

Free Daryoush

union activist, jailed by the Australian government since October 2000

Daryoush Hooshmand Nejad is an electrician and union activist who fled to Australia from Iran over four years ago. He was fleeing for his life from the brutal Iranian government. Instead of being given refuge, however, Daryoush has been locked up – without charge or trial – ever since he arrived in Australia in October 2000.

Daryoush wrote this letter in 2003, while he was in the Port Hedland detention centre in Western Australia:

A short story of my life

I am 43 years old, married, and have two daughters in Iran. I am a technician and was working at an oil refinery in Iran. I had a good and happy life with my family, but because of some difficulties with the Iranian government I had to leave my country and my family.

I was working with a labour union and was asking for the rights of the workers. On 5 July 2000 there was a big demonstration against the government in Abadan city about the difficulties with the drinking water.

I was a leader of the labour union and was supporting that demonstration. However, there were clashes between the police and the demonstrators and there was big damage to government property.

So the Iranian government, which operates on strict Islamic rules, ordered the arrest of the main people who had organized the demonstration. They arrested lots of people and put them in prison, torturing them. Some of them were killed. I was on the list of people ordered to be arrested and I believe I would have been tortured and killed like some of my colleagues. So I left my country and my family behind and came to Australia to seek asylum.

I thought this would protect me and my family, but unfortunately the Australian Immigration Department put me in a detention centre at Port Hedland surrounded with layers of razor wire. I am isolated for an unknown time. The treatment that I and other detainees have received is inhuman and unacceptable. My application for a protection visa was refused with no rational and logical reasons. It seemed refused on the department's personal opinion and not facts.

The Australian Government has now reached an agreement with the Iranian Government to forcibly send all Iranians in detention centres back to Iran. This is a terrible breach of human rights. All of them will face death, not because of their political problems with the Iranian Government, but because of the serious issue that myself and most of the Iranian detainees have changed their religion and become Christian. According to the strict rules of the Iran Government, if someone converts their religion they will be killed so it is clear that if they are forcibly returned they will be killed by the Iranian Government.

I am closing this letter with a request that all human rights organizations, Amnesty International, unions and Australian people, help save us from these conditions be sympathetic to our situation.

With best regards

Daryoush Hooshmand Nejad (Bx1173)



Daryoush Hooshmand Nejad

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free the refugees

As unionists, we know that we all go forward together or we all go back together. We know that the Australian government is attacking refugees to promote racism and divide us from our fellow workers.

Daryoush Hooshmand Nejad is a union activist who fled the brutal Iranian government. Instead of being given refuge, he has been locked up –without charge or trial –ever since he arrived in Australia in October 2000.

Like many others, Daryoush has been failed by the cruel and often bizarre rules administered by the Australian Government's immigration department. Now, like other refugees from Iran, he is facing the prospect of being forcibly deported back to the country from which he fled. Two other men, brothers who fled after the Abadan riots, were returned to Iran by the Australian Government in August 2001 and April 2002. Family members went to meet the first man at the airport, but he never came out. His brother has also disappeared.

Daryoush is one of 68 Iranians (including two women and three children) being held in immigration detention in Australia. The Government has over 100 refugees like Daryoush locked in Baxter, along with around 150 other people. All the refugees have been detained for over three years, some for up to six years – simply for fleeing to Australia to find safety. Another 54 refugees are still jailed on the island of Nauru, and some dozens more in Australian Government funded internment camps in Indonesia.

Daryoush has struggled for his freedom ever since being locked up by the Australian Government. Before Christmas 2004 he was involved in a hunger strike at Baxter detention centre. Like many others in Baxter, Daryoush suffers from serious stress and mental illness as a result of his long and unjust detention.

We are serious when we say *an injury to one is an injury to all*. Today we must give solidarity to our union brother in Baxter, and the many more refugees who are in his situation.

Help us to free Daryoush:

Propose a motion in your union to demand that the Australian government immediately release Daryoush. ***This meeting of (insert union details) calls for the immediate release of Iranian refugee Daryoush Hooshmand Nejad from Baxter detention centre. We are opposed to any attempt to forcibly deport Daryoush or any other asylum seekers and therefore call on our union, state Trades & Labor Council and the ACTU to coordinate industrial action to prevent forcible deportations.***

Send a letter to Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone (Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600 Australia) stating your union's support for Daryoush's release and bid to stay in Australia. Send copies to AAWL.

Attend rallies to support freedom and justice for refugees with others from your workplace. Bring your union flags and banner. Check www.rac-vic.org for the latest information on rallies.

Organise to have a refugee speaker at your next union meeting to find out more about life in the detention camps and different ways to support the campaign. **Call Julie Smith on 03 9663 7277** to organise this.

Contribute to the AAWL refugees project to support freedom for Daryoush and all refugees in detention: **Commonwealth Bank BSB 063123 Account: 10034866 Ref: FRP**

