



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

London SW1A 2AH

*From the Secretary of State*

19 August 2010

Brendan Barber  
Trade Union Congress  
Congress House  
Great Russell Street  
London  
WC1B 3LS

*Dear Brendan*

Thank you for your letter of 22 July about the recent Ministerial Order from Minister al-Shahristani affecting the activities of trade unions in the Ministry of Electricity in Iraq.

Following your letter, the British Ambassador to Iraq, John Jenkins, met the Electricity Minister, al-Shahristani, to set out the concerns raised. In addition, British Embassy officials met the Inspector General at the Ministry of Electricity, Alaa Mohie E-Deen, to seek further clarification. The Ministry of Electricity hold the view that the Order enforces existing law which bans union activity on Ministry premises and during official working hours and does not seek to impose further restrictions on union activity. We are advised that the Ministry of Electricity has launched an investigation into union activities. The results of the investigation will be made public. We will of course pass this on as soon as we receive any details. British Embassy officials in Baghdad have also met Hashmeya Musshin al-Saadawi, leader of the Electricity Workers and Employee Union, to discuss the situation.

Officials remain in contact with Hashmeya, as well as EU and US colleagues, and will continue to consider possible ways to encourage dialogue between all those involved. The right to form and join trade unions in Iraq is embodied in Article 22 of the Iraqi constitution. This is a principle to which HMG attaches great importance and takes very seriously. As you know, the draft Iraqi Labour Code, which will cover the regulations affecting unions, remains with the Council of Ministers for comment. The UK will continue to encourage the Government of Iraq to ensure a just, fair and ILO-compliant union law.

I have asked officials in London to continue to follow developments and keep you updated with the latest information.

*Friendly*  
*William Hague*

WILLIAM HAGUE