

the “co-unter worker”

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Arrested workers in Iran on May Day in Court

Interview with Mohsen Hakimi, Activist of the Anti-Capitalist Movement of Working Class,
and Member of Iranian Writers Association

Swedish “workplace paper/leaflet”, *motarbetaren* (the “co-unter worker”) has made an interview with the Iranian workers’ activist, Mohsen Hakimi, who, together with six other workers, is called to trial on August 23rd and 24th because of trouble with the police and security forces at May Day this year.

Q: While celebrating the May Day 2004 in the city of Saez in Iran, a number of workers and labour activists were detained by police and security forces of Iran. You, Mr. Hakimi, were among the detainees. Would you explain the details for our readers?

A: In order to hold a meeting on the May Day, workers of Saez had formed a council which was associated with a similar council in Tehran. The council had announced that the meeting will be held in the center of the city at 5 pm. But before this time, the place had been occupied by police and security forces, so that when the people arrived there they were attacked and more than 30 workers including the members of the council were arrested. Of course, except seven workers, the rest of the detainees were released after 12 hours.

Q: Who were these seven workers?

A: They were well-known labour leaders in Kurdistan province and me who live in Tehran and had been invited to deliver a speech in the meeting.

Q: Would you mention their names?

A: Yes. They were Mohammad Abdipoor, Borhan Divargar, Jalal Hoseini, Esmail Khodkam, Mahmoud Salehi and Hadi Tanumand.

Q: What was the reason of police and security forces for your arrest?

A: They said the meeting was illegal. Although, the workers believed that celebrating May Day as an international workersday does not require government’s license they had requested the needed license. But the Governor’s Office, which is in charge of issuing licenses for meetings and demonstrations, had opposed the meeting.

Q: How did they behave you during your detention and while you were in jail?

A: Their behavior during our detention was scandalously offensive, and except the last three days the rest of days we were kept in individual cells, which obviously is a kind of torture.

Q: What was your reaction?

A: Just from the time of our detention we went on a hunger strike in protest to the detention and their behavior. After ten days, we ended the strike by request of the people of Saez as well as our families.

Q: How long were you in jail and how were you released?

A: We were kept in jail for 12 days and were out on very high bails: For example,

for two of us a total of \$500.000! Of course, release of us was partly due to the pressure of public opinion both inside and outside Iran. Some labour organizations outside Iran showed their outages by writing letters to the president of Iran and also complaint to ILO.

Q: So, you are going to be tried in a court?

A: Yes, we will have a trial. We have been accused and should defend ourselves in a court.

Q: What have you been charged with?

A: Well, after the first day of our detention they took us to Islamic Revolution Court, and there a judge accused us for participation in an illegal meeting for May Day, and – surprisingly – for siding with »Komala«, which is a left political organization in Kurdistan that has been in arm struggle with Islamic Republic of Iran for several years. There in the court, we denied both of these charges. It is noteworthy that in the summons which they have sent us recently, the first charge has been omitted and only the second one has been mentioned.

Q: Why?

A: Because the first charge does not work for them and it can frighten nobody! Since no meeting has been held and we were all detained before any meeting could be held, we would definitely had been acquitted. And this is what they do not want. They want to put us in jail, and

for this the second charge might work. Probably, they have thought that this charge will frighten us and our lawyers. But the problem with this charge is that there is not even one document to prove it!

Q: When is your court going to be held?

A: On Aug. 23rd and 24th.

Q: Do you have your lawyers to defend you in the court?

A: Yes, we have our lawyers. In addition, an international organization has accepted to defend us in the court?

Q: What do you expect labour and human right organizations and media do for you?

A: We expect these organizations and media to protest to this unjust trial and put pressure to such a court which is going to try workers for celebrating May Day in order to release all the workers unconditionally.

Q: Mr. Hakimi, you are known as »activist of the anti-capitalist movement of working class«. Would you say something about this movement for our readers at the end of this interview?

A: Essentially, working class movement is an anti-capitalist one whose aim is to abolish wage labour. I mean it is not socialists who make this movement anti-capitalist. Rather, the movement is spontaneously anti-capitalist. What the socialists ought to do is to organize this movement. By doing so, socialists help this spontaneous antagonism with capitalism to be self-conscious.

In contradistinction to this, the approach of the mainstream »socialist« movement from the time of First International on has been something different. The »socialists«-whom I prefer to call sectarists-have thought that their task is first to make workers anti-capitalist and then to absorb them into their organizations and parties in order to help them to seize the power. Thus, instead of organizing the anti-capitalist movement of working class, these sectarists have pulled out the forerunners of this class from their movement and converted them to abstract political activists for defending non-proletarian classes, and in this way they have deprived the movement from its actual leaders and activists.

On the other side of the coin, we have had the syndicalists who have much benefited from the above approach, because by limiting the class struggle

of working class to economic struggle in the context of accepting capitalism and leaving political struggle of the class to political parties they have tried-and are trying-to make the anti-capitalist movement of working class apolitical, which is exactly what capitalists want and desire.

The resultant of the above two trends has been a kind of dilemma in which we see, on the one hand, »anti-capitalist« political parties and organizations which claim to represent the working class but do not have working masses with them, and on the other hand, working masses who either are not even organized or have been organized in reformist trade unions which have become unable even to maintain the level of wages in a satisfactory situation. What I mean by anti-capitalist movement of working class is an organized movement against capitalism and above bourgeois trends which while struggling for the daily economic demands of workers attempts to reach its ultimate aim, that is seizing the power and abolishing the wage system as the final cause of the slavery of modern working class.

July 2004

Protest against the repression by the Iranian state against the workers after this year's May Day Celebration!

On May Day this year 50 workers in Saqez in Kurdish Iran got arrested after having protested against the regime's decision to move the Celebrations to the day before (!).

Most of them got released again short after, but seven, where of two the day before had met a Canadian delegation from ICFTU (Mohsen Hakimi and Mahmood Salehi), were kept arrested and only got released on bail ten to twelve

days later after protests both from within the country (mainly from the people of Saqez) and international. However they have to pay approximately 250.000 USD each, in its turn corresponding to 150 years' wages for an Iranian worker! Trial is to be held during the last week of August.

The arrested workers are well-known activists in the workers' movement and are struggling for the workers' self-

organization against wage-slavery. The reason for getting arrested was that they stressed that the workers themselves – and not the regime – shall decide how to celebrate May Day, and that the regime and the capitalist system shall be condemned for the assaults.

It is now up to the global working class to protest and fight against this threat, and against the capitalist system!