

10 November 2016

### **Iran - Imprisonment of labour rights defender Esmail Abdi**

On 9 November, 2016, labour rights defender Mr. **Esmail Abdi**, was imprisoned following the Tehran Appeals Court's decision to uphold a six years prison sentence on charges related to his peaceful trade union activities.

[Esmail Abdi](#) is a mathematics teacher at a high school in Islam Shahr, as well as the Secretary General of **Iran's Teachers' Trade Association (ITTA)**. As part of his trade union activities campaigning for labour rights, Esmail Abdi has organized peaceful demonstrations and given interviews with domestic and foreign media regarding teachers' labour rights.

On 7 October, Branch 36 of the Tehran Appeals Court decided to uphold the six-year prison sentence against Esmail Abdi, issued by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran in February 2016 for "propaganda against the state" and "collusion against national security". On June 27, 2015 the trade unionist was arrested by the Revolutionary Guards' Intelligence Organization, one week after being barred from leaving Iran to attend an international teachers' conference in Canada. Esmail Abdi was denied the right to a fair and impartial trial, with his lawyer not being given access to the labour rights defender's file or the evidence brought against him in the case.

This is not the first time that Esmail Abdi has faced judicial harassment for his human rights work. In 2011, the labour rights defender was convicted by the Tehran Revolutionary Court for "propaganda against the state" and "revealing information about security matters" and given a 10 year suspended prison sentence subject to five years of probation. With this most recent conviction occurring within this probation period, there is a risk that the suspended 10 year sentence could be implemented on top of the six year sentence. Prior to the suspended sentence, Esmail Abdi was also detained four times by security forces between 2006 and 2009 for his peaceful activism.

The imprisonment and judicial harassment of Esmail Abdi is part of an ongoing campaign by the Iran government aimed at repressing independent labour rights activism. Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by and strongly condemns the imprisonment of Esmail Abdi, as it believes it to be in retaliation for his legitimate and peaceful human rights activities.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Esmail Abdi and quash all convictions against him as Front Line Defenders believes that he has been targeted solely as a result of his legitimate human rights work and trade union activities;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Esmail Abdi, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9

December 1988;

3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Iran and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.