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Iran: Free Mahmoud Salehi now

Editors: On April 9th 2007, a commanding officer of the Saez security forces appeared at Mahmoud Salehi's work and asked him to attend at the office of the prosecutor to negotiate with the governor and the prosecutor about this year's celebration of the international workers' day, which was being organized by Salehi and his colleagues. However, in the prosecutor's office, Salehi, the former President of the Bakery Workers' Association of the City of Saez and a well-known labour activist in Iran, was told that the Kurdistan Appeal Court has reached the final verdict on his May Day 2004 case and that he has been sentenced to one year imprisonment and a three year suspended prison sentence. They immediately put Salehi under arrest. Salehi objected to the deceitful and illegal way in which his arrest took place and refused to sign the order. After that Salehi was taken immediately to the Sanandaj Central Prison. This way, the government authorities did not allow Salehi to contact his family, lawyer and colleagues, and he was not even allowed to take his medications with him. Salehi has major kidney problems, as one of his kidneys has stopped working and the other one is almost failing and without medications and continuous treatment his life would be endangered. Thus far, the verdict of the appeal court has not been handed down to Salehi's lawyers.

Mahmoud Salehi along with Jalal Hosseini, Mohsen Hakimi, Borhan Divargar, Mohammad Abdipoor, Esmail Khodkam and Hadi Tanomand and about 40 other workers were arrested on May 1st 2004 at the beginning of a rally in commemoration of the International Workers' Day in the City of Saez, Kurdistan Province. The above labour activists, internationally known as the Saez Seven, went on hunger strike while in custody until they were released on heavy bail on May 12th 2004. While three of the above seven have since been acquitted, the remaining four continued to face numerous trials. The Saez Revolutionary Court had previously sentenced Salehi to 4 years imprisonment, while Hosseini, Hakimi and Divargar were each sentenced to two years jail. The Kurdistan Court of Appeal's final verdict changed Salehi's to one year immediate imprisonment and three years suspended sentence. The appeal court also confirmed the two years imprisonment of Hosseini, Hakimi and Divargar, but those sentences were suspended for three years, which means that they are free now but if they commit any 'illegal' acts during the next

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three years they would then have to face trials for that particular 'illegal' act and will also have to serve their two years suspended jail sentence.

Send a message of protest to President Ahmadinejad, and read the latest developments in Mahmoud Salehi's case at LabourStart.

Eric Lee, Labourstart