

Voice of Iraqi Workers

Nr.6

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15.April 2004

Speech of Falah Alwan to the International Labour Delegation in Geneva

15.March 2004



Speech of Falah Alwan General Secretary of the Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq FWCUI to the delegation of the International Campaign against the Occupation and for Labour Rights in Iraq to the International Labour Organisation (ILO)

I have to repeat some of the comments which I have already mentioned in several meetings with delegations who had visited Baghdad and also mentioned in Amman December 2003.

This is due to an obvious reason; the

situations in Iraq have not been improved. The issues we discussed before still have their significance and its influence on the development of labour movement and the living and working conditions of workers.

First; and from the outset of our works in May 2003 and when as we were progressing to set up labour unions, practically there were no organizations for the workers and we can say that there were no machine working in the majority of factories, or companies and workshops as they haven been either destroyed by bombardment or plundering.

There were massive unemployment and it could not be compared with any past inflation, crises or the rate of unemployment in other parts of the world.

To P.2

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~~L o n g l i v e M a y 1 s t~~

From P.1

Speech of Falah Alwan

We have confronted a whole unemployed country. We established the union of unemployed on may 1st. 2003, and thousands joined this union. We had organized despite the insecure circumstances and explosions which threatened people all the times. We organised more than 13 demonstrations between 7 May to 14 September 2003 including a sit-in protest for more than 48 days in the burning summer of Baghdad and we did more than 13 sessions of negotiations with the American civil administration- CPA.

With the establishment of UUI, we had also founded "the Preparatory Committee to Establish the Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq" and the main purpose was to establish unions in those industries which had been not destroyed.

We confronted different obstacles while we were working on the ground;

1. There is a tradition among the workers which have been enforced by the Baath regime, which states that unions should be established on instructions of governmental authorities and the legitimacy of the unions should be guaranteed only by the authorities. The worker should vote to representatives of the government in the union because unions are part of the administrations and management and not representatives of workers.

2. Weakness of unionist traditions in Iraq because of the split between the workers and labour unions. The general federation of trade unions GFTU was not representing the workers in Iraq but a spy machinery of the Ba'ath regime against workers of Iraq. It was the tool of fascism inside the workers and unions it was an administration of the old regime and its leaders who were obliged to be high ranking members of Ba'ath party.

3. The continuation of the new authorities and Iraqi Governing Councils at the same resolutions and regulations of Ba'ath regime which declare clearly the prohibition of organizing labour unions in public sectors and governmental administrations and regard the

workers as a civil servant in 1987 (Resolution turning Workers into Civil Servants). In addition to the implementation of the laws of civil service for those workers who are working in sectors which should be supplied by labour law and healthy labour conditions.

4. The insecurity in Iraq and total anarchy helped some of the forces to rule and control areas in Iraq and to implement their own policies there and misusing the ethnic and tribal identities and divisions in Iraq to draw fractions of workers behind their policies and to put difficulties to the establishment of unions which represents the whole workers in this land

5. The reappearance of Ba'athist traditions pushed women and their position in society to the back. This has led to indisposition of women workers despite the threats of kidnapping and killing which confronted her on almost daily bases .It is useful to mention that women are more than 60% of the Iraqi population and this means that more than half of this society is unemployed.

6. The policy of the IGC which has recognized a group as representatives of Labour unions in Iraq and abroad.

The groups which have been recognised by IGC as representatives of Labour unions have been established in mid May 2003. Meanwhile none of the Iraqi factories was working. This means that this groups have not been elected by the workers and it was only a deal between different parties which have no connection to the interests of workers in Iraq .It is an attempt of some fractions which have policies that align with the US policies in Iraq and tries to pull in the labour movement behind IGC and to make it a dependent movement on the US and IGC policies.

