

A Paper published by the Network of the FWCUI & UUI Representation Abroad

**Call by FWCUI for messages of solidarity to Worker's conference in Baghdad on 02.04.05 , Read More on P.2**

**About The Announcement Made By the Ministry Of Labor Regarding the Granting Of 130,000 Dinar as an Employment Insurance (EI)**

The nonstop struggle of UUI featured in demonstrations, sit-out campaigns and bringing the mass about the union demands represented by (descent jobs or EI), had a significant influence to enforce it in becoming a social demands even in the government offices that had no serious intention to get to the bottom of the society's calamity. These demands had become on the top of the list of the protesting movement, also it had been adopted by many political parties for their propaganda to get closer to the people. It has become an important part of the ministry of labor project and the government in general, after being very far from being considered in any government agenda

that have proven throughout the past two years they are secluded from the people concerns and crisis as well.

The approval of the ministry of labor to grant EI comes along this way in response to this struggle and a premium success of this movement. The authority's (US, Iraqi) who held negotiations with UUI leadership were denying the workers rights in obtaining EI.

Their media saved no efforts to make this denial deep rooted in people beliefs and the international public opinion as well, however the rock-solid stand of UUI and it's persistency of not slipping down toward the job

market sales that have been put into service by many employment agencies and some corrupted officers in the ministry's were proving day by day that the vision, the work of the UUI and the trust the mass have put in these kinds of works are the treasure of the UUI which will secure the continuity of the movement to end the most dangerous crisis in the society, that is the unemployment. Ultimately there is only one voice of unemployed people who chant: "NO TO FALSE PROMISES, YES TO DESCENT JOB OPPORTUNITIES!" For all unemployed people.

Steering Board of UUI  
10.March 2005

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## Declaration of the formation of Iraq Freedom Congress (IFC)

[www.ifcongress.org](http://www.ifcongress.org)

We, the undersigned, hereby announce the formation of the Iraq Freedom Congress.

**IFC** is a broad organisation committed to establishing a free, secular and non-ethnic government in Iraq – a government based on direct sovereignty of people of Iraq, and committed to guarantying their right to freely and consciously determine the system of governance in Iraq.

**IFC** is independent, democratic, non-religious and non-ethnic.

**IFC** has been formed to encounter the civil abyss in Iraq. Presently, the fabric of the civil society in Iraq has been torn apart under the US occupation and the domination of the Islamic, tribal and political gangsters. People of Iraq have been caught between the two poles of world terrorism of our time- the US state terrorism and the political Islam – forcing their mental and physical well-being to the verge of destruction.

**IFC** strives to establish the sovereignty of people of Iraq. The only way out of this abyss is to mobilise people to take the country, to whatever extent possible, out of the sphere of control of both the US occupiers and the Islamic currents, and establish their sovereignty.

**IFC** mobilises and organises peo-

ple within its local and district organisations to establish the control and sovereignty of the people at every level and to any extent possible. **IFC** safeguards this sovereignty against any aggression. The sovereignty of the people in this context is the implementation of the demands stated in the manifesto of **IFC** as legislations.

Individuals as well as organisations (including political parties, trade unions, people's councils, associations and institutions) who share the aims and objectives of **IFC** may join **IFC**, as stated in the **IFC**'s constitution, provided their programmes and policies do not breach that of **IFC**.

**IFC**'s operations and organisation are not restricted to Iraq. **IFC** endeavours to gain the support of all free-minded individuals, progressive organisations and institutions worldwide, whom share its aims.

