

Iran : The New round of the protest of the oil worker

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October 21, 2023 - Protests by oil, gas and petrochemical workers have been taking place intermittently for months. The latest round of protests by oil workers started in October of this year. According to the reports published by the oil workers, on Monday, September 25, a number of laid-off workers of one of the contractors of the first phase of the Howeyzeh Gas Refining Company gathered in front of the company in order to achieve their demands.

These workers, who were working with short-term three-month contracts, protested the decision to fire them, and demanded to return to their jobs, by blocking the company entrance.

In protest to the setting of an illegal wages ceiling, on Monday, October 2nd, the employees of the offshore platforms in the two Iranian Plateau and Pars Oil and Gas companies protested this decision by gathering at their workplaces. According to the statements of the workers working in these two companies, Monday's protests will continue until the authorities respond and this restriction is lifted, and every Monday, they will protest against the illegal deduction of their wages.

On October 9, the employees of Arkan-e- Sales gathered too in the Abadan oil refinery to protest against the poor living conditions and the lack of job security, and demanded the removal of intermediary companies and labor supply contractors. In this refinery, about four thousand workers are under the pressure of hard work and livelihood without any job security.

These employees want to accelerate the allocation of oil and gas cards from the beginning of 21 March 2023, remove discrimination and allow the use of guesthouses, dining clubs and social welfare services for all workers, and modify the job classification plan and generalize it from the beginning of 21 March, and pay their arrears.

The demand for the withdrawal of contractors, the increase of wages and the safety of the working environment are among the nation-wide demands of oil workers. Now, on Mondays, the workers of these sections are protesting to achieve their demands.

In this regard, on Monday, October 16, the official employees of the Ministry of Petroleum working in the Forozan, Abu Zar and Behrgansar platforms of the Continental Plateau Oil Company, as well as the employees of the Aghajari Oil and Gas Operating Company, demanded the removal of the wage cap, the removal of the limitation of pension years, the return of excess tax deductions, and They protested for the full implementation of Article 10 of the labour law.

In addition to that, on October 18, the official employees of Aghajari Oil and Gas Operating Company gathered once again to protest against their fixed wages cap. Removing the wage cap, removing the limitation of retirement years and returning excess tax deductions are the urgent demands of these employees.

In general, the exit of contractors, elimination of discrimination and having the same legal and welfare conditions for the same work as official colleagues are the most important demands of

contract workers. Mondays are the day that all oil workers plan to protest until their demands are met.

Over the past years, oil industry workers have repeatedly started protests in various forms, including mass protests and strikes, to achieve their demands. Since the beginning of this year, the protests of the oil workers started again with their special demands, and the oil workers spent many days on strike. This round of strikes by these workers was very extensive and as a matter of fact, more than a hundred production units joined these strikes.

On 8th July this year, again, a number of workers of the Arkan-e-Sales of the Ministry of Oil came to Tehran to protest against the non-implementation of the plan to eliminate contracting companies and gathered in front of the presidential institution. The most important demand of these workers was “removal of contracting companies” and these workers said in an interview with one of the government news agencies: nearly one hundred and five thousand people in a corporate form (volumetric and non-volumetric Arkan-e Sales) in government companies are affiliated to the Ministry of Oil, including Gas, oil, drilling, refining, distribution of petroleum products, and all of them request the withdrawal of contracting companies and the conclusion of a direct contract with the Ministry of Petroleum.

Since that date, there have been other protests in the oil and gas complex, and these protests are continuing until now. The decision of the contract employees to gather again in Tehran and the Monday’s protest of the oil workers has brought the protests of the oil workers into a new round of protests.

The resistance of the government and contractors against the basic demands of oil, gas and petrochemical workers in a recent year has put four simultaneous solutions in front of labor activists and strikers, which are:

*Emphasizing on the common basic demands with the aim of widening the scope of workers’ participation in regular and repeated protests.

*Independent labor organization with the aim of sustainable labor self-organizing based on these regular protests.

*Strengthening the communication between workers such as informing and reporting independently and directly to the initiative of workers about labor protests and the status of striking sections.

*Attracting the support and solidarity of trade unions and independent labor unions at the international level.

The effective combination of these solutions increases the probability of workers being successful in handling their claims; It creates an effective qualitative step in advancing the movement of demands and is a factor of strengthening the labor movement and class struggle.

(Taken from the newsletter of the Revolutionary Workers’ Union of Iran)

P.S.

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