The structure of the IGC based on ethnic and religious considerations is an obstacle in the face of building strong and wide-boarded labour unions which would not recognise people according to their nailing or religious identities. The structure of IGC is part of the attempts to divide the Iraqi society. Workers are in urgent need to build strong and broad

based organisations which are not based on the language or religion As an example, the Kurdish parties in the IGC forced a union against the will of workers which represents their interests and tried to prevent the elected unions by workers in the Northern Oil Company and confronted it with its yellows unions. They threatened workers forcibly specially those who are speaking Kurdish and obliged them to join their parties and insisted that Kirkuk is a Kurdish city, and that the Arab workers there have no right to practise union activities. The example of such situations is numerous and made the political situation and the status of workers in Iraq very complicated. Religious and ethnic groups have implemented difficult situation which would be hard to solve without microscopic investigations to bring up the implications of their policies. These are obscure groups without obvious and clear properties. The USA wants to implement its new world order and its military dominance against the world and to make from Iraq an emerging pad of its strategy. The situation of workers in Iraq is apart of the international scenario and workers must have power to establish their unions and elect their own representatives according to their own willpower without any intervention or recommendation of any political or religious parties whether in the power or outside of it.

One of the obstacle facing our work is to establish strong unions is the financial and technical difficulties and problems. For example, we are in urgent need of a newspaper which covers the whole country and the whole of the labour movement in Iraq. Because of our financial incapability we published only limited publication and limited number of distributions. Workers themselves have participated in editing, reporting and sending of photos and articles to it on a voluntary basis. Regardless of that, the goals of this newspaper could not be met. Workers in Iraq needs a broadcasting station like TV and radio station and needs daily press releases on the situation in Iraq and on strikes of workers and all these works need a good financial capacity and the activity of our federation is still restricted due to these difficulties. **To P. 3**

From P. 2 ... Speech of Falah Alwan general secretary of FWCUI to Int.Labour delegation

But the alternative to confront these catastrophic situation and dark scenario is by the:

-Withdrawal of the US and its allied forces as the major source of insecurity. Their presence in Iraq is always a pretext of the terrorist groups to carry out their terrorist operations inside the cities and among civilians. The UN should be demanded to send international peace keeping forces until the Iraqi people be able to elect their own government.

-Establishment of a secular non -religious and non -ethnic state in Iraq in order to prevent the ethnic and religious forces to segregate Iraqi people according to their ethnicity, religion, sect and race.

-Issuing of modern labour law which would be up to date and catching up with the most advanced technological and progressive developments in the world, and represents the whole interests of workers in Iraq

-Full equality between women and men.

-Full and unconditional political freedom, freedom of belief, expression, criticism, and freedom to organize and protest for all citizens.

-Direct intervention of the people of Iraq to decide their political future and the form of the future government in Iraq

-Freedom of the establishment of unions and workers organisation without intervention of the governmental authorities and over ground decisions

-Fighting massive unemployment in Iraq and demand jobs or unemployment insurance

These above mentioned points are general outlines of our alternative to prevent further division and desperation of Iraqi society and further destruction of its structure and are forward steps toward the formation of a civil and modern society in Iraq.

Falah Alwan ,General Secretary of FWCUI , March 2004

www.uuiraq.org

Iraqi Workers and Women foil U.S Agenda

Freedom Socialist Newspaper Vol. 25 ,Nr. 1 April-May 2004

<http://www.socialism.com/fsarticles/vol25no1/iraq.html>

By Monica Hill

When newscasters announce that Iraqis rallying by the thousands against the U.S. are Muslim or pro-Saddam "terrorists," don't believe it. Those demonstrators are probably workers protesting unpaid wages and lousy working conditions under the occupation. Or possibly they are angry women denouncing attempts to shove them back to the Dark Ages. Quiet as it's kept, the mounting resistance to U.S. occupiers includes a class and gender eruption that expresses itself not in suicide bombs but in militant strikes and rallies and calls for international solidarity. As it

gathers momentum, the profiteers who had hoped for smooth sailing are anxiously adjusting their agendas.

The explosive woman question.

In mid-January, Iraqi women — from leftists and organizers for the unemployed to judges and cabinet ministers — came out swinging against a sudden decree by the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). Resolution 137 replaced Iraq's 1959 civil code on family laws, the most advanced in the Middle East, with reli-

gious laws (Sharia). These would revive polygamy and child marriages and abolish women's rights to alimony, divorce, child custody, education, and inheritance.

