

Joint Statement by Leaders of Iraq's Labor Movement and U.S. Labor Against the War

June 26, 2005

Washington DC, USA

At the invitation of U.S. Labor Against the War, a delegation of six Iraqi labor leaders representing three of that country's major labor organizations toured the United States between June 10 and June 26, 2005. They visited 25 cities, attended 45 events and 10 press conferences, met with thousands of working people, union leaders, members of Congress and other public officials, religious and community leaders, and antiwar and other social justice activists.

They have given voice to the people of Iraq whose voices have been largely unheard in this country. They brought a story of courage, hope, struggle and resistance on the part of Iraq's working people that has been absent from the mainstream U.S. media.

The following statement was drafted and signed at the conclusion of their visit. It represents the consensus view of all the Iraqis and their U.S. hosts:

We, the representatives of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), the Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq (FWCUI), the General Union of Oil Employees (GUOE), and U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW) issue this statement at the conclusion of an historic 25-city tour by leaders of the three Iraqi labor organizations in the United States.

We speak in the spirit of international solidarity and respect for labor rights around the world. We speak in the spirit of opposition to war and occupation and for the right of self-determination of nations and peoples.

On behalf of the Iraqi labor movement, we met and spoke directly to thousands of Americans, including workers, union, religious and political leaders, anti-war activists and ordinary citizens. All of us, both Iraqi and American, were deeply heartened at the solidarity expressed throughout the tour. We have seen with our eyes and felt with our hearts that the people of the United States do not want the war and occupation of Iraq to continue. We are strengthened in our understanding of the deep commitment of organized labor and workers in Iraq to a unified democratic, independent Iraq, with full equality between women and men in terms of rights and duties, and based on full respect for the human identity without discrimination on any basis.

The tour was an expression of the following key principles:

- ▶ ***The principal obstacle to peace, stability, and the reconstruction of Iraq is the occupation. The occupation is the problem, not the solution. Iraqi sovereignty and independence must be restored. The occupation must end in all its forms, including military bases and economic domination.*** The war was fought for oil and regional domination, in violation of international law, justified by lies and deception without consultation with the Iraqi people. The occupation has been a catastrophe for both our peoples.

In Iraq, it has destroyed homes and industry, national institutions and infrastructure – water, sanitation, electric power and health services. It has killed many thousands, and left millions homeless and unemployed. It has poisoned the people, their land and water with the toxic residue of the war.

In the United States, more than 1700 working families have suffered loss of loved ones and thousands more have been wounded, disabled or psychologically scarred in a war that serves no legitimate purpose. The cost of the war has led to slashing of social programs and public services. It has militarized our economy, undermined our own liberties and eroded our democratic rights.

We believe it is the best interest of both our peoples for the war and occupation to end and for the Iraqi people to determine for themselves their future and the kind and extent of international aid and cooperation that suits their needs and serves the interests of the Iraqi people.

- ▶ ***We strongly and unambiguously condemn terrorist attacks on civilians and targeting of trade union and other civil society leaders for intimidation, kidnapping, torture and assassination.*** The occupation is fuel on the fire of terrorism.
- ▶ ***The national wealth and resources of Iraq belong to the Iraqi people.*** We are united in our opposition to the imposition of privatization of the Iraqi economy by the occupation, the IMF, the World Bank, foreign powers and any force that takes away the right of the Iraqi people to determine their own economic future.

We call on nations across the globe to help Iraqis regain their economic capacity, including full reparations from the US and British governments to rebuild the war-ravaged country.

- ▶ ***We call for the cancellation of Saddam's massive foreign debt by the IMF and other international lenders without any conditions imposed upon the people of Iraq who suffered under the regime that was supported by these loans.*** The foreign debt of Iraq is the debt of a fallen dictatorship, not the debt incurred by the Iraqi people. Further, we call for the cancellation of reparations imposed as a result of wars waged by Saddam Hussein's regime, and call for the return of all Iraqi property and antiquities taken during the war and occupation."
- ▶ ***The bedrock of any democracy is a strong, free, democratic labor movement.*** We are united in our commitment to build strong, independent, democratic unions and to fight to improve the wages, working and living conditions of workers everywhere. We confront the same economic and corporate interests that have mounted a global assault on workers and labor rights. *We demand strong labor rights in Iraq at the same time that we strive to reverse the erosion of labor rights in the United States and elsewhere around the world where they are threatened.* We call for free and independent labor unions in Iraq based on internationally recognized ILO conventions guaranteeing the right to organize free of all government interference and including full equality for women workers. We support the direct participation of labor and workers' representatives in drafting the new labor code, in determining government policies affecting unions and workers' interests, and in drafting the new constitution. We condemn the continued enforcement of Saddam's decree number 150 issued in 1987 that abolished union rights for workers in the extensive Iraqi public sector and call for its immediate repeal.
- ▶ ***We commit ourselves to strengthening the bonds of solidarity and friendship between working people of our two countries and to increase communication and cooperation between our two labor movements.*** We look forward to delegations of Iraqis and Americans visiting each other's countries for mutual support, and to strengthen international understanding and solidarity in our common struggle for peace and establishment of a democratic civil society that respects human rights and freedom.

With the strength and solidarity of workers across the US, in Iraq and internationally, we are confident that we can build a just and democratic future for labor in Iraq, the US, and around the world.

Signed: June 26, 2005

Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq

Fahad Alwan

Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions

Adnan al Saffar

General Union of Oil Employees

US Labor Against the War

Joe S. Biden

Nancy Wolforth

Paul A. Massey



Hassan Jama'at