



TUC Iraq Bulletin

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In this issue:

- **Teachers' union delegation** 1
 - **FBU delegation to Iraq** 1
 - **Oil unions and the oil law** 1
 - **Further attacks on trade unions** 2
 - **Transport workers are coming** 2
 - **TUC Aid for Iraq Appeal** 2
-

Teachers' union delegation

As reported in the fifth bulletin, a delegation of Iraqi teachers from the teachers' union in Baghdad visited the UK in February. The visit, organised by TUC Iraq Solidarity Committee Chair and NASUWT Treasurer Sue Rogers, allowed eleven Iraqi trade unionists a fortnight's respite, the chance to meet British teacher trade unionists, and some training.

The delegation spent some time with the ATL and NUT, but most of their time was at the NASUWT residential training centre in Birmingham. They received a training course developed by NASUWT on the basis of existing Unison materials, and prepared a pamphlet aimed at potential members, explaining what their union does for teachers.

The group also got to see the one night of Shakespeare's Richard III that was spoken in Arabic at Stratford, and saw a Kidderminster Harriers home game – especially interesting for the delegation member who was a former Iraqi international!

Friendships were forged, fun was had, but the serious purpose of the visit was clear to all involved – building the Iraqi teacher union.

FBU delegation to Iraq

Six people, two fire appliances, three thousand miles in ten days. That's the start of a fantastic report of the latest Fire Brigades Union (FBU) visit to Iraqi Kurdistan.

Building on previous FBU visits, which delivered fire fighting equipment and protective clothing, Brian Joyce and his colleagues this time took two red fire engines across Europe and through a virtual civil war in Turkey to help their colleagues fight fires safely. "The Road 2 Iraq", the report of their incredible journey, told by Duncan Milligan, is on the FBU website at www.fbu.org.uk/newspress/ffmag/2007/0607/ffjun_07_iraq.pdf and it is well worth reading.

Oil unions and the oil law

The TUC helped organise an international solidarity campaign for the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions (IFOU) in June, when they took strike action, and in July when they were joined by the GFIW to protest against the Iraqi oil law in demonstrations across southern Iraq.

Sue Rogers and TUC International Secretary Owen Tudor travelled to Amman in May to meet IFOU leader Hassan Juma'a, along with Jim Catterson from the global union federation covering oil workers, ICEM. The discussions led to much closer relations between ICEM and the IFOU, and the TUC Iraq Solidarity Committee has agreed that the IFOU is a bona fide sectoral union.

The solidarity campaign in June with the IFOU strike saw the TUC condemning Iraqi government military intervention, and support for the demands of the IFOU, which ranged from calls for a restoration of bonus payments to oil workers and the granting of permanent employment to temporary workers through to demands for consultation over the Iraqi oil law.

Further attacks on trade unions

In March, the TUC condemned the abduction, torture and murder of Iraqi trade unionist Najim Abd-Jasem, General Secretary of the Mechanic Workers' Union.

Sue Rogers had met Najim, and said: "Najim was one of the most positive influences in the Iraqi trade union movement. He was very progressive, and very clear about where the movement needed to go"

The Iraqi trade union movement, the GFIW, has issued the following statement: "Najim A Jasem was kidnapped by militias on 27 March. His body was found on 30 March 2007. His body bears huge signs of torture. He was member of the underground Workers' Trade Union Movement (WDTUM) and fought against the regime of Saddam. He was dismissed from his job because of his trade union activities. He was reinstated after the fall of Saddam. He was one of the key founder of the new democratic IFTU, now the GFIW, and was elected the General Secretary of the Mechanics Workers' Union."

Then in April, the TUC expressed its sympathy and solidarity with the family and colleagues of Moaaid Hamid, Vice President of the General Federation of Iraqi Workers in the province of Nineveh, and his wife, both murdered on 9 April 2007, following clashes between forces of the Iraqi army and terrorist elements in the province.

The deceased was one of the first trade union leaders who contributed to the creation of the IFTU after the fall of the former dictator in 2003 and has played an active role in building a genuine democratic trade union movement despite all the difficult circumstances.

Transport workers are coming

Later this year, in November, a delegation of four Iraqi and two Kurdish transport union representatives will be visiting the UK to tell us about transport trade unionism in the ports, railways, haulage and aviation industries; to build links with similar unions in Britain; and to learn about how transport trade unionism works in our country.

Organised by the TUC and the GFIW's international representative Abdullah Muhsin, the visit will involve the International Transport Workers' Federation, ASLEF, RMT, the T&G section of Unite the Union and the TSSA. We hope to arrange visits to airports, railway depots and bus garages, and hold meetings for trade unionists in Yorkshire and the Humber and in the North West.

The visit will be funded by the TUC and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, with unions providing incidental assistance.

TUC Aid for Iraq Appeal

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 sectoral trade union organisations in Iraq. Members are drawn from seventeen TUC affiliated unions. The TUC continues to raise money for Iraqi trade unionists. This has been used for bringing Iraqi trade unionists to Britain and to the ITUC World Congress, supporting global union training projects and more. [Click](#) to give money online or find out more.

Solidarity leaflet

A striking leaflet is available for bulk purchase by unions for inclusion in journals, bulletins and mailings to members – see it at www.tuc.org.uk/extras/iraqleaflet.pdf Contact Owen at otudor@tuc.org.uk for copies.