The new code would "allow anyone who calls himself a cleric to open an Islamic court in his house and decide about who can marry and divorce and have rights," said retired judge Zakia Ismael Hakki. "We have to stop it." And so far, they have done just that, with demonstrations and protest meetings involving 80 different women's organizations in several cities.

To P. 4

Support the Union of Unemployed in Iraq - UUI.

www.uuiraq.org

From P. 3 **Iraqi Workers and Women foil U.S Agenda**

Yanar Mohammed, founder of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), a militantly anti-theocracy left group, got a death threat for her outspoken opposition to Resolution 137. She accused the U.S. of planning to hand over power to the fundamentalists, both Shia and Sunni, who dominate the IGC and are friendly to U.S. interests. Members of these two sects also dominate the streets; for the first time in decades, women cannot walk outside without fear of being assaulted by religious vigilantes.

Seeking international support, OWFI got hundreds of signatures on a protest letter to the U.S. occupying authority, and organized a solidarity demonstration in New York City on March 3. Forty-five members of the House of Representatives sent a letter to the White House urging action on behalf of Iraqi women.

The storm of protest persuaded the White House and occupation overseer Paul Bremer to promise to veto Resolution 137. This victory provides time to organize further against the Islamist reactionaries. This is a pivotal struggle, and not merely because women today make up 65 percent of the Iraqi population.

Before the decade of debilitating embargo followed by the U.S. invasion, women made up 40 percent of the Iraqi workforce, with rights and skills they have not forgotten. Now, they represent a large proportion of the unemployed, who are in the forefront of organizing independent unions, strikes, and street demonstrations. Women's fight for freedom is an indispensable spur to and component of the revival of Iraq as a whole.

Workers up in arms, literally.

The U.S. plan was to privatize the economy quickly. "Our strategic goal in the months ahead," intoned Bremer in June 2003, "will have the effect of reallocating people and resources

from state enterprises to more productive private firms." The occupiers announced a list of the first Iraqi state enterprises to be sold off.

Also in June, they revived a 1987 Baathist ban on public-employee unions and strikes and issued a decree making it illegal to "incite to violence and disorder." In July came an order against freedom of assembly.

In September, the IGC passed a law that economists dubbed "A Capitalist Dream." Among other things, it permits foreign corporations to own 100 percent of a company or industry in Iraq and to export 100 percent of the profits.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the pot of gold. Legions of Iraqi workers and jobless detonated.

The Union of the Unemployed, led by the Worker-communist Party of Iraq, mobilized tens of thousands of the unemployed to protest against nearly 70 percent joblessness.

Independent unions and the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions are organizing militantly against everything from perilous conditions and the importing of foreign workers to starvation wages of \$60 a month with no extra pay for overtime or dangerous work.

Numerous strikes broke out in Basra during August and September. Transportation workers started a government-wide walkout demanding gas, water and electricity services that mushroomed to include everyone. Another strike called for sacking Baathist managers. Three general strikes took place in the area over low wages and late paychecks.

At a brick factory 30 miles east of Baghdad, workers marched into the boss's office and demanded a wage increase and a union contract. He told them they could easily be replaced. They went home and came back with machine guns and rifles to keep scabs from crossing their picket line. The owner backed down quickly.

In February, Southern Oil Company

workers won a three-month battle for higher wages by threatening to join the armed resistance.

Solidarity builds.

Iraqi workers are up against neo-Baathists, religious reactionaries, and domestic capitalists, all of whom are collaborating with a powerful imperialist occupier. But the Iraqi working class is large and strong, with a proud history of secularism and ethnic tolerance. And on its side are workers and antiwar activists around the world.

U.S. rank-and-file unionists have sent delegates to Iraq who publicize news of intrepid struggles there. But more is needed: a warning from internationalist unionists to beware of those U.S. labor bureaucrats who accept the goal of U.S. business — a privatized Iraq. In November 2003, for example, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney issued a statement that ignored privatization and its devastating effects, but pledged that the AFL-CIO "stands ready to participate in the Iraq reconstruction effort," which he calls "as important an investment in American security as the budget to support our military."

What demands can the U.S. labor movement make to give real support to Iraqis?

