

Iraq's new trade unions

The ***Iraqi Workers' Federation*** (formerly the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions) is the largest trade union federation in Iraq. It was founded in March 2003 and its general secretary is Subhi Al Mashadani. The IWF organises 12 industrial unions representing workers in the oil and gas industries, the railways, transport and communications, food, textiles, leather, construction, teaching, electrical, printing and mechanical, public service and agricultural unions. It is the only union federation recognised by the new government, and supports UN proposals for ending the occupation. In Britain the IWF representative Abdullah Muhsin can be contacted on 07976 846868, abdullahmuhsin@iraqitradeunions.org, or via www.iraqitradeunions.org

The ***Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq*** (FWCUI) is an independent union federation. It was founded in December 2003 and its president is Falah Alwan. The FWCUI includes the ***Union of the Unemployed of Iraq*** (UUI), whose general secretary is Qasim Hadi – various studies have found that the unemployment rate in Iraq is well over 50%. It also has close links with the ***Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq***. It has members in the textile, metal, chemical, oil leather and agricultural industries who have been involved in recent strikes. It held conferences in Basra in November 2004, and in Baghdad in April 2005, that called for an immediate end to the occupation. In Britain the FWCUI representative Houzan Mahmoud can be contacted on 07956 883001, houzan73@yahoo.co.uk, or via www.uuiiraq.org

The ***Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions*** (IFOU) is an independent federation of oil and allied workers' unions, mostly based in southern Iraq. Its major member union was founded in April 2003. Its general secretary is Hassan Juma'a Awad. IFOU unions have already won battles to improve the wage scale imposed by the occupation authority – in January 2004 Southern Oil Company workers won an increase in the basic wage rate from 69,000 dinar per month to 102,000. Oil workers have also staged strikes and cut off the oil supply in their fight to ensure that more oil revenue goes back to Iraq's south, and to secure the payment of unpaid wages. They have also held a conference against privatisation. IFOU can be contacted by e-mail at hssnawad@yahoo.com or via www.basraoilunion.org

The ***Kurdish trade unions*** are linked to the two main political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan, the KDP and the PUK. The unions are in the process of merging their organisations. There are 12 sectoral organisations including the Kurdish Teachers Association, Kurdish Chemists' Association and the Kurdish Agricultural Engineers' Association. The Kurdish unions do not have representatives in Britain.

There are other independent trade unions and committees in Iraq. The FBU firefighters' union has contact with Iraqi ***firefighters***. The NUJ journalists' union has links with Iraqi ***journalists*** through its international organisation, the IFJ. The ***Iraqi Teachers' Union*** sent a representative to the conference of the British teachers' union NASUWT in April 2005, and can be contacted via the IWF.

Many UK unions are linked with global union federations that have established solidarity with Iraqi unions. The ***TUC Aid Iraq Appeal*** is raising money to help Iraqi trade unionists rebuild a free and independent trade union movement. Donations to the TUC appeal can be made online at www.tuc.org.uk/iraqappeal

www.iraqunionsolidarity.org