

Labor Rights Violations

Unsafe Working Conditions

Introduction

Labor rights encompass a range of protections and entitlements enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), to which Iran is a party. HRA has conducted a review of Iran's record in relation to respect for labor rights over the review period. In light of a review of the State's behavior, HRA has drafted recommendations to which it urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to implement as a means of urgency and without reservation.

Recommendation:

Ratify Additional ILO Conventions: Iran should ratify and implement ILO Conventions No. 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize) and No. 98 (Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining).

Iranian workers, particularly in the construction, mining, and oil industries, face hazardous working conditions. HRA reports frequent accidents and fatalities due to inadequate safety measures and lack of enforcement of existing regulations. Between May 1, 2023, and April 27, 2024, at least 9,879 workers were killed or injured in workplace-related accidents.

Recommendation:

Improve Workplace Safety: Iran must enhance the enforcement of safety regulations, provide adequate training and resources, and conduct regular inspections to prevent workplace accidents and fatalities.

Violations of Labor Rights

HRA has documented numerous violations of labor rights in Iran, including issues related to wage theft, unsafe working conditions, suppression of labor unions, arbitrary arrest of labor activists, and discrimination against women and minorities in the workplace.

Recommendation:

Combat Workplace Discrimination: Iran should implement and enforce laws prohibiting discrimination in the workplace, ensuring equal opportunities and fair treatment for all workers, regardless of gender or ethnicity.

Wage Theft and Delayed Payments

One of the most pervasive issues reported by HRA is wage theft and the consistent delay in payment of workers' salaries. This is particularly prevalent in state-owned enterprises and large industrial sectors, where workers often face months of unpaid wages, leading to severe economic hardship. Between May 1, 2023, and April 27, 2024, at least 84,226 workers were owed wage arrears, with public sector companies responsible for 54% of these arrears.

Recommendation:

Ensure Timely Payment of Wages: The government should enforce laws mandating the timely payment of wages and hold employers accountable for violations.

From 2020–June 2024:

15,085 workplace injuries

Arbitrary Detention of Labor Rights Activists

Many workers have been summoned, arrested, or convicted for peaceful activities such as protesting low wages. In the past 12 months, at least 32 protesting workers in the Aq-Darreh gold mines and several contractors at the South Pars/North Dome gas-condensate field were arrested. Prominent labor activists like Reza Shahabi and Hassan Saedi remain imprisoned for their activities. In 2024, activist Sharifa Mohammadi has been sentenced to death for her activity.

Recommendation:

Protect Labor Union Rights: The government should respect the right to form and join independent labor unions, release detained labor activists, and refrain from interfering in union activities.

From 2020–June 2024:

3,642 workplace deaths