



Support the Tehran busworkers!

Since April 2005, Tehran busworkers have combatted mass jailings and sackings to insist on their right to form a union and claim unpaid wages. Most recently, bus workers protesting the laying off of hundreds of their colleagues for taking part in a strike on 28th January were handed a list of 46 confirmed dismissals. The list includes five members of the union's executive who are still in prison.

The state-owned company (Sherkat e Vahed) said the orders came from the Islamic regime's intelligence authorities. Earlier, workers had been told that a "disciplinary committee" has been set up which is working its way through a long list of workers to be expelled for their participation in the strike. Around 1,000 detained bus workers, recently released following worldwide protests, have been locked out of their workplaces. They have been without pay for the past six weeks.

Six members of the bus workers' union executive (the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs United Bus Company) and two labour activists who had expressed support for the bus strike are still being held in the high security Evin Prison without being formally charged and without access to a lawyer. They include union leader Mansoor Ossanlou, who has been in prison since 22 December 2005 and suffers from a heart condition and an eye injury sustained in an attack last May on a meeting of the union.

On 13 March around 120 workers once again gathered outside various government offices and the bus company headquarters in protest at the continued barring of around 1,000 bus workers from work. The workers were told that a decision will be made by Saturday 18 March.

While opposing US military attacks on Iran, we should also support Iran's workers against the vile regime of the Islamic Republic. Letters of protest may be sent to Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir.

Thanks for information to the International Labour Solidarity Committee of the Worker-communist Party of Iran, who have set up a Relief Fund for the locked-out busworkers: Account no: 49606174 at NatWest, Enfield Branch, sort code: 600738.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has also backed the busworkers: <http://tinyurl.com/l5awk>.

Why no Iraqi union speakers on the platform?

Iraq has a brave, lively, anti-sectarian labour movement. It embodies the best hope for the peoples of Iraq to win freedom, democracy, and peace. Harassed and attacked both by the occupying forces and the current Shia-Islamist/ Kurdish government, and by the Sunni-supremacist "resistance", it urgently needs international support.

Surely representatives of that labour movement should have first place on a Stop The War platform? Yet the only recognition to the Iraqi labour movement granted by the organisers of today's demonstration is that a statement of support from the secretary of the Iraqi Federation of Oil

Unions will be read out. Although the two other major Iraqi union federations, the Iraqi Workers' Federation and the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions of Iraq, have representatives in Britain, they will not get to speak.

Nor will the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq, the main women's-rights movement in Iraq, get to speak.

At the same time the demonstration organisers highlight their solidarity with a demonstration called in Baghdad by the Shia-Islamist Mahdi Army, Muqtada al-Sadr's movement. In March 2005 Basra University students struck for over a week against the Sadr movement, after it attacked a student picnic and shot dead a male student who tried to defend female students harassed by the Sadrists because they were not "Islamic" enough.

We should instead be making solidarity with Iraq's workers and women.

Iraqi unions form joint committee

Iraq's three main union federations, the Iraqi Workers' Federation, the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions of Iraq, and the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions, met in Amman in January and formed a joint committee to press their common demands.

They will oppose privatisation; fuel price rises; and cuts in food rations. They demand that the huge international debts built up by Saddam Hussein should be cancelled, instead of the Iraqi people being forced to pay them. They call for the repeal of Decree 875 - introduced by the Shia-Islamist/Kurdish coalition government last August, giving it the power to seize all union funds - and the introduction of democratic labour and social-security laws.

Press your MP to sign the Early Day Motion

So far 59 MPs have signed the Early Day Motion put down by Dave Anderson MP to oppose Iraq's anti-union Decree 875. Check out the list of

signatures at <http://tinyurl.com/z7mer>. If your MP hasn't signed, write asking him or her to do so. If you are a member of a Labour-affiliated union, demand that your union presses its sponsored MPs to support Iraq's unions and back the motion.

Meeting Face to Face: the Iraq-US Labor Solidarity Tour

Iraq Union Solidarity will be organising showings of a new DVD from the USA in which you can hear the representatives of Iraq's working class speak for themselves.

In June 2005 six Iraqi trade union leaders, from all three major federations, toured the United States. Hosted by U.S. Labor Against the War, they visited 25 cities and spoke to several thousand unionists, peace activists, and others.

The documentary captures the energy and emotions of the tour while expressing the important substantive message Iraqi workers want to convey to all Americans: end the occupation; oppose the privatisation of Iraqi national resources; and support the right of all Iraqi workers to organise free and independent trade unions.



Behind all the press and TV reports of new governments and constitutions, and bloodshed by both US/UK troops and Al Qaeda types, there is another story in Iraq.

It is that of the new Iraqi labour movement, re-establishing itself in difficult circumstances. Iraqi workers have set up trade unions, evicted old Ba'thist bosses and new American contractors, won pay raises, campaigned to save jobs, demanded jobs or benefits for the unemployed, and resisted privatisation. The diverse and lively Iraqi labour movement can be a key force in winning a free, democratic, and secular Iraq.

Iraq Union Solidarity is a grassroots network of trade unionists and activists set up to support, fundraise and co-ordinate efforts to support the Iraqi trade union movement, in line with TUC policy passed at the 2004 Congress.

We work to spread information, to assist links at every level between the British and Iraqi labour movements, to help arrange speakers and meetings, and to raise money for the hard-pressed new independent trade union organisations in Iraq.

- **Come to our monthly organising meetings in London (next meeting Tuesday 11 April, 7.30pm, Marchmont St Community Centre, 62 Marchmont St, near Russell Square Tube).**
- **Join our information e-list (send a blank email to ius-subscribe@unionlists.org.uk)**
- **Check out our website, www.iraquionsolidarity.org**
- **Invite a speaker**
- **Affiliate.** Our affiliation fee is only £5 for a year, just to cover the costs of our meetings and mailings. We encourage organisations to contribute more, and will forward any amount sent to us above the basic £5 to the TUC Iraq Appeal in order to assist trade unionists in Iraq. (Cheques payable to "Iraq Union Solidarity", please).

Contact us! Convenor: Pauline Bradley. Email: iraquionsolidarity@yahoo.com. Phone: 07979 421475. Postal address: c/o Pauline Bradley, Unison, 14A Willoughby Road, London N8 0HR.