**IFC** calls on all humanitarians to join its ranks.

**18 March 2005.**

### Signatories:

Ali Abas (Secretary of the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions of Basra), Professor Amer Fayad (Political Science University of Baghdad), Amjad Ghafoor (Secretary of the Congress for the Referendum for the Independence of Kurdistan), Arman Farakish (Chair of Iranian Civil Rights Committee), Asai Kenji (Chair of International Solidarity

Committee of Movement for Democratic Socialism – Japan), Aso Jabbar (Representative Abroad of Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions of Iraq), Falah Alwan (Secretary of the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions of Iraq), Faris Mahmood (Politburo Member of Worker-communist Party of Iraq), Fateh Sheikh (Chair of Worker-communist Party of Iran – Hekmatist Politburo), Hosein Haref (Secretary of Visual Artists Centre of Iraq), Houzan Mahmoud (Women's Movement Activist – Iraq), Javad Aslani (Iranian Civil Rights activist), Kazem Aniran (Chair of the Democratic Al-Ahwar of Iraq), Koorosh Modarresi (Leader of Worker-communist Party of Iran – Hekmatist), Mazloom Abas (Communist Activist), Professor Meqdam Abdul Jabbar (University of Basra), Moayed Ahmad (Politburo Member of Worker-communist Party of Iraq), Mohamad Hassan Saleh (Chair of Organization for Social Equality – Iraq), Nadia Mahmood (Founder and Co-ordinator of Middle East Centre for Women's Rights), Professor Namir Al-Khayat (University of Basra), Nasrin Jalali (Iranian Civil Right activist), Osama Ghaem (Literary Critique), Qasem Hadi (General Secretary of Union of Unemployed in Iraq), Rebwar Ahmad (Leader of Worker-communist Party of Iraq), Professor Riad Al-Asadi (Political Science Basra University), Salam Mansoor (Playwright and Artist), Sami Hassan (Deputy Secretary of Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions of Basra), Samir Adel (Chair of the Executive Office of Worker-communist Party of Iraq), Sato Kazuyoshi (President of Movement for Democratic Socialism – Japan), Shamal Ali (Politburo Member of Worker-communist Party of Iraq), Yanar Mohammad (Chair of Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq), Yasn Taha Yasen (Chair of Education Now Centre in Iraq), Dr Yusam Shakir

### **Call by FWCUI for messages of solidarity to Worker's conference in Baghdad**

#### **Dear comrades and supporters of the working class struggle in Iraq:**

Federation of workers councils and unions in Iraq-FWCUI is holding its second conference in Baghdad on **(2 April 2005)** in which we expect more than 250-300 workers delegates to take part in this conference.

This is a historical event for the workers in Iraq to have their own free and open conference to be held in Baghdad after three decades of Ba'athist oppression and two years of brutal occupation of Iraq as well as the ongoing terrorism by political Islamists.

So please send messages of solidarity in support of their efforts for getting more organised to defend their own rights and to be united against both US/UK occupation and political Islamists.

#### **In solidarity**

**Aso Jabbar and Houzan Mahmoud, FWCUI Abroad representation**

To send message of solidarity please email it to: [info@uuiraq.org](mailto:info@uuiraq.org), [asojabbar@yahoo.com](mailto:asojabbar@yahoo.com) & [houzan73@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:houzan73@yahoo.co.uk)

## **Wool industry workers demonstrate inside Industry Ministry**

**March 6.2005**

More than a hundred workers of the General Company of Wool Industry in Baghdad demonstrated inside the premises of the Industry Ministry. The demonstration came in response to a statement issued by a group of labour activists. The statement was distributed to all factories owned by the company: the Alfatah factory, the Wahid Ayar factory, the Tag mechanical factory, the factory of spare parts and the Alhuryiah factory.

The statement raised the following demands:

-Fund all companies belonging to the Industrial Ministry centrally rather than having each factory depend on self-funding.

-Protect national production by stopping imports of similar commodities and marketing products through the ministry.

-Upgrade all production lines to international standards

-Grant the employees of the company allotments of land

-Reinstate danger and distance allowances.

-Sack Baathist elements from the Ministry and companies it owns and operates

-Establish a special committee inside each company to fight against corruption

A delegation from the demonstrating

workers negotiated with Sami Alaarachi, Deputy Minister of Industry and Minerals. Alaarachi promised the workers he would study their demands.

