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### **Iran – Labour rights defenders sentenced to 11 years in prison**

On 15 October 2016, labour rights defenders Jafar Azimzadeh and Shapour Ehsanirad were sentenced to 11 years in prison by the Revolutionary Court of Saveh over charges of 'propaganda against the regime' and 'crimes of assembly and collusion against national security through organizing and operating an illegal group'.

[Jafar Azimzadeh](#) and [Shapour Ehsanirad](#) are well-known trade unionists in Iran. They are leading members of the Free Union of Workers in Iran. They are active in defending labour rights and the improvement of working conditions.

The two human rights defenders were sentenced to 10 years in prison for establishing the Free Union of Workers in Iran and one year for 'propaganda against the Islamic Republic', 'publishing false contents on Internet' and 'participating in illegal demonstration and protests'. The human rights defenders also face another investigation in another case at branch 101 of the Second Criminal Court in Saveh over charges of 'disturbing the public opinion and public order' for allegedly inciting workers at the Safe Rolling and Pipe Mills Company to go on strike in 2015.

In a separate case, Jafar Azimzadeh was sentenced to six years in prison and two years of deprivation from any cyberspace and media activities in March 2015 by the Revolutionary Court in Tehran on charges of 'collusion against national security' and 'propaganda against the state' which were upheld by the Appeal Court on 8 November 2015. He was temporarily released on 30 June 2016 following a two-month hunger strike.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the sentencing of labour rights defenders Jafar Azimzadeh and Shapour Ehsanirad, as it believes that it has been solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of the workers' rights.

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

1. Immediately quash all sentences against Jafar Azimzadeh and Shapour Ehsanirad and drop all charges against them.
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in Iran are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals.