



# TUC Iraq Bulletin

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## More attacks on Iraqi unions

The General Federation of Iraqi Workers (GFIW) formed out of three Iraqi union confederations last autumn (see issue one) has formally complained to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Director General about further attacks on the independence of the trade union movement by the Iraqi Government. Following on from Decree 8750, the Iraqi government has now taken steps to interfere in the running of the Engineers' Union, by imposing a new leadership and appointing a group of government supporters to oversee new elections in the union. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), to which the TUC belongs, has supported the complaint.

The TUC Executive Committee in February will be considering a plan of action including:

- a formal protest by the TUC General Secretary to the Iraqi Ambassador to London;
- pressure from Parliamentarians such as an

Early Day Motion; and

- a letter-writing campaign for trade union members, to put pressure on the Iraqi government.

The actions of the Iraqi government are, sadly, similar to the steps taken by Saddam Hussein in the 1970s before he completely took over the Iraqi trade union movement and suborned it to his ends, and the TUC will register those points strongly with the Iraqi government.

The TUC will also raise the latest attacks on the Iraqi unions with the British government. Foreign Office Ministers have been very supportive of the TUC's concerns over Decree 8750, and British diplomats in Baghdad have held several meetings with Ministers to express the British government's belief that trade unions should run their own affairs.

## TUC Iraq Bulletin

In 2004, Congress called on the TUC to establish an Iraq Solidarity Committee, and that Committee has decided that a bulletin for trade unionists would help raise awareness of what is going on and encourage more trade unionists to give money to the [TUC Aid for Iraq Appeal](#) and get involved in practical solidarity with Iraqi and Kurdish trade unions. This bulletin will be published bimonthly on the TUC website.

The TUC Iraq Solidarity Committee is chaired for the General Council by Sue Rogers of the NASUWT, and includes representatives of sixteen affiliated unions as well as the ICFTU and STUC.

## Teachers' delegation

Seven Iraqi teacher union representatives visited Britain in November in a very successful delegation that was organised by the TUC but hosted by the six largest teacher unions (ATL, AUT, EIS, NASUWT, NATFHE and NUT). The delegation spent time with each union, as well as visiting the TUC for talks, the House of Commons to meet trade union MPs and the Department for Education and Skills. EIS took the delegation to see the Scottish Parliament, which much impressed the leader of the Kurdish Teachers Union, while other unions took the delegation to a primary school in London, and national executive meetings in Birmingham and London. The delegation were even able to be present as the AUT and NATFHE announced their merger ballot result (no one mentioned that the Iraqis, with one union in Iraq and one in Kurdistan – both covering teachers from nurseries to universities – had already got a lot further in terms of mergers!) The delegation included people from several political persuasions, two women, and representatives of every educational sector. Although mostly funded by the British teacher unions, the delegation was also partly financed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. A delegation report by Abdullah Muhsin of the GFIW is available on the TUC website at [www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-11305-f0.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-11305-f0.cfm)

## Cancel Iraq's debt

The TUC will be backing the campaign to cancel the debts that Iraq built up under Saddam Hussein. The TUC Iraq Solidarity Committee considered a report from Justin Alexander of Jubilee Iraq (modeled on the Jubilee Debt Coalition), and agreed to call on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to speed up and complete the cancellation of the UK debt, and take steps inside the International Financial Institutions (the IMF, the World Bank and so on) to get them to follow suit. The TUC believes that repaying Saddam's debts won't help the Iraqi people rebuild their country: they weren't asked if they wanted to take the debt out, and they shouldn't now have to pay back those who bankrolled Saddam.

## No to oil privatization

A new report on the ways in which the Iraqi oil industry is being stolen away from the nascent independent Iraqi government has been welcomed by the TUC. *Crude Designs*, produced by a consortium including War on Want, sets out how, rather than sell off the whole industry, neo-liberals in the west and Iraq are developing agreements with oil companies that amount to the same thing, without the same risk to the companies! The report is at [www.waronwant.org/?lid=11112](http://www.waronwant.org/?lid=11112)

## New ICFTU project officer

The ICFTU have appointed a new co-ordinator for their Iraq project. Based in Amman, Ralf Erbel comes from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and he will be oversee projects being conducted in Iraq, including, hopefully, some supported by the TUC.

## Iraqi women head for Britain

Hard on the heels of the teachers union delegation, the TUC, Unison and the Nick Burdon and Denis Blockley Fund are hosting a delegation of two Iraqi women from Basra and two Kurdish women trade unionists in early March. The delegation will take part in the TUC's annual International Women's Day celebrations on 6 March and then will travel to the TUC Women's Conference in Eastbourne where they will address the conference and take part in a fringe meeting.

## TUC Aid Iraq Appeal

The TUC is raising money for Iraqi trade unionists. This has so far been used for bringing Iraqi trade union leaders to Britain and to the ICFTU World Congress in December 2004, commemorating the assassination of IFTU leader Hadi Saleh and supporting the IFJ journalists' project. [Click](#) to give money online or find out more.