This outraged the demonstrating workers who are exasperated that the managers of these companies are procrastinating in meeting their demands. They also believe managers are planning to buy the companies after they are privatised by the administration.

The statement called for a 2 –day demonstration inside the ministry building. Workers warned ministry officials that they will go in strike if their demands are not met.

**FWCUI , March 2005**

### **Workers of the Ur Company for Cables and Aluminium Protest**

Over last few months the protest of workers of the Ur Company for manufacturing of cables and aluminium has been growing against the corruption of the administration and the hard working laws imposed on them.

After the fall of the fascist Baath regime, it was supposed that all the antihuman and anti- workers laws adopted by this regime should be cancelled but this did not happen.

When the workers demanded that they establish their own union the administration told them they are not allowed to do that because the Saddamist resolution number 150 issued in 1987 by the Revolution Command Council of the Baath regime is still in force which consider all public sector workers public servants prohibited from establishing unions.

Therefore the workers of this company were told that they are public servants and they do not have the right to establish their own labour union otherwise they will violate articles of Public servants disciplinary laws which expose them to sever punishments.

The ministry and administration which still apply rules and resolutions of Baath regime will not be able to meet the demands of workers wishful to secure their livelihood and continue production in their company in which more than 4500 employee of all department can loss their jobs because of negligence in part of the administration and a plan to privatise the company. The clear lesson for workers in this company and in other working places is that same oppressive rules and resolutions are applied against them.

Therefore the only way to face the threats of the authority is to organize in their revolutionary organization which can bring the support of law to their demands and stand up to the illegitimate authority like what happened with administration of this company.

The only way to defend the class interests of workers is through establishment of your own council by electing directly your representative who could defend your fair demands through strengthening your unity and common struggle for a better situation for you and your families. FWCUI is a powerful tool in the direction of independency of labour unions and councils and powerful tool to defend your demands.

**FWCUI-Nasiriya Branch  
05.03.2005**

## **Voice of Iraqi Workers**

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## Statement of FWCUI Regarding the Recent Labor Activists Targeting Act

The appearance of the labor activists and leaders is considered one of the most important element of the civilized and liberation movement, and what characterizes the terrorists and anti human movements is its stand against the libertarian movements towards building a human society based on equality and modernism, and its stand and confrontation the labor activists and human rights activists.

They save no efforts to plot conspiracies to liquidate their opponents, which mean their bankruptcy and incapability to confront the mass movement that revolved around its leaders and activists.

Recently a group associated with Alsadir followers in Basra formed of Mohammed Alhamdany, Mohammed Ali Talib, Nezar Almuthaffar, Muayed Alugaily and Mohammed Fathel have planned to abduct a number of labor activists (Abu Watan, vice president of FWCUI in Basra) (Sami Hassan, secretary of FWCUI in Basra).

They first attempted seducing and bribing one of their relatives to plan for this operation and kill them eventually, which it is considered very common way to deal with their opponents.

The enemies of humanity and civilization were stunned and annoyed because of what the labor activists

actions such as leading workers' protests in Basra, formation of labor organizations, and leading the massive displaced people movement.

Meanwhile we call on all labor unions, human rights activists, and all libertarian powers to denounce these acts, we will continue our libertarian action that move people forward towards civilization and wipe out the criminal gangs, and open a horizon for a better world that vacant of crimes, exploitation, and human rights violation.

**FWCUI , Fe.b.02.2005**

### **The kidnapping of the Italian Journalist Mrs.Giuliana Sgrena of Il Manifesto by the criminal Islamic groups in Iraq is condemned**

Recently the gangs of political Islam in Iraq kidnapped Mrs.Giuliana Sgrena fellow journalists of the newspaper Il Manifesto and threaten that they will hack off her head if the Italian Troops are not withdrawn from Iraq.

