Executive Summary

The Suppression of Public Education as a Multi-Layered and Continuous Process

Documenting Violations of Teachers' Rights from 1 Mehr 1404 (23 September 2025) to 25 Mordad 1405 (16 August 2026)

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1. Introduction

The 1404–1405 academic year (2025–2026), particularly following the protests of Dey 1404 (December 2025–January 2026), has been one of the bloodiest periods for the teaching community and students in contemporary Iranian history. We use the expression "one of the bloodiest periods" because, for various reasons, we do not have precise figures for teachers and students who lost their lives in different periods of contemporary Iranian history, particularly over short time spans, or even during the period known as the Cultural Revolution and the eight-year war. However, during the protests of Dey 1404 (December 2025–January 2026), we witnessed the deaths of at least 15 teachers and hundreds of students. In addition to documenting the killing and repression of teachers during the Dey protests, this report seeks to document a set of the most significant forms of violations of teachers' rights from 1 Mehr 1404 (23 September 2025) to 25 Mordad 1405 (16 August 2026), and to analyze the relationships among them. The central finding is that the suppression of public education is not confined to moments of protest: it is present in teachers' everyday lives and workplaces, becomes more overt and severe violence during direct confrontation, and continues after protests subside through security, judicial, administrative, and employment-related channels. In this sense, the "multi-layered" nature of repression refers to the interweaving of different tools and institutions: from schools, screening and administrative and employment mechanisms to security agencies, courts, prisons, and social and livelihood-related pressures. Its "continuous" nature means that these measures are not isolated incidents: everyday pressures exist before protests, turn into direct violence during confrontation, and continue afterward through summonses, arrests, fabrication of cases, sentencing, deprivation, and employment penalties. This cycle is purposeful: it raises the cost of making collective demands, restricts collective communication, and weakens teachers' capacity for independent organizing.

2. Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, with quantitative data analysis at its core. The primary data were compiled from documented violations of rights published by the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations. To supplement, interpret, and verify these data, they were cross-checked against reports by reputable human-rights organizations and media outlets, available documents, and interviews with informed individuals. Information was categorized and compared using indicators such as the type of rights violation, the perpetrator, location, gender, employment status, history of union activity, and whether an active teachers' union existed in the area where the incident occurred. The last indicator refers to the existence of an active union in the area where the incident occurred, not to whether the affected individual belonged to a union or was a union activist. The qualitative component consists of three focus-group interviews with 18 teachers and union activists, divided into three groups of six. These discussions were used to interpret the quantitative findings, examine lived experiences of repression, identify barriers to organizing, and elicit strategies for responding to pressure. Since official and independent statistics are unavailable and documenting rights violations in Iran's security-heavy environment is difficult, the figures in this report represent documented and verifiable cases, not all cases that may have occurred. Numerous factors limit documentation: fear of security, judicial, and employment-related consequences; internet shutdowns; communication disruptions; and reluctance to publicize violations. These limitations are particularly significant for those injured during protests, detainees, those under administrative and employment-related pressure, and incidents occurring in small cities.

3. Research Findings

These figures show different dimensions of pressure on teachers: from lethal encounters during protests to arrest and prosecution, the imposition of restrictions, and administrative and employment penalties. However, the figures should not be added together or treated as the number of unique individuals without considering differences in counting units, possible overlap between cases, and documentation limitations. Among the recorded judicial penalties, the total sentences include at least 40 years, one month, and 16 days of imprisonment, 382 million tomans in fines, and 75 billion rials in forfeited bail. Deprivations and restrictions imposed in prison included four cases of denial of medical treatment, two cases of denial of visits, two cases of restrictions on telephone calls, one transfer to solitary confinement, and one restriction on movement within the prison. Among the sentences issued, the death sentence against imprisoned teacher Alireza Mardasi was confirmed for the second time, underscoring the urgent need for action and intervention to prevent his execution.

Type of Repression	Women	Men	Unknown	Total
Shot to death	3	12	0	15
Physical injury (protests)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Beating	Unknown	1	Unknown	1
Arrest	10	68	0	78
Issuance of judicial summons	1	7	28	36
Summons by a security agency	2	8	0	10
Court hearing held	1	3	0	4
Execution of exile sentence	0	1	0	1
Issuance of judicial sentence	11	19	0	30
Bail seized	0	3	0	3
Fabrication of Cases	1	9	5	15
Deprivation in prison	0	10	0	10
Restrictions on communication	3	5	0	8
Summons before the Administrative Violations Board	3	3	0	6
Removal from service	1	2	0	3
Salary deduction	0	1	0	1
Compulsory retirement	1	1	0	2
Dismissal from employment	2	5	0	7
Total	**39**	**158**	**33**	**230**

4. Analysis of Findings

1. The repression of teachers goes beyond sporadic incidents and becomes a continuous cycle of control, punishment, and erosion of the capacity to act collectively. Pressures begin in everyday life, the workplace, and administrative mechanisms; during protests they escalate into direct violence, arrest, and judicial action; after protests, they continue through summonses, fabrication of cases, sentencing, and employment penalties. In this process, administrative, security, and judicial institutions play different but interconnected roles, extending the effects of repression into imprisonment and beyond. The three institutions that enforce repression—judicial, security, and administrative—overlap and cooperate. For example, in some cases, repression begins with security agencies but is continued by judicial institutions, providing it with legal cover.

