

Executive Council of Australian Jewry Inc.

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The Representative Organisation of Australian Jewry

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Statement of support for Australian trade unions in calling for workers rights in Iran

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), on behalf of the Australian Jewish community, joins with Australian trade unions in calling upon the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to cease its persecution and harassment of trade union activists in Iran and to respect basic labour rights - freedom of association; the right to organise; collective bargaining; abolition of forced labour; equality of opportunity and treatment; and other internationally-accepted standards regulating conditions across the entire spectrum of work-related issues.

Iranian labour activists are facing some of the harshest conditions in the world. For merely expressing their opinions and engaging in peaceful organising activities, they are frequently sacked from workplaces, persecuted, kidnapped, jailed, beaten or exiled. Iranian labour leaders, like Mansour Osanlu, Mahmoud Salehi and Ebrahim Madadi, have repeatedly been incarcerated, beaten and deprived of urgent and necessary medical treatment while their health is at great risk.

These three leaders have also been the targets of assassination attempts by Iranian government agents seeking to terrorise and crush the rising progressive labour movement in the country. The assassination attempts on the lives of Iranian labour activists must be condemned forcefully by workers and their organisations and all fair-minded people all over the world.

Although the Islamic Republic of Iran is a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and a party to its conventions, the Iranian government systematically represses all independent activities of workers in Iran. The ILO has found that the Islamic Republic of Iran is in violation of the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. C111) because of widespread inequality in access to employment and educational opportunities afforded to members of religious minority groups, including the Baha'i and Jewish communities, who do not enjoy equality of treatment in practice. Discrimination in employment on the basis of religion is especially entrenched with regard to posts within the judiciary system, election to Islamic Labour Councils and access to university education. The ILO has also expressed its "concern with regard to the lack of equality for women in society and at work".

The ECAJ expresses its solidarity with Australian trade unionists and other Australians in calling upon the Australian and other governments and the ILO, to increase pressure on the Iranian government to stop the assassination attempts, persecutions, arrests, threats, violence and other repressive measures against workers and labour activists and to honour Iran's treaty obligations.

Robert Goot AM SC

ECAJ President

23 June 2009