



London Retired Members Branch

DEFEND IRANIAN TEACHERS' LEADER ESMAIL ABDI

In late June, as if driven by an urge to match their Sunni ruling counterparts across the Gulf in Bahrain, the Shia theo-tyrants of Iran arrested Iranian Teachers' Trade Association leader, Esmail Abdi. A petition condemning his seizure and calling for his release has been circulated by Labour Start, who summarise Esmail's experience "following his attempt to obtain a visa to attend the 7th Education International World Congress in Ottawa, Canada" as follows:

"After his passport was confiscated at the border, he was ordered to return to Tehran to meet with prosecutors. However, upon reporting to the prosecutors' office he was arrested while more than 70 teachers waited outside in support.

Abdi's arrest comes after nationwide rallies were held earlier this year to protest wages that leave the majority of teachers below the poverty line."

Esmail is the victim of a blatant manoeuvre by the Iranian rulers to isolate organised workers in Iran from those in other countries. Behind the stately swagger and bullying, their actions reveal fear of the essential nature of our class as a global transformative force. What is at stake is fundamental freedom of association internationally, as well as within current national boundaries. The rulers of Iran, like those of Bahrain, are fully aware of this. True to their nature, both regimes wage war on such freedom at the elemental class level of union organisation.

UCU London Retired Members branch is already active helping build support within the labour movement for the Bahrain Teachers' Association. Simultaneous and linked expression of solidarity with victimised teachers in Iran is important in its own right, as our Iranian sisters and brothers are under attack. But further, it is part of a process of seeking to facilitate anti-sectarian class development across the entire Gulf region and beyond.

As a first step, support the Labour Start petition online at:

http://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign.cgi?c=2779

Further information on both the victimisation of Esmail and on trade unions more generally in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which consolidated power after 1979 largely through the crushing of workers' organisations, will be appearing on our branch website.

David Binns (UCU London Retired Members branch)

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