This terrorist and anti-human action are part of a string of similar operations perpetrated by criminal Islamic groups under the rubric of fighting against the occupation of Iraq and forcing the occupying forces to withdraw from this country. It is common knowledge that under no circumstances hacking off people's heads by Islamists can be justified by referring to the crimes committed by the USA forces and allied forces against people in Iraq.

These acts have nothing in common with human sentiments and behav

our and have nothing to do with the fair demand of the masses in Iraq in necessity of the withdrawal of the occupying forces and with people's aspirations in freedom, equality and prosperity.

The terrorist and bloody practices of groups of political Islam in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Afghanistan and any other place these groups exist indicate with no doubt that the desire to bloodshed is a key part of their methodology and essences no matter how different are the excuses and justifications.

We are in trade Unions in Iraq strongly condemn and denounce the crimes of kidnapping foreigners and Journalists in Iraq and we demand that this hostage be immediately and unconditionally released. We express our solidarity and sympathy with the

family and friends of these hostages.

The freedom-loving people in Iraq are relentlessly struggling to liberate themselves from the wickedness of these Islamic groups.

They call on the civilized humanity to support and build solidarity with them in their struggle for freedom and to get rid of the down spiral of violence and terrorist conflict between the USA and political Islam.

**Aso Jabbar**

**Abroad Representation of FWCUI**

**15. February 2005**

**No To America  
No To Political Islam  
For a Secular State in Iraq**

**Appeal by the Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq (FWCUI) to all labour activists, trade unions and Student organisations worldwide to support the strike of Students of the University and schools of Basra**

Since 15th March 2005 the students of the University of Basra along with hundreds of students from secondary schools and a large part of freedom loving people have been demonstrating in Basra against the atrocities of the Islamic groups in the city. On 15th March a group of armed militia belonging to the infamous Al Sadr in Basra accompanied by a band of thugs linked to the Islamic Republic of Iran attacked a group of Student from the Engineering Faculty on an outing in one of the city's parks. The armed thugs launched a vicious attack against the students destroying all their belongings and ripping off the clothes of females students.

The attackers especially targeted female students singling out one Christian student. A male student rushing to help the Christian student was brutally shot dead by the armed gang. A day after this tragic incident thousands of students of the University of Basra declared an open end strike inside the University. The protester inside the University compound have been surrounded by the national guards, armed militia of Al Sadr and the police forces.

These demonstrations have now escalated to express not only the anger against the killing of one student but also to protest against the criminal activities of the so-called students linked with Islamic militia groups and their bullying activities to impose their policies on all aspect of life.

These demonstrations have proved that the Iraqi people in general and the students in particular are prepared to withstand the attempts of the dark forces to impose their reactionary policies on the society. These demonstrations highlighted the deep desire within the Iraqi society for civil life and against those wishing to impose their sectarian views on the entire population.

These forces of political Islam are



against the content of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; they are violating the right to strike and organisation as the recent opening of fire into the peaceful demonstration of unemployed people in Samawa and Kut has revealed.

The FWCUI declared in a press release on 18.March 2005 in Baghdad its full support and solidarity with the strike and demands of students in Basra and condemned strongly the atrocity of Al Sadr band against the students of Basra University .

-We in FWCUI representation abroad also strongly condemn this criminal action by the Al Sadr gangs against the students and we demand that all those involved in this atrocity should be brought to justice and all demands of students should be met.

-We demand the right of students to organise themselves in their own independent unions.

-We call on all freedom loving and equality seeking people in Iraq to gather around this progressive movement for freedom and to broaden the dimension of this movement against terrorist and right wing forces in Iraq.

-We condemn the lack of response and the passive position of the Iraqi authorities and we hold the occupying forces responsible for the deterioration of the security situation and actu-

al chaos in Iraq which allowed the armed militias to implement their reactionary policies on Iraqi people and to restrict their freedom and violate their basic rights.

-We stand side by side with the progressive students in Basra and fully support their demands for secularism, freedom and equality.