- **Stop privatization!**
- **For workers' right to organize unions and strike.**
- **For Iraqi workers' and neighborhood councils, organized on a national level, to call for a national assembly charged with coordinating elections and writing a permanent constitution.**
- **No to religious control of the Iraqi state. For a secular society with equal rights for women.**
- **For freedom of the press, association, assembly, speech and religion. Self-determination for national minorities.**
- **For war reparations to Iraq paid by U.S. war profiteers.**
- **U.S. out of Iraq!**

**We Condemn Targeting Civilians by the Coalitions Forces and Islamic Groups
Yes To Freedom And Security
Killing Civilians Is a Crime Against Humanity**

Regarding the Attempts of Militias to Turn Workers' Factories in Nasiriyah into Military Bastions

A group of armed gangs belong to Mukkada Al Sadr have attempted to evacuate factories and workshops in order to turn them into bastions and military positions to fight the American and Italian forces inside Nasiriyah city. Both Aluminum and Sanitary Supplies factory workers in Nasiriyah have refused to evacuate their work places despite many threats made to their lives; declining from turning them into battle fields which would mean either destroying them or open them for robbery and looting. They insisted on remaining inside their factories in order to defend them.

This brave and firm position of workers in Nasiriyah is a practice that workers would endeavor to generalize in all areas facing military confrontation between the US troops and the armed militias confronting them, despite all pretexts and motivations.

The civilians will make sure to block the armed militias from turning the peaceful residential areas into centers for attacking the US, British, and other forces, and also to prevent the occupying forces from remaining inside the cities and residential areas.

We completely reject the turning of workers' and civilians' work and living places into reactionary war-fronts between the two poles of terrorism in Iraq; the US and their allies from one side, and the terrorists in the armed militias, well known for their enmity to Iraqi people's interests, from the other. We will confront the attempts of these militias aiming at disturbing the security and stability of the population, and curtail their attempts to push society into civil war and further destruction and pain.

The Federation of Workers' Council and Unions in Iraq – FWCUI , Baghdad - April 8, 2004

The Employees of Mechanical Industries in al-Askandaria Demand Higher Wages

On March 22, 2004, hundreds of employees of the General Company for Mechanical Industries in al-Askandaria demonstrated and demand that the current wage scale had to be adjusted. They also requested that the management of the company to be sacked due to widespread corruptions. The workers stated that some senior Baathists occupied high administrative posts in the company and that the management appointed people accused of stealing the company's property immediately after the US war.

In addition, the employees are demanding full time jobs because the company has several new contracts worth millions of dollars. However, the management has

been refusing to provide workers regular full-time works. Media reports have previously indicated that current embezzlement is behind the management's refusal. It is widely believed that the most senior managers in this company are heavily involved in embezzlement for they have collected huge wealth in a very short time.

The General Company for Mechanical Industries is a place where thousands of families make their living.

The Iraqi Local Police and Coalition Forces Fire Warning Shoots to Disperse Protesting Unemployed People in the Iraq

On March 24,2004, the local police and coalition forces fired warning shoots to disperse protesting unemployed people demanding jobs in the city of Najaf- 160 km south of the Iraqi capital- Baghdad.

Few hundreds unemployed people gathered in front of the Coalition Civil Administration's office in the centre of

Najaf asking for jobs. Outraged by the Coalition Civil Administration's indifference, the protesters pelted the building with stones.

Soon huge force of the coalition troops and local police rushed to the scene and started shooting in air to disperse the protesters. Unlike many other protests, no protesters lost their live in this incident.

It is worth mentioning that unemployment in Iraq has reached crisis level after the US war and its occupation of Iraq. This is in particular true for the Iraqi Southern cities where unemployment exceeds 70% and there have been no real changes during last 12 months despite many promises by the coalition forces to provide jobs. During last several months there have been huge protests in the many southern cities like Kut, Omara, and Basra, many of these protests where brutally cracked down by the coalition forces and local police.

Local Police Kill an Unemployed Person in Basra

Eyewitnesses reported that at least one person was killed during a demonstration of unemployed people in the center of Basra on April 1, 2004.

Hassan Jasim, 26-year old, was killed when local police opened fire at hundreds protesters demanding jobs.

