



TUC Iraq Bulletin

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The TUC Iraq Solidarity Committee, chaired by Sue Rogers from the General Council, works in solidarity with the General Federation of Iraqi Workers (GFIW), the trade union movement in Iraqi Kurdistan and other trade union organisations in Iraq. Members are drawn from seventeen TUC affiliated unions.

Second hand mobile phones

Our colleagues in Iraq tell us that they can re-use **Second hand mobile phones** for far less than it would cost them to buy new ones, so if you could send any second hand mobile phones to TUC Aid for Iraq at Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS, that would be very helpful. Please remember to send the charger as well!

Medical rehabilitation

Muhsin Jaaim Mashkpr, head of the Service Workers Union in Baghdad was severely injured when the car in which he was travelling was blown up by a roadside bomb a few months ago

(as far as we can tell, he was not the target of this attack). He led a well-known strike and negotiated demands for hotels workers in Baghdad in January 2005. He is recovering slowly, but needs medical rehabilitation which he cannot obtain in Iraq, but which has been arranged for him in Romania. The cost of his rehabilitation would be \$7,000 and \$3,000 has already been pledged by Unison and by the ICFTU, so a further \$4,000 is required. Please let the TUC know if you can help (if you need further information, pictures etc for an appeal, these can be provided).

Labour law in Iraq

The TUC continues to campaign with our colleagues in Iraq for better labour laws, and against Saddam's Decree 150 and the more recent 2005 Decree 8750. Complaints to the ILO have been submitted about Decree 8750 by the ICFTU and the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions, and the TUC is keeping up the pressure on the British government to use its influence. TUC General Secretary has requested a meeting with the Iraqi Ambassador in Britain to press the case.

Recently (and partly due to the changed composition of the government which eventually took office after the December 2005 elections), the GFIW reports that the Iraqi government has begun to show more positive signs. A committee established to oversee Decree 8750 has been nominated, drawing mostly on pro-union people (although the unions were not consulted and continue to reject the whole Decree). In discussions, the Minister for Labour and Social Affairs has indicated that the Government will step back from some of the measures to

implement the Decree (eg the freezing of bank accounts) and that the government is now in the process of enacting the ILO-compliant labour law drafted in 2004.

However, there is no reason to let up on pressure on the Government of Iraq to:

- withdraw Decree 8750, which represents unacceptable government interference in free trade unionism;
- repeal Decree 150 which bans trade unionism in the public sector completely; and
- enact a new labour law fully compliant with ILO conventions.

Action in Parliament

Dave Anderson MP, Chair of Labour Friends of Iraq, has tabled an Early Day Motion (number 1689) about Decree 8750. EDMs are a way for MPs to indicate their views on a subject, and demonstrate the strength of feeling – but they are not voted on.

So far, 73 MPs have signed to support the EDM – you can view the list and the full text at <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=30136&SESSION=875> and if your MP isn't on the list, why not write and ask them to sign?

The EDM's other sponsors are Joan Ruddock, Dai Harvard, Rob Marris, Sharon Hodgson and Peter Bottomley.

Women's delegation report

In March this year, four Iraqi women from the trade union movement (including two from the GFIW and two from Iraqi Kurdistan) came to Britain to take part in the TUC Women's Conference and International Women's Day celebrations. The women were:

- Nazanin T. Ali, Head of Women's Affairs at the Kurdistan Workers Syndicate, Member of the Service Workers Union;
- Hoda S Rafiq, Member of the Kurdistan Journalists' Union, who works for the Kurdistan Workers Syndicate newspaper;

- Hassana Abdulsatar, member of the Mechanics, Metal and Printing Workers Union and a member of her union's Women's Committee; and
- Violet Issa Qalaab, President of the Oil and Gas Workers Union Al Zubair Branch and member of the Iraqi Women's League.

The visit was funded by the TUC, Unison and Amicus' Nick Burdon and Denis Blockley Trust. A report of the visit is on the TUC website at www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-11912-f0.cfm

Privatisation seminar in Amman

In April, the TUC sent Ian Cuthbert of the CWU to Amman in Jordan to take part in an ICFTU seminar on privatisation, helping Iraqi trade unions to face up to the challenges (Ian was obviously able to explain what had happened with the British Telecom sell-off in the 1980s). His report is on the TUC website at www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-11897-f0.cfm

ALO meeting in Morocco

In February, the TUC helped make sure that a full GFIW delegation attended the meeting of the Arab Labour Organisation (part of the ILO) in Morocco, to ensure that the Iraqi trade union movement was able to make key contacts with other Arab trade union movements. As they ought to, the Iraqi government paid for the GFIW delegate, and also covered the hotel bill of the observer sent with TUC support. But TUC support was crucial to making the GFIW's involvement more strategic than simply taking part in the formal proceedings. GFIW President Rasim Al Awadi subsequently wrote to the TUC to confirm the success of the conference.

TUC Aid Iraq Appeal

The TUC continues to raise money for Iraqi trade unionists. This has been used for bringing Iraqi trade unionists to Britain and to the ICFTU World Congress, supporting global union training projects and more. [Click](#) to give money online or find out more.