-We appeal on all labour activists and trade unions worldwide to support the striking students and their fair demands.

Victory to Basra student's protests  
Long live the movement for freedom and secularism in Iraqi

**Aso Jabbar  
Houzan Mahmoud,  
Representation  
abroad of FWCUI**

**19. March 2005**

**You can send you solidarity letters through our above given addresses.**

## Campaign to support the courageous demonstrations by students at Basra University in Iraq!

### **Join our campaign to strengthen the protest movement of Basra Students!**

Since March 15th there have been massive and courageous student demonstrations in the southern Iraqi city of Basra against the notorious Islamist gang led by Moqtada al-Sadr. The students anger and outrage are a direct response to the a brutal attack on a student outing from the Engineering faculty of Basra university, in which al-Sadr's thugs aided by Iranian agents started beating up the students and destroying their belongings, as well as ripping off the clothes of female students and singling out in particular one young Christian woman. The students fought back and, when a male student tried to defend his female friend, he was shot dead. The authorities, meanwhile, have turned a blind eye.

As a result, the students of this faculty have been joined by many other faculties and high schools and thousands of other Basra citizens on the streets. Despite the threats of al-Sadr and tribal groups in the environs of the city demanding that the students issue an apology for insulting Islam or face bombardment of their university, the protest is growing and has generated a lot of support among the people, particularly young people. Since the war, Basra has been dominated by Islamist groups backed by the Iranian regime. By demonstrating against al-Sadr's repression, the students are taking a lead in fighting back against the Islamists for freedom and democratic rights.

**We call on all student groups, workers, organizations and progressive campaigners to join our campaign to defend the student movement in Iraq and its fight for freedom, equality and secularism. The Basra students need international solidarity urgently to win this battle.**

- We demand separation of religion from the state and from education

-We demand unconditional freedom of speech, association and protest for students-and for all Iraqis.

-We want the Islamists criminals to be



brought to justice.

-We hold the British troops responsible ignoring the barbarisms of political Islamists in Basra.

- We demand that armed militias of political parties are banned from university campuses.

-We hold the "so called" Iraqi police responsible for ignoring this Islamist repression.

**We urge you to show solidarity add your name and the name of your organization to this appeal.**

### **Campaign Co-ordinators:**

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Daniel Randall (Alliance for Workers liberty) UK

Mick Duncan (No Sweat Campaign) UK  
Kalliroi Nicolis (Social Aid of Hellas) Greece

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Josh Robinson, Cambridge University People & Planet

Robin Sivapalan, Education Not for Sale candidate for NUS VP (Education)

Jodi Garrod, Women's Officer, SOAS student union

Sam Keyes, Education Officer, Leeds University Union

James Bull, Equal Opportunities Officer, Salford University student Union

Coral Harding, Women's Officer, University of East London student union

Will Wiles, National Union of Students steering committee

Faz Velmi, National Union of Students LGB committee

Laura Schwartz, Wadham College student union

Emma Norris, president-elect, Oxford University student union

Fran Robinson, Hackney Community College

Hugh Grant-Peterkin, Bristol University Maria Exall, Communication Workers' Union national executive

John Moloney, Public & Commercial Services Union national executive

Kate Ahrens, UNISON national executive

Peter Tatchell (Human right activist) UK  
Claire Bileby & Louise Gold (National Union of Student- women's committee) UK

UK  
OutRage (the gay human rights campaign!) UK

Raja bin Salama (Tunisian University) Tunisia

# Iraq's strike wave

Interview with Falah Alwan ,president of FWCUI during his visit to attend TUC Conference in London , <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/view/3779> , 26 Feb. 05

Falah Alwan, president of the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions of Iraq, spoke to Solidarity when he visited Britain in February. The interpreter was Houzan Mahmoud.

In the last two months there has been a huge wave of strikes: textile workers in Kut, power workers in Nasiriyah, aluminium products workers in Nasiriyah, chemical workers in Baghdad, leather workers in Baghdad, and agricultural workers.