Karim Ali, a participant in this demonstration, said "we decided to demonstrate in front of the office of traffic police to ask for jobs since no one paid any attention to us."

Full Freedom of Worker Organization & Strike is Precondition for Building a Free Society.

No T America, No To Political Islam , Yes To a Secular State
Down With War of Terrorists in Iraq No To USA Terrorism, No To Islamic Terrorism

On the demand to try Saddam Hussein and other Baathist leaders

March 2004

Putting Saddam and other Baath's leaders on trial is the demand of the masses of people in Iraq. At the same time, struggle to achieve this demand is one of the fields of struggle to erase the consequences of suppression, and oppression by the former regime and to heal the wounds it left on the lives of people in Iraq and the region. Realizing this demand will help the people to struggle for freedom and their welfare. Therefore, we struggle to achieve this demand and we present here an outline of principles and procedures for the trial of Saddam and other Baath leaders:

First: The demand to try Saddam Hussein and other Baath leaders by the Iraqi masses is a just and legitimate demand because these were leaders of a savage regime of the Arab nationalist movement, which imposed its oppressive and bloody rule on the people in Iraq for 35 years with an iron fist. The people in Iraq, various Iraqi organizations and political parties and international organizations have hundreds of documents that incriminate Saddam Hussein and his regime for the following crimes:

-Brutal oppression of the working class and the denial of its basic rights, blood baths against the communist, labour and left movement, and mass executions of labour and communist leaders.

-Bloody oppression against the Iraqi masses and violation of their basic rights and civil and political freedoms.

-Tampering with the society's resources and stealing them.

-Imposing the worst kinds of sexual discrimination and the most reactionary traditions and laws on women in Iraq. Denying their most basic rights, raping thousands of women and launching campaigns of mass murder against women including beheading them.

-Committing the most savage crimes against children, by forcing them to join the army and various military forces, sending them to its war frontlines, torturing and executing them, perpetrating mass killings against them. Depriving millions of children from their basic daily rights and requirements of a decent life.

-Committing genocide, using chemical weapons and perpetrating mass executions. Using chemicals in Halabje and the notorious Anfal operation are two examples of genocide.

-Participating in reactionary wars and launching a suppressive war against the masses in Kurdistan and in the south of Iraq. These wars had resulted in the killing of hundreds of thousands of human beings and the destruction of tens of thousands of living and working places.

-Adopting fascist policies such as ethnic cleansing, Arabization, Baathisation and forcefully displacing thousands of people.

Second: the crimes of Saddam Hussein and his regime, which resulted in victimizing millions of Iraqis over

thirty-five years, are the crimes of a political regime that belongs to Arab nationalist movement. Thus, the objective behind their trial is to politically try Arab nationalist movement and its fascist regimes in order to unearth the truth and unmask the crimes, practices and the dark and criminal essence of this movement to the masses in Iraq, the region and the world. A public and just trial for Saddam Hussein and Baathist leaders would give the masses the opportunity to reach the truth of Pan-Arab tendency and its ethnocentric regimes.

Third: Saddam Hussein and his regime, as an Arab nationalist regime through practicing absurd chauvinism in Iraq have established a bloody history for themselves. This regime has caused deep and serious wounds in human society and in particular the society of Iraq and the Middle East. The eradication of the consequences left by this regime, and the final closure of the Arab nationalist movement's dossier are crucial to keep the people in Iraq from nationalistic and tribal conflicts and to cure the wounds sustained by the society.

Fourth: the Arab nationalist movement seeks to define Saddam and the Baath leaders to the millions in Arab countries as heroes who "defended the Arab land, waters, and wealth against the occupiers, struggled against the partition of Arab homeland and protected Arabic sanctities". P.7

On January 28, 2004, the Governing Council -IGC passed its resolution number 16, which appoints an organization as the official representative of the Iraqi workers inside the country and internationally

The decision Nr. 16 should be abolished !

Join our campaign for unconditional right of Organisations and Strike for Workers in Iraq.

From P.6 On the demand to try saddam Hussein and other Baathist leaders

If the truth behind this deception is not revealed, Saddam Hussein and the Baath's story will remain for upcoming years a tool in the hands of Arab ethnocentric regimes and movements to intensify fascism and escalate ethnocentric hatred and conflicts and will continue this deception ceaselessly.

