delayed wage payments to mitigate reduced profits from decreased demand. Additionally, some employers in industrial and manufacturing units have not yet implemented the Supreme Labor Council's wage increase decree, and for those who have, many have forced workers to perform unpaid overtime.

Workers are not permitted to form independent labor unions and are often compelled by the government to establish Islamic labor councils in many production units. Due to the threat of dismissal for protesting, workers face significant challenges in organizing large-scale protests against government-supported employers. This situation has made it increasingly difficult for workers to organize extensive protests to address wage suppression, exploitation, and job insecurity.

Despite these challenges, project-based oil and gas workers, who human resources contractors and subcontractors exploit, have gone on strike in several oil, gas, and petrochemical project refineries to protest their working conditions. According to these workers, employers still need to implement the Supreme Labor Council's minimum wage decree. Contract workers demand a minimum 45% wage increase, reduced working days, and improved sanitary and welfare conditions in their dormitories.

Official oil and gas employees, similar to previous years, have staged several sit-ins to protest the increase in income tax and the imposition of a salary cap. Additionally, delays in wage payments, layoffs, wage discrimination, temporary contracts, and the non-implementation of job classification have triggered worker protests in several industrial units.

Table 3: Some of the Industrial Workers' Protests in Spring 2024

Group of Protesters	Location	Demand	Form of Protest
Project Workers ³⁵	Asaluyeh Gachsaran National Drilling Company Yadavaran Oil Field	Payment of overdue wages Elimination of contracting companies Reduction of working days Increase in wages	Strike at workplace
Official Oil Employees ³⁶	Continental Shelf Oil National Drilling Company Lavan Offshore Oil	Removal of salary cap Reduction of income tax	Strike at workplace Gathering in front of government offices
Esfahan Petrochemical ³⁷	Esfahan Petrochemical	Payment of overdue wages Change of contracts	Strike at workplace
Chabahar Petrochemical	Chabahar	Payment of overdue wages	Gathering / Strike
Negin Mokran Petrochemical ³⁸	Chabahar	Payment of overdue wages	Gathering / Strike
Pars Paper Mill ³⁹	Shushtar	Elimination of contractors Increase in wages Job ranking	Two-week strike
Pars Steel Haft Tappeh ⁴⁰	Shush	Increase in wages Reinstatement of dismissed workers	Strike at workplace
Bafq Iron Ore ⁴¹	Bafq	Stop share transfer	Strike at workplace
Kaveh Sodium Carbonate ⁴²	Firuzabad	Increase in wages	Strike
National Steel Group ⁴³	Ahvaz	Reinstatement of dismissed workers	Sit-in in front of factory
Seasonal Workers, Miyanab Sugarcane ⁴⁴	Shush	Payment of overdue wages Change of contracts	Sit-in
Khuzestan Cement ⁴⁵	Ahvaz	Reinstatement of dismissed workers	Sit-in
Urmia Cement Drivers ⁴⁶	Urmia	Increase in freight rates	Strike

35 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 25, 2024

36 [Free Workers' Union of Iran](#), June 2, 2024

37 [Coordination Committee for Creating Labor Organizations](#), June 11, 2024

38 [Halvash](#), May 15, 2024

39 [Coordination Committee for Creating Labor Organizations](#), May 31, 2024

40 [Free Workers' Union of Iran](#), May 7, 2024

41 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 18, 2024

42 [Free Workers' Union of Iran](#), June 11, 2024

43 [Voice of Independent Steel Workers](#), May 11, 2024

44 [ILNA](#), April 21, 2024

45 [Free Workers' Union of Iran](#), April 6, 2024

46 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 31, 2024

Public Service Workers

Nurses

Nurses in Iran continue to face challenging working conditions characterized by long hours and low pay. The government's promise to hire additional nurses proved unrealistic, and the planned wage increase for nurses has yet to be implemented. Iran is experiencing a severe shortage of nurses, with many opting to migrate, as the House of Nurses and the Nursing Organization reported.