There were different reasons for different strikes. Many were a response to high fuel price rises. That led to a wave of strikes to raise wages.

Others were in response to the threat of privatisation, especially with the aluminium products workers and the power workers. The workers became suspicious that the bosses were preparing privatisation and workers would be losing their jobs.

Some of these strikes were spontaneous - the textile workers, and a strike at the Pepsi factory in Baghdad. In the other cases the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions had a great role in the strikes.

We organised those strikes and led them so as not to be narrow - we wanted to widen this wave of strikes and try to unify the workers' demands.

Our aspiration was to make it into an Iraq-wide workers' struggle. The obstacles were the lack of communications and the problem of security. In some places the Islamists are powerful, and it is hard to organise there. You risk being killed, in some areas of Mosul, or Ramadi, or Basra.

It is possible to organise in the workplaces, but it is very difficult to organise on the streets because of the security situation. When the workers go on strike, they do not organise picket lines on the street. They go to the management offices in the factory, or they go home.

The agricultural workers who struck work in 300 state farms. They used to receive bonuses as a share of each year's profits. Now, after the fall of the old regime, the bonuses have been

abolished. They are paid only 80,000 dinars a month, the equivalent of \$60. That is why they struck.

It's hard to organise in all those state farms, but we managed to get to some of them in three areas. Mostly the workers were partially successful. The chemical workers won almost all their demands. The power workers and the leather workers won about half of what they demanded. The agricultural workers won some of their demands.

The textile workers in Kut were attacked and four workers were injured. The government responded on the basis of the Ba'th regime's labour laws which said that workers were "civil servants" and had no right to strike. The textile workers suffered a defeat.

One of the reasons for the strikes is that it is winter and the workers need oil to heat their houses. The high fuel prices also make transportation very expensive, and increase the price of food transported from one place to another.

With the leather workers the strike was to do with corruption in the administration of the factory. The workers used to get seasonal bonuses, but the management took them away.

The wave of strikes was mostly defensive. There is a huge level of unemployment, and workers face the threat of being sacked from their jobs if they raise wider demands, political demands. The workers have not really yet got to a stage where they can expand their demands and widen their horizons for a real working-class struggle in Iraq.

The issues of wages, unemployment, and the occupation all affect the workers. A section of workers has been driven into the reactionary camp of political Islam. And political Islam has been dividing the workers on the basis of religious sects and ethnic groupings. That affects the working class. There isn't really a sectarian division inside the workplaces. For example in the textile factory where I work there are Shia and Sunni, and



there is no problem. Some Shia activists want to bring religious issues into the factories, but the workers don't like it.

The Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions has branches in different cities - Baghdad, Basra, Nasiriyah, Kirkuk, and Mosul. In those cities we have committees in the workplaces. In some cities we are the major union federation. In Basra we have committees among the oil workers, in the power station, among the building workers, and in the transport sector. In Nasiriyah it's mainly the aluminium products workers.

In each workplace, the workers who are members of the Federation get together and elect their own committee. It's down to the workers themselves. The size of the committees varies, but it is usually about three to five per cent of the workers. For example, in one factory with 230 workers, 105 are members of the Federation, and the committee has seven people.

You can't really say that we organise secretly, but sometimes we have to use different ways of organising to fool the management. Many of the workplaces are still state-owned, and we use different names to organise the workers - "workers' committee", "workers' gathering", etc.

In Basra, for example, there is a branch of the Federation, with people elected to lead the branch. They supervise the work of the committees in the different workplaces, but those committees are elected by the workers in the workplace.

When the Federation had its conference in Basra, the workers in each workplace gathered to choose their representatives to go to the ..To P.8

## From P.7 Iraq's strike wave

conference, and then those representatives elected the local leadership. As for the workers who are members of the Federation but not members of the committees - the leadership of the branch will go to the workplaces to meet with the workers, not during working hours, because that is not allowed, but after working hours or during the lunch break. We don't have a bureaucratic structure. If any member of the Federation has a criticism or a complaint he can go directly to the Executive Committee to make his complaint or publish it in our newspaper.