2. The targeting of teachers changes at different stages of repression; union activists, in particular, face more concentrated and sustained pressure after protests. During protests, the scope of enforcement affects broader groups of teachers; afterward, pressure takes different forms against protesting teachers and activists with organizing capacity. Union activists may face summonses, fabrication of cases, and more sustained restrictions. However, the higher number of documented cases of pressure against union activists, compared with individual teachers, does not necessarily mean that they are subjected to greater repression. It may instead reflect differences in documentation and reporting capacity, as union activists generally have greater access to the resources and networks needed to report and document such cases.

3. The presence or absence of an active teachers' union is related to the form of repression, the possibility of documentation, and the capacity for collective resistance; however, it does not by itself explain the severity of repression. An active union increases the capacity to publicize cases, provide legal support, and pursue them collectively, helping prevent violations from disappearing from public view. Conversely, the absence of such capacity may leave teachers alone in documenting and pursuing cases. Nevertheless, the existence of a union does not in itself prevent repression, and lower numbers of recorded cases in areas without an active union do not necessarily mean fewer rights violations there.

4. Repression takes different forms regarding gender, employment status, and geography, and is not reflected uniformly in the available statistics. Retired teachers are also targeted, and female teachers' circumstances may involve ideological, administrative, familial, and economic pressures in addition to judicial and security pressures. Regional differences and employment positions also affect the nature of encounters and the possibility of pursuing cases. Statistical analysis must therefore account for differences in circumstances and documentation limitations; the available data are insufficient to draw definitive conclusions about the relative severity of repression across all groups and regions.

5. Conclusion

The report's findings indicate that the repression of teachers should be understood as a structural and continuous issue that extends from the workplace to the streets, judicial

authorities, and prisons. The significance of this finding is that the defense of teachers' rights should not focus solely on responding to arrests or judicial sentences; employment-related, economic, and administrative pressures, as well as restrictions imposed after protests, are also part of the same issue. At the same time, understanding the actual dimensions of repression requires simultaneous attention to documented cases and the limitations of documentation. Differences in statistics across regions or groups may result not only from differences in the type and extent of enforcement, but also from differences in reporting capacity, access to organizational support, and the ability to report safely. Systematic and responsible documentation is therefore essential to identifying patterns of repression and rights violation. Ultimately, the sustainable defense of teachers' rights requires collective capacity, independent organizing, and accountability mechanisms. Unions can strengthen mutual support, the recording of rights violations, and the continuity of collective demands; however, union organizing alone does not prevent repression and must be accompanied by legal support, democratic participation, and attention to gender, employment, and geographical differences.

6. Recommendations and Strategies for Teachers' Unions

The recommendations and strategies in this section are drawn from experiences and views expressed by union activists in the interviews conducted. The report categorizes these views and organizes them around three central questions; this section should therefore be understood as a formulation of activists' experiences and proposals, rather than recommendations made by the authors.

1. How does repression operate? Repression extends beyond judicial and security measures and also includes pressure through dismissal, salary deductions, fabrication of cases, damage to activists' reputations, and restrictions on legal rights. Surveillance of communications, intelligence infiltration, and disclosure of sensitive information also undermine organizing capacity and endanger trust within unions and the continuity of collective activity. At the same time, when confronting arrests and fabrication of cases, unions must preserve their capacity to pursue public and professional demands and ensure that all their capacity is not consumed by managing continuous, long-term security crises.

2. How can union activists counter repression? Establishing financial and legal support through solidarity funds and coordinated pursuit of judicial and administrative cases helps prevent teachers under pressure from being left alone. Sharing experience and raising awareness are also important, through education on union and civil rights, familiarity with legal avenues, and the sharing of experiences of interrogation and arrest. Alongside these measures, safeguarding information and communications, increasing awareness of protecting sensitive information, and reducing the vulnerability of members and organizational activities are essential. Maintaining collective ties and broadening demands by strengthening trust and participatory activities, and linking teachers' demands to students' rights and the issue of public education, help strengthen collective action.

3. What actions should unions prioritize? Strengthening independent and democratic union organizing—including establishing and strengthening independent unions, holding general assemblies, and ensuring accountability to members—is important for guaranteeing participation and continuity of collective activity. A sustainable documentation mechanism is also needed to record and verify rights violations—including arrests, sentencing, and employment-related and administrative sanctions—so that patterns of repression can be identified and cases can be pursued. Organized support for those affected is another priority, including following up on detained and injured teachers and providing legal and financial support to the families of those killed. Unions should also attend to gender differences and vulnerable circumstances, including tailored support for female teachers, female teachers who are the sole provider of the family, and strengthening women's participation in union leadership. Finally, greater cooperation among unions, exchange of experience, broader connections with students' demands, and greater solidarity with the rest of society can reduce fragmentation and strengthen the social support for these demands.

7. Summary

The report presents a picture of repression that is not limited to isolated encounters, but operates through administrative, security, and judicial mechanisms at different stages of union activity and protest. The recorded data show the breadth of these pressures; at the same time, documentation limitations prevent a definitive account of all actual cases or of differences in the severity of repression between groups and regions. The report's analysis also shows that the capacity to organize, disseminate information, and provide collective support matters for the recording and pursuit of rights violations. Independent unions can strengthen this capacity, but to be effective in confronting the authorities, they need support resources, sustained documentation, democratic participation, and links with broader demands concerning public education. Overall, the report's central focus is the connection between multi-layered and continuous repression, constraints on teachers' capacity to act, and the need to strengthen collective organizing. Accordingly, defending teachers' rights means not only pursuing individual cases, but also making a sustained effort to document rights violations, hold the responsible institutions accountable, and preserve the educational community's collective capacity to pursue professional demands and defend the right to public education.