Fifth: neither the USA nor the Governing Council enjoys the right and authority to try Saddam and Baath leaders. Apart from the absence of legality, neither represents the people in Iraq on this issue, not to mention that they are partners in crimes committed against the people in Iraq. They are accused of helping Saddam in his crimes against the Iraqi masses. The USA had helped this regime for a long time, launched two bloody wars that resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, and imposed 13-years of sanctions, which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands and the collapse of civil life. The USA destroyed the infrastructure of society and thus deprived the masses of the most basic necessities of life and caused untold tragedies. In the end it brought about the current unfolding dark scenario, which has thrown Iraqi society into a state of chaos, uncertainty and continuous turmoil and upheaval.

As for the Governing Council, in addition to the majority of its members' collaboration with the Baathist regime and their role in strengthening its fascist authority, it has for 13 years supported US anti-human policies of waging war, bombardment, manslaughter and the imposition of sanctions. If Saddam's trial is to be conducted by the USA and the Governing Council, it means the truth of the regime's crimes and those who helped it will never be revealed. Thus, the trial will be conducted in a way,

which contradicts what the people of Iraq want.

Sixth: the trial of Saddam and the Baath leaders should be just and public and according to humanist standards by an international court. These are the preconditions for revealing the truth, healing the wounds and exposing the fascist essence of the Baathist regime and leaders depicted by the Arab nationalist movement as heroes. In this regard the following must be observed.

1.The trial should be public and attended by representatives of the people in Iraq and representatives of Iraqi parties, workers' councils and unions, women's organizations and intellectuals as plaintiffs against Saddam Hussein and other Baath leaders who should submit their evidence on the crimes committed. The mass media has the right to cover the trial and to communicate its proceedings publicly.

2.The trial should be conducted according to the most advanced and humanist contemporary standards. The right and the requirements for the defendant to defence must be secured. Any kind of mental or physical pressure must be prohibited. A sound atmosphere must be ensured during the trial, which must be based on evidence and justice. In addition to the possibility that such a trial will lay out humanist standards for future trials, it will reveal this regime's fascist essence and the truth about its leaders, which will deny the Arab nationalist movement any opportunity to falsify the truth and knit heroic stories about Saddam and the Baath leaders, and be conducted in an atmosphere which can satisfy the masses in Iraq, the region and worldwide.

3.The trial should be conducted in an international court outside Iraq. Since Iraq is under occupation and under

constant terrorist attacks and there are no legitimate government, courts, constitution and civic laws, under the current situation the trial of Saddam Hussein and the Baathist leaders can not be conducted in Iraq based because of the objections detailed above. Conducting this trial in Iraq would result in hiding the truth from the masses and would obstruct the participation of representatives of masses in its proceedings. It would give legitimacy to the US occupation and the Governing Council, which has been formed under the auspices of the USA and against the will of the people in Iraq.

We struggle to organize the masses around the demand of trying Saddam Hussein and the Baathist leaders on the bases of this lawsuit. We reaffirm that the independent and united struggle of the masses in Iraq is the only way to achieve such a demand in a humane way that best matches the interest of the masses in Iraq. We call upon all the freedom-loving masses in Iraq, parties and mass organizations to support this lawsuit and unite their struggles for putting on trial Saddam Hussein and the Baathist leaders in order to unearth the true reactionary essence of the Pan-Arab nationalist movement.

**-Union of Unemployed in Iraq
-Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq
-Worker-communist Party of Iraq**

-Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq

-Organization to Defend Secularism in Iraq

-Women's Rights Center in Middle East

-Center in Defense of Children's rights in Iraq

Tens of Bank Cashiers released

The Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq issued a statement on April 2,2004 to announce that the OWFI and WPIraq have succeed to free about 50 bank cashiers arrested in early February 2004. They were arrested after the authority held them responsible for the missing money and the flow of counterfeit notes into the banks during the period of replacing the Iraqi currency. The OWFI and WPIraq insisted that top officials rather than rank- and – file workers were responsible for the missing money. Under immense pressure from the OWFI and WPIraq the cashiers were release and the whole issue was investigate.