Working hours vary. In some places they have been finishing work early so that workers can go home early, because of the security situation. Whether their pay gets cut because of that depends on the local management. There is no labour law to cover that.

There are problems caused by the old laws which prevent our union expanding. And some workers will not get unionised because they still think of unions as part of the state apparatus. Their trust needs to be gained. We have national Iraqi-wide unions in the Federation, for example for chemical workers, or for leather workers. The Executive and the main office is in Baghdad.

In some workplaces there are other unions organising, but we have our own committees. We have no problem about working with other unions as long as they don't create problems with the members, but, for example, we have problems with the IFTU [Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions] in the workplaces. The IFTU representatives bring official orders into the workplace and say that the Federation of Workers' Councils is not allowed, it is illegal, it has no right to organise. Sometimes they threaten our members that they will be sacked from their jobs.

The GFTU [the old Ba'hist union] has split now. In the south SCIRI [the Supreme Council of the Islamic

Revolution in Iraq] threw out the old Ba'histis and now they have an organisation called GFITU. At first they wanted to call it "Islamic union" or something like that.

Somebody got the GFITU leader drunk once when he was going to a meeting, so the workers don't trust him as an Islamic trade union leader. The rump GFTU is now dominated by the Sunni tribes and old Ba'histis. But both GFTU and GFITU have no real existence. They are just names. They have no organisation in the workplaces.

The teachers' union is independent. It does not belong to any federation. Every federation wants to bring them in, but they have not joined any. It's not very clear what the dominant or most influential political force is there.

Both the GFTU and the GFITU claim that the Southern Oil Company Union of Hassan Juma'a belongs to them, but I don't think so. The Federation has a committee among the oil workers in Basra as well as in Kirkuk, but there is no conflict with Hassan Juma'a. He does his work and we do our work. Our relation with them is positive.

As for the Kurdish union organisations, there are two of them, tied to PUK and KDP, so there is nothing we can share with them.

The major federation which is calling for strikes and mobilising workers is ours.

We don't have a student organisation. I don't think there are really any student unions in Iraq. They claim that there is a Communist Party-led student union, but when they started the Islamists threatened any female and male students sitting together or going to any places together. As regards the unemployed, one of our projects was to carry out a survey, at least in Baghdad, to find the real percentage of unemployed. But the Ministry of Labour rejected that project. They said that we are not an offi-

cial union, so we don't have permission to do that.

We have also campaigned for training for the unemployed, but the Ministry of Labour refused that too.

We used to organise protests outside the Ministry of Labour to demand unemployment benefit. Now, because of the security situation, it is very hard to organise street protests, but we have not stopped campaigning in terms of making complaints to the ministries and to the international organisations.

The new draft labour law has been presented by ILO [International Labour Office], and I have been appointed to attend discussions on it in Amman. It does include freedom of organisation, but about strikes and so on it is not very clear. The Federation has its own amendments to this draft, about a 35 hour week, two days' holiday per week for the workers, unemployment benefit, and provision for women who work in the home. But the Ministry of Labour is not taking these into account.

I think that maybe this law will be implemented after the privatisations go through.

The political demands we want to organise the workers around are an immediate end to the occupation, a secular state, freedom and equality, and so on. [But immediately would the workers' organisations be strong enough to defeat the Islamist militias?] No. The Islamic militias are well armed and it is not possible for the workers to confront them at the moment. If the workers refuse to join these militias, it will weaken them. But for the moment the situation is difficult.

Not many of the Federation's members are women workers, only about 10%. The security situation and the rise of political Islam make things difficult. There are many women workers in sectors like hospitals and banks, but it is very difficult to organise there.

# For a progressive Labour Law in Iraq

## For immediate Withdrawal of all Occupying forces from Iraq