
**TUC response to Iraqi education
ministry kidnappings**
Message of solidarity from Brendan Barber
15 November 2006

UK unions stand in solidarity with Iraqi workers and educationalists

Responding to the kidnapping of Ministry of Education officials in Baghdad this week (not all of whom have been released as yet), TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber has sent the following message of solidarity with Iraqi workers and teachers.

“This cowardly attack on some of the people most involved in keeping the education system going is a terrible reminder of the persistent persecution being suffered by workers and academics in Iraq. Workers in the education sector are in the front line, facing intimidation, harassment and sometimes death, all for the simple reason that they are trying to bring enlightenment, empowerment and education to Iraq’s children and young people.

“British trade unionists have little experience of the pressures under which Iraqi workers and educationalists operate every day, but we stand in solidarity with them in their struggle to build a new Iraq – non-sectarian, non-discriminatory and free.

“We call on the government of Iraq to take the steps necessary to prevent sectarian and other violence against people at work, and to restore the freedoms that they should have to join the trade unions of their choice and to bargain collectively.”

Last year, a delegation of Iraqi teacher union representatives (along with their colleagues from Iraqi Kurdistan) visited the TUC as guests of British teaching unions. They explained how teachers were targeted by terrorists for teaching about human rights, secularism and equality, as well as for ‘co-operating’ with the government of Iraq. Recently, the number of attacks on teachers in schools and universities has increased as sectarian disputes have been added to the so-called insurgency – developments which affect workers in many others sectors too.

Brendan Barber’s message of support was sent to the General Federation of Iraqi Workers, representing Iraqi workers generally, and to the Iraqi Teachers’ Union which covers teachers in schools and colleges. The TUC has an Iraq Solidarity Committee chaired by General Council member Sue Rogers who is National Treasurer of the teachers’ union NASUWT. To donate to the TUC Aid for Iraq appeal, visit <http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/index.cfm?mins=376>