A significant number of nurses are employed on temporary three-month contracts. Due to the workforce shortage in public hospitals, nurses are compelled to work overtime for inadequate compensation. In early 2024, groups of nurses in various hospitals collectively refused to accept mandatory overtime shifts, showing their unity in demanding fair working conditions.⁴⁷

The Deputy Minister of Health and Medical Education has promised an increase in overtime pay for nurses in public hospitals. However, a member of Parliament has expressed doubts about the government's ability to afford wage increases for nurses.⁴⁸

In the year's second quarter, nurses in Shiraz⁴⁹, Fasa⁵⁰, Baghmalek, Ahvaz⁵¹, and several cities in Mazandaran province held protests against their working conditions. Their primary demands include:

- Conversion of short-term contracts to permanent and direct contracts with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education
- Increase in wages and reduction in working hours
- Elimination of wage discrimination
- Proper implementation of the wage classification system for healthcare services

Municipal Workers

Municipal workers across various cities have voiced their frustration over the prolonged delays in wage payments. These workers are frequently exploited by contracting companies and are paid low wages. In some regions, wage arrears have extended beyond one year.

Municipal officials have cited reduced income and a lack of allocated government

47 [Asr-e-Iran](#), April 29, 2024

48 [Mehr News](#), May 4, 2024

49 [The Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions](#), May 11, 2024

50 [Free Workers' Union of Iran](#), May 13, 2024

51 [Nurses News Channel](#), April 13, 2024

funds as the main reasons for the wage payment delays. In Sisakht, municipal workers are owed between eight and 30 months of back pay. Municipal workers in Yasuj, Bandar Abbas, Dezful, and Kut-e Abdullah are facing similar challenges.⁵²

In Zahedan, municipal workers staged a multi-day strike to protest the delay in their wage payments. Municipal workers currently lack union representation.

Public Sector Workers

In the public sector, the rise of temporary and contractual employment has led to a concerning trend. These workers' wages, determined by the resolutions of the Supreme Labor Council, often fall below those of official public sector employees, and they do not enjoy the same job benefits. The increasing privatization and outsourcing of public services, particularly in the Ministries of Energy, Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, and the Agricultural Jihad Organization, has significantly impacted job security and wages in the public sector.

In the Ministry of Energy, electricians, high-voltage operators, linemen, meter readers, and water and sewage operators work under temporary contracts.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Railways has outsourced many maintenance and repair services to the private sector. Iran Traverse, the largest human resources contracting company for the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, frequently delays wage payments to its contracted workers.

Table 4: Public Sector Workers' Protests in Spring 2024

Group	City	Demand
Electricians/High-Voltage Operators	Lorestan Khuzestan	Wage increase Payment of shift allowance Overtime cap Increase in rest hours Implementation of job classification
Railway Transport/Maintenance Line Workers	Lorestan Arak Kerman Razavi Khorasan Khuzestan	Payment of overdue wages Contract changes Wage increase Reinstatement of dismissed workers
Government Employees/Provincial Government /Education	Ilam Governor's Office Tehran Agricultural Jihad School caretakers	Wage increase Contract changes Elimination of wage discrimination Implementation of Job classification

Migrant Workers: Facing Increased Risks and Restrictions

Migrant workers, primarily from Afghanistan, continue to face significant risks and the constant threat of expulsion from Iran. The Iranian government has refrained from disclosing the precise number of Afghan migrants expelled. In contrast, the Taliban government in Afghanistan reported that nearly two thousand Afghans were deported from Iran over two days in May 2024.

An official in Tehran Province recently made inflammatory remarks, labeling Afghan migrants as a security threat and comparing their presence to the Iran-Iraq war. This rhetoric aligns with the broader strategy of fortifying Iran's eastern border with Afghanistan. Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, a presidential candidate and speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, has prioritized the construction of border fortifications as a key electoral promise. Operations for wall construction have already begun⁵³, with Ali Bagheri, head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, confirming the allocation of funds for this purpose.⁵⁴

In 2023, Iran expelled at least one million Afghan migrants. Ahmad Vahidi, the Minister of Interior, declared in April 2024 that Iran is unable to accept new migrants and emphasized the need for current Afghan migrants to return to their homeland. Vahidi warned businesses against employing undocumented migrants, stating, "Any entity that employs these individuals illegally is in violation, and industries, offices, and other establishments in our country should not employ these individuals."⁵⁵

In a six-point statement, the Ministry of Interior condemned attempts by some websites to incite anti-Afghan sentiment but concurrently reinforced its stance that:

- Afghan migrants should return to Afghanistan and contribute to its reconstruction.
- Government authorities will repatriate unauthorized individuals.
- Iran cannot accommodate Afghan migrants.
- It is necessary to organize those Afghans who have been granted temporary residence.⁵⁶

Solat Mortazavi, the Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, announced a program to regulate foreign employment, suggesting increasing

53 [Daneshjoo](#), June 8, 2024

54 [ISNA](#), June 12, 2024

55 [Entekhab](#), April 30, 2024

56 [Asr-e-Iran](#), April 9, 2024

job opportunities for Iranian citizens.⁵⁷ This move signals further restrictions on Afghan migrants in the Iranian labor market. Previously, Iran had already imposed limitations on Afghan employment and prohibited their residence in many provinces.

