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Iran

Social regression encounters resistance

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Since the agreement on its nuclear programme, the obsession of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been to make the labour market attractive for the multinationals. So it is a “social” policy of the most violent kind that is being implemented.

This policy has been particularly characterised by the modification of the labour laws and the reintroduction of the possibility of exploiting the labour of children under fifteen. The meagre forms of protection concerning contracts have been removed and the possibility of “establishing” oral contracts has been extended. From now on salaries can be “negotiated” directly between the employer and the worker. The level of the minimum wage is fixed enterprise by enterprise, taking account of “economic reality”.

It is in this context that large multinationals are renewing contact with Tehran. Thus, Peugeot is trying to win back its position as the leading Western firm on the Iranian car market. The launching in October 2016 of a joint venture called IKAP (Iran Khodro Automobiles Peugeot) announced the return of the French brand on the Iranian market. For its part, Renault has created a joint enterprise with Iran Khodro and Saipa. And the social violence suffered by the Iranian workers does not count for much...

As for Airbus, it has signed a protocol of agreement with the Islamic Republic covering 114 middle-distance and long-distance planes. The national company Iran Air has just taken delivery of its first Airbus A321. On the commercial level, the “Great Satan” is making sure it is not left out. Thus the US company Boeing has announced the signature of an agreement with Iran Air for the sale of 80 planes and the leasing of 29 others.

Struggles, protests and solidarity

Faced with this economic and “social” policy and with the violence of the repression, workers’ struggles have not weakened. They are conducted in the workplaces, continued also in the prisons of the Islamic Republic and they find an echo among the population that is not negligible. Numerous solidarity campaigns are being conducted, abroad or via social networks.

Since the end of October 2016, there has been a fresh wave of protests in Iranian prisons. Over the last few weeks, several prisoners have gone on hunger strike to denounce their conditions of incarceration. Among them there are some well-known activists: Ali Shariati, imprisoned for having taken part in a peaceful demonstration against acid attacks on women; the defender of children’s rights Saaed Shirzad; and also many working-class and Kurdish activists.

The aim of this movement is to demand justice and to have trials that are properly conducted, as well as an end to torture and ill-treatment. Some prisoners have been on hunger strike for more than 70 days and are in critical condition. Faced with this movement and with the support for the activists, the regime has undertaken a campaign of threats against the prisoners and their families. Several prisoners have been transferred and placed in solitary confinement in high-security wings. Some who had been hospitalised have been reincarcerated, despite opposition from the medical personnel.

However the regime has also demonstrated some weaknesses. It is thanks to the international campaign and to support actions in Iran that the woman writer and activist Golrokh Ebrhaimi has been freed. The battle must continue.

Social regression encounters resistance

The imprisoned activists and those who are fighting courageously against the dictatorship of the mullahs are counting on the campaigns of international solidarity.