

Iranian Nurses' Protest Faces Government Crackdown

news

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"All nurses have livelihood problems," said the general secretary of the Nurses' Home (union) [1]. The exploitation of nurses is even further evidenced, as they are forced to work 120 hours of overtime per month for a meager \$0.33 per hour [2]. The overtime is due to the severe shortage of nurses; according to the Nursing Organization of Iran, there should be twice as many nurses in Iran as there are now [3].

As a result, the Iranian nurses are widely reported to have become "tired, unmotivated, and burnt out" [4]. The terrible news that three nurses have died from overwork [5] confirms the harsh conditions under which they work in Iran. Echoing 19th-century London reports of overwork deaths, one needs to look no further than the works of Karl Marx to comprehend the condition of Iranian nurses.

"Hence even in the condition of society most favorable to the worker, the inevitable result for the worker is overwork and premature death, decline to a mere machine, a bond servant of capital, which piles up dangerously over and against him, more competition, and starvation or beggary for a section of the workers." -Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844

To protest for humane conditions, the nurses have organized nationwide. The official response has been to summon the protestors to disciplinary committees and hand out sentences such as six-month suspensions, exile to other cities where commuting is impossible, non-payment of overtime, and deduction of bonuses [6].

Union protests for better wages, such as the recent nurses' unorganized protest, are a step forward, but they are not enough. To effectively put an end to such naked horrors as death from overwork, it is imperative to be educated in scientific socialism - as this reveals the causes of such symptoms, and highlights the path towards their solution, which lies in class struggle.

For instance, the determination of the working day is to be understood as the "result of a struggle, a struggle between collective capital, i.e., the class of capitalists, and collective labour, i.e., the working-class." [Capital Volume One, Chapter 10, Section 1]

The first step in order to triumph in this struggle is to organize as a class party on the Marxist-Leninist platform, a task that remains to be completed in Iran.

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