57 [Ham Mihan](#), May 18, 2024

Repression of Workers and Teachers

As International Workers' Day and Teachers' Day approached, workers and teachers in Iran faced severe repression. In the days leading up to these events, security agencies summoned or arrested dozens of union activists and members of labor organizations.

On May 1, 2024, the Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions reported that 17 teachers in Kurdistan Province were summoned to the Intelligence Office.⁵⁸ In Tehran, Esmail Abdi was summoned by the Intelligence Organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).⁵⁹

In prison, several labor activists were threatened by security interrogators with new charges if they engaged in activities for International Workers' Day.⁶⁰ Despite these threats, 12 prisoners in Evin Prison issued a joint letter celebrating International Workers' Day, stating: "It is time for the Iranian working class to rise and reclaim its rightful place in these decisive struggles." The signatories of this letter were Morteza Parvin, Fouad Fathi, Keyvan Mohtadi, Anisha Asadollahi, Golrokh Iraee, Hasti Amiri, Mehran Raouf, Davood Razavi, Shahrokh Ahmadi, Maziar Seyednejad, and Siamak Ahmadi.⁶¹

Security and judicial authorities have been denying prisoners access to necessary medical care. Reza Aghdasi, a disabled worker, Reza Shahabi, and Davood Razavi were among those who were prevented from being transferred to an external clinic despite their urgent need for treatment. Reza Shahabi was eventually moved to a clinic after his condition worsened but was quickly returned to prison. The Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company reported on May 9, 2024, that Shahabi was transferred to a hospital after experiencing severe pain and numbness in his right toe.⁶²

Davood Razavi, a member of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, and Reyhaneh Ansari-Nejad, a labor activist, were also sent to the hospital on May 18, but their medical leave was not approved.⁶³

Reza Aghdasi, a disabled worker, suffered an ear infection but was not transferred to the hospital. On May 11, prison guards returned him to the prison midway through his transfer.⁶⁴ Nejat Anvar Hamidi, an imprisoned teacher in Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz since 2018, was also denied hospital care despite his illness.⁶⁵

58 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 1, 2024

59 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 1, 2024

60 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 30, 2024

61 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 30, 2024

62 [The Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company](#), June 9, 2024

63 [The Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company](#), June 18, 2024

64 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 13, 2024

65 [The Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions](#), June 11, 2024

Sharifeh Mohammadi, imprisoned since December 5, 2023, and deprived of access to her appointed lawyer, faced trial. On June 12, 2024, security forces arrested her husband, Cyrus Fathi.⁶⁶ Mohammadi has been pressured into a forced confession and has not yet met with her lawyer.

Mohammad Sadeghi, a teacher in Arak, was summoned to prison to serve his sentence following his arrest during a March 2023 protest.⁶⁷

The judiciary summoned nine teachers from Kerman Province for their participation in union protests in 2021 and 2022. Majid Naderi, Mohammad Reza Behzadpour, Hossein Rashidi, and six other teachers were released on bail in April 2022.⁶⁸ The other summoned teachers were Shahnaz Rezai, Zahraei, Mitra Nikpour, Fatemeh Yazdani, Leila Afshar, and Mohammad Mostaali Zadeh.

On April 4, 2024, union activists Ali Kuroshat, Pirouz Nami, and Siamak Sadeghi Chehrazi in Khuzestan Province were summoned to court.⁶⁹ On the same day, the Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions confirmed the dismissal of Sakineh Maleki, a teacher in Anzali, who was arrested in November 2022.⁷⁰ Zahra Sayad Delshadpour was sentenced to forced retirement (dismissal from work)⁷¹, and teachers Somayeh Akhtar in Mariwan, Shahrbanoo Asadi in Gilan, and Rouhollah Mardani in Alborz were also dismissed by the Administrative Violations Board.⁷² The Administrative Court of Justice confirmed the dismissal of Hamid Jafari Nasrabadi.⁷³