News of the Campaign "Against the occupation and for Labor Rights in Iraq"

"Against ethnic divisions, the union must gather the workers based on their economic identity."

ILC INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER NO. 72

March 30, 2004

A dossier of weekly information published by the International Liaison Committee of Workers and Peoples (March 30, 2004)

In the tradition of welcome and solidarity of the Swiss workers' movement in regard to international workers' organizations, a meeting took place on March 15, 2004 between the delegation of the campaign "Against the occupation and for labor rights in Iraq" and those of the Steelworkers and Watchmakers union (FTMH) of Geneva, in the offices of this federation. We publish excerpts from the discussion below.

Khadje El Husaini, trade unionist from Lebanon: "I represent the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions. I would like to thank the ILC and the American union coalition USLAW for permitting this meeting and this discussion. The unification of the workers' movement against the ethnic divisions is very important. In view of the dangerous period that we are living today, we must declare our solidarity against the tyrannical current that confronts Iraqi workers. If one speaks of working conditions, living conditions, if one speaks of unemployment, these are the points on which workers rely regardless of their origin. The role of their union is to gather the workers based only on their economic identity.

Falah Alwan: "The principal bulwark against ethnic division is the existence of union organizations that unite workers whatever their language or religion. There will not be a division if the workers are free to constitute organizations of their choice.

At present, regardless of their ethnic origin, what is important for the workers is the condition to see change, to be able to live according to their needs, to defend their working and living conditions. The fact that there is unemployment; these are the points that unite workers regardless of their origin. It is the role of the union to gather workers based on their economic identity.

Kansas City Gathering Looks At Worker Rights At Home, International Labor Solidarity

Kansas City Gathering Looks At Worker Rights At Home, International Labor Solidarity

Campaign For Labor Rights

KC Labor Newsletter
Week In Review, March 22, 2004

[http://www.kclabor.org/kansas_ city_gathering.htm](http://www.kclabor.org/kansas_city_gathering.htm)

The Labor Party's **Campaign for Worker Rights**, flowing from that paper, brings the Bill of Rights to the workplace. The rights to organize, bargain, strike, and act in solidarity with one another are inalienable rights grounded in the First and Thirteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. These rights are widely recognized as human rights by numerous international conventions. Without these basic rights, working people are deprived of the capacity to defend and promote their interests in the face of overwhelming corporate and government power.

The Fight For Worker Rights In Occupied Iraq

This session was opened by Ed Bruno who is also a leader of **US Labor Against the War**. Since the beginning of the occupation support for Iraqi worker rights has been the central campaign of USLAW. Bruno

had been scheduled to be part of a second USLAW delegation to visit Iraq but this trip has been put on hold because of the recent targeting of U.S. civilians.

An important part of the solidarity campaign is raising material support for new, independent Iraqi trade unions. Both unions and individuals are urged to send donations to the **USLAW Iraqi Solidarity Fund**.

Bruno introduced a special guest speaker, **Amjad Al-Jawhary**.

Amjad Al-Jawhary was born in Baghdad in 1966. He earned a bachelor's degree in biology at Mosul University in 1989. Because of his political views, and organizing among sewing workers, he was blacklisted by the regime and was unable to find employment in any state enterprise. With his family, he fled to Turkey in 1995 and was active among Iraqi refugees there. Since 1996 he has lived in Toronto, Canada where he has spoken widely on Iraqi issues and has been active in the anti-sanctions and anti-war movements.

Speaking on behalf of the the Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq, and the Union of the Unemployed of Iraq (UUI), he reviewed the history of the Iraqi labor movement until it was outlawed by Saddam Hussein. Today the occupation authority continues to enforce those laws.

As Amjad later in the day told the *Kansas City Star*, "The people paying the price for this war are the workers — over there and over here," said Al-Jawhary, who now lives in Canada. "We don't need war and you don't need war. There's been enough killing on both sides."

World Still Says No To War

When the conference adjourned most participants lined up behind the banners of KC Labor Against the War, and the KC Labor Party, and marched a few blocks to a World Says No To War rally. Amjad was the wrap-up speaker for that event addressing several hundred antiwar activists.