

Listen to the Iraqi labour movement

Help build the ‘Third Camp’

IRAQ HAS A growing, militant new labour movement – independent trade unions, unemployed movements, women’s organisations, and working-class political parties.

In oilfields, oil refineries, the railways, factories, and elsewhere, workers have organised trade unions and sometimes won victories by removing Ba’thist managers or improving wages.

Different strands in the Iraqi labour movement have sharp political differences between themselves. As well as the revolutionary Federation of Workers’ Councils and Unions of Iraq, there is the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, with a leadership whose politics are reformist – like the leaders of the trade unions here in Britain. There are other unions affiliated to no federation. All the genuine unions deserve our support as trade unions, whatever our disagreement with their leaders’ politics. And all the main groups agree on two points:

That Iraq must gain democratic self-rule, free of US/UK military occupation;

“The freedom-loving people of Iraq and the Worker-communist Party of Iraq struggle to separate their ranks from both poles of this conflict and to establish and consolidate a third camp as a humanist, liberationist and progressive alternative which stands up to both poles of reaction and terrorism”.

Worker-communist Party of Iraq

“The ‘resistance’ of the ethnocentric and Islamist groups is reactionary... ‘Occupation’ and ‘resistance’ are two poles of the same reactionary camp... The real basis for struggle against the USA’s new world order is the workers, the proletarians, and their programme, liberty and equality”.

Union of the Unemployed of Iraq

And that the various “resistance” militias, Islamist, Ba’thist, and Sunni-supremacist, are not a national liberation movement. They are reactionary groups, offering only an ugly future of

communal division and conflict within Iraq, and clerical or renewed Ba’thist dictatorship.

On the new Iraqi labour movement rest all hopes for a democratic, secular, and free Iraq. That free Iraq cannot possibly be won by way of the victory of the reactionary militias which will crush the labour movement.

Activists in the West must therefore combine all our condemnation of Bush and Blair – their war, their occupation, the way their military campaigns have recklessly killed so many civilians along the way, and, politically, only boosted those reactionary movements – with positive support for the positive alternative in Iraq: the labour movement.

“The so-called ‘Iraqi resistance’ referred to in the media represent neither a national liberation struggle (but rather an attempt to ‘balkanise’ Iraq) nor the possibility of rebuilding Iraqi civil society (except on the model of a mediaeval theocracy).

“The Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions welcomes the many expressions of support from the international labour movement for their task of rebuilding Iraq’s trade unions and believes that they are fundamental to establishing a free and democratic secular Iraq in which civil society can be rebuilt”.

Abdullah Muhsin, British representative of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions

What you can do:

- Support the TUC’s Iraq Aid appeal to provide funds for Iraq’s trade unions.
- Invite speakers from the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, the Union of the Unemployed of Iraq, and other Iraqi labour organisations to your trade union branch or student union.
- Support Iraq Union Solidarity, a grassroots network for solidarity with Iraq’s new labour movement. <http://www.iraquionsolidarity.org>.

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