Mohsen Ahmadi and Salman Olfati, teachers from Ilam Province, were arrested following the Nowruz (Iranian New Year) celebrations.⁷⁴ Security forces detained Aman Jalali Nejad in Ahvaz.⁷⁵ On April 22, Mohammad Amin Narouei, a Baluchi worker, was arrested in Karaj.⁷⁶

During simultaneous teachers' rallies in several cities on Teachers' Day, security forces attacked the protesting teachers. They arrested several individuals, including Reza Amanifar in Bushehr, Mehdi Qaderi, Mehdi Farahi Shandiz, Vahid Mousavi Dehsari, and Davood Bayesteh in Tehran.⁷⁷ Mahmoud Beheshti Langroudi and Mahmoud Safdari, members of the Teachers' Union, were summoned to court in May.⁷⁸ On June 9, 2024, during a rally of retired teachers in Tehran,

66 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 11, 2024

67 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 31, 2024

68 [The Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions](#), June 9, 2024

69 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 4, 2024

70 Ibid.

71 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 27, 2024

72 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 28, 2024

73 [The Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions](#), May 30, 2024

74 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 14, 2024

75 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 27, 2024

76 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 22, 2024

77 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 2, 2024

78 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 28, 2024

security forces arrested Mostafa Rabati, who was released the following day.⁷⁹ Mohsen Omrani, a Bushehr Teachers' Union member, was also summoned to the provincial court.⁸⁰

In Ahvaz, security forces arrested Maryam Zaleki for participating in the April 30 retirees' rally. She was released on bail after 40 days.⁸¹ Ismail Gerami, a retired worker, was summoned to court again on May 5, 2024.⁸²

Employers and the government have used dismissals as a tool of repression against protesting workers. On March 23, seven workers with 15 years of service from Attila Orthopaed Co.⁸³ in Sanandaj were dismissed. In Saghez Municipality, at least 150 temporary contract workers were laid off.⁸⁴ Petro-refinery Siraf Green Star also dismissed several workers.⁸⁵

79 [The Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions](#), June 9, 2024
80 [The Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions](#), June 1, 2024
81 [The Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions](#), June 12, 2024
82 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 5, 2024
83 [Radio Zamaneh](#), March 23, 2024
84 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 27, 2024
85 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 4, 2024

Workplace Accidents: Rising Fatalities and Inadequate Safety Measures

Iran has witnessed a concerning rise in workplace accidents and fatalities, mainly due to long working hours, unsafe working conditions, and insufficient oversight from the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare. The Legal Medicine Organization of Iran recorded 2,115 worker deaths from workplace accidents in 2023. In contrast, the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare claimed a decrease in fatal workplace accidents compared to the previous year.

The year 2024 began with tragic news: a young doctor committed suicide in Noorabad Delfan Hospital in Lorestan Province, followed by several nurses. Parasto Bakhshi, a 34-year-old doctor, reportedly ended her life due to psychological stress from work.⁸⁶ On May 12, 2024, Mohammad Sharifi Moghadam, Secretary General of the House of Nurses, confirmed the suicides of three nurses within a month, including Bahar Karamnejad, who committed suicide due to work-related stress.⁸⁷ Kerman University of Medical Sciences claimed that her trial work period had ended and her contract was not renewed.⁸⁸

In the second quarter alone, at least 111 workers lost their lives in workplace accidents. Construction and public service workers were the most affected, with more than half of the fatalities occurring in these sectors.

Ten percent of fatal workplace accidents involved miners. Iran's mines have been privatized, and the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Industry, Mines, and Trade have been criticized for their lax oversight. Safety experts have previously indicated that 70 to 90 percent of the mines are unsafe and lack proper supervision. For instance, after an incident on May 30, 2024, workers at the Abneil mine in Kerman reported that the mine lacked essential safety equipment, such as stretchers for transporting injured workers.⁸⁹

On June 17, four miners were trapped under four thousand tons of rock in the Shazand mine. The rescue operation was prolonged, and six hours after the incident, rescue workers found the bodies of two miners. The search for the remaining two miners continued for another two days.⁹⁰ The Iranian Labor News Agency (ILNA) reported that none of the injured miners had accident insurance.

Among the victims, at least 12 were Afghan workers, six of whom died in a workshop fire. These workers often toil in hazardous, informal jobs without insurance or formal contracts. Seasonal agricultural workers, employed on a daily wage basis and lacking insurance, also experienced fatal accidents, particularly

86 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 3, 2024

87 [Radio Zamaneh](#), May 12, 2024

88 [Khabar Online](#), April 10, 2024

89 [Radio Zamaneh](#), June 14, 2024

90 [ILNA](#), June 19, 2024

during harvest. Unsafe transportation to work sites remains a significant risk factor for these workers.

