

Iranian revolution 1979: the workers' movement was crushed. Now it is beginning to revive



Iranian oil workers dare to fight

ON 16 February, oil workers and their elected representatives from the oil refineries of Shiraz, Isfahan, Tabriz and Tehran, together with workers from oil pipelines and the national gas company, staged a demonstration in front of the Oil Ministry in Tehran.

The government sent Islamic Guards to disperse the demonstrators and hundreds were arrested. The government declared all oil workers' organisations illegal, banned the formation of a national organisation, and rejected the demand for collective bargaining.

Two oil workers who were among the demonstrators outside the Oil Ministry on the 16 February died from the injuries they received that day. There are reports that two other oil workers died under torture in prison. A number of those arrested were released in late February but the government then arrested oil workers in Shiraz and Abadan.

Oil workers were protesting against their working conditions and the level of wages and for the right to form a workers' organisation have been involved in a direct confrontation with the Iranian regime for the last few months. The oil

workers had previously threatened to go on all-out, national, unlimited strike if their legitimate demands were not met.

As negotiations failed in early February, the oil workers tried to co-ordinate their protest on a national level thus the demonstration of 16 February.

According to the latest information the government has now accepted most of the economic demands of the oil workers, and in many refineries workers returned to work on 8 March. The government negotiators have accepted an increase in travel payments, improved rate of overtime pay, and improved pay scales.

However many of the political demands, such as the right to form workers' organisations, have not been met. The oil workers are continuing their protest for the unconditional release of imprisoned demonstrators and recognition of their national workers' organisation.

Committee for the Defence of Iranian Oil Workers comprising Communist Party of Iran, Workers Left Unity, Organisation of Migrant and Refugee Iranian workers.