In the spring quarter, the following statistics, based on reports from Iranian domestic media, provide a snapshot of the fatalities and injuries due to workplace accidents. This data, while comprehensive, does not capture all incidents.

Occupational Group	Deaths	Injuries
Construction	32	30
Industry	18	27
Agriculture	9	25
Services/Public Services	28	53
Small Workshops	13	15
Mining	11	25
Total	111	175

Prison Letters

Rasoul Bodaghi, a member of the Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions, who security forces have imprisoned since May 1, 2022, reaffirmed his membership in the teachers' unions in a letter from prison. He stated that he "categorically denies any affiliation of himself and the Teachers' Union of Iran with any political party, group, union, or syndicate, whether domestic or foreign, other than the Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions of Iran." He described the Teachers' Unions as "one of the most powerful, enduring, principled, and democratic grassroots organizations."

In his letter, Bodaghi wrote that all the injustices imposed on him, his family, and his colleagues over the past 23 years are "for the noble people of Iran." He added that what troubles him most are the "arbitrary arrests, interrogations, white torture, unlawful dictated trials lasting only a few minutes, and convictions without the slightest evidence or documentation. Moreover, the propaganda, false scenarios, and deceitful films produced in the largest center of lies and the biggest organization of deception, trickery, and mercantilism known as the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB)."

Letter from Reza Shahabi and Davood Razavi to the International Labour Organization (ILO)

Coinciding with the 112th International Labour Conference, Reza Shahabi and Davood Razavi, two board members of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, sent a letter to representatives of global labor unions. In their letter, they protested the inclusion and membership of Iranian government representatives instead of labor union representatives in the committees of the International Labour Conference.

Shahabi and Razavi, who have been imprisoned since 2022 and are denied medical leave despite their illnesses, wrote in the letter:

"For us, it has always been a serious concern that despite numerous credible reports regarding the violation of basic workers' rights and the suppression of independent labor unions and the increasing number of child laborers in Iran by a few independent labor unions in Iran, including our syndicate, the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, and the nationwide teachers' organization, the Coordinating Council of Teachers' Unions of Iran, as well as by international labor unions and federations to the International Labour Organization, why has the ILO not taken noticeable and effective actions even within the framework of the ILO's fundamental conventions that all members are obligated to "respect, promote, and realize"? Why does the organization continue to invite the fake representatives of the Iranian government as

representatives of Iranian workers to its annual meetings and, in many cases, even elect them to the board of directors and labor committees?”

Shahabi and Razavi further stated:

“We, the members of the syndicate, have been persecuted by employers, the Iranian government, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence, and the judiciary for establishing an independent labor union and engaging in union activities within the framework of ILO conventions and international labor standards since 2005. We have been repeatedly arrested, imprisoned, and dismissed from our jobs. During this period, hundreds of syndicate members have been arrested and beaten, dozens have been fired or suspended, and security forces have raided their homes. The three imprisoned members of the syndicate in Evin Prison have continuously faced this anti-worker policy and have been sentenced to long prison terms. Despite severe physical illnesses, the prison authorities and agents of the Ministry of Intelligence have prevented us from receiving medical leave.”⁹¹

On May 1, 2024, coinciding with International Workers’ Day, a group of prisoners in Evin Prison wrote a joint letter to celebrate the occasion. In their letter, they stated:

“The Iranian working class, an inseparable part of the global working class, has a rich history of class struggle marked by significant victories and occasional bitter defeats. Today, the Iranian working class faces a great responsibility: to recognize its position as a social class tasked with advancing society toward achieving social justice, eliminating exploitation, oppression, and all forms of discrimination, particularly gender and ethnic discrimination, establishing political freedom, preventing environmental destruction, and averting devastating regional wars. It is time for the Iranian working class to rise in these decisive struggles and reclaim its rightful place. We hope for a future shaped by the powerful and aware hands of the working class.”⁹²

91 [The Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company](#), May 27, 2024

92 [Radio Zamaneh](#), April 30, 2024

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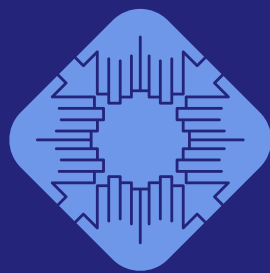
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