



Closing statement from the Conference on the Right to Freedom of Association in Iraq (CRFAI)

Baghdad 24-25 May, 2016

Inspired by a solid labor determination and high hopes for a better future, the Iraqi trade union federations (GFITU, FWCUI, GFWUI, KUWU, IFOU) conducted an extensive conference on trade union rights and freedoms. The conference was attended by union activists who came from all Iraqi governorates; representing unions in a variety of different sectors. As well, this conference that was held in Baghdad on May 24 and 25, 2016 was attended by official delegations from MoLSA, both the Parliamentarian committees of labor and social affairs committee and civil society organizations, Solidarity Center, IndustriALL, Civil Society organizations, and a group of legal experts in labor issues.

The conference participants discussed in the 2 conference days topics related to labor rights and freedoms in Iraq, they presented several action plans that had been already developed by their participating labor federations on those issues in particular, and also expressed their visions and recommendations on Iraq's economic and social challenges, and their impact that reflects on labor and trade union rights. Three main discussion sessions were conducted among the conference activities, in which the following topics were tackled: the future of unions following the passage of the freedom of association law, the role of union freedoms in promoting public freedoms in general, and achieving social harmony and conciliation, and the role of working women in unions following the passage of the freedom of association law. Also the conference sessions included a presentation on International labor standards that address trade union rights and freedoms, and the commitments of Iraq towards those conventions. Lastly, participants listened to the final proposals for the trade union rights and freedoms program, which were prepared by Iraqi labor federation representatives who participated in this conference.

Below are the resolutions and recommendations that were adopted by this conference:

1. It is necessary that the government abides by and complies with Arab and International labor conventions and other international treaties that are related to trade union rights and freedoms, in terms of legislation and application, in a way that guarantees the right of workers and civil servants in establishing their own organizations, and managing them in complete freedom.
2. Demanding that the legislating authorities ratify convention number 87 of 1948 as quickly as possible and put its provisions into effect immediately, and adopt it as a basis for relevant legislations, as well to apply the conventions that have already been ratified by Iraq, and to ratify other ILO conventions that are pending; those which will contribute to improving labor conditions and protect the rights of workers and civil servants.

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3. Confirming respect for union freedoms as an essential part of human rights and that protecting these rights are one of the most important factors that ensure social peace.
 4. The participants agreed that the unity of the working class and the union movement in Iraq is considered a fundamental pillar to restoring its strength and strengthening its position in agreement with the principles of trade union rights and freedoms.
 5. Forming a joint labor team from labor unions and federations to promote the unity of positions of Iraqi labor and their union organizations on fundamental mutual issues, to ensure broad representation in front of various national and international bodies.
 6. To demand that MoLSA involves all trade union federations in labor related activities, in and outside the country, and also invites them to participate in tripartite committees, according to the principles of social dialogue.
 7. Not allowing the variety of perspectives and different visions and means of action that trade union federations adopt to be a reason for serious conflicts and illegitimate competition between them, but instead to advance the collaboration and joint discussions to reach mutual agreement on fundamental labor issues in Iraq.
 8. To deny the interference of government officials and politicians in trade unions' internal affairs, and to confront certain political agendas that attempt to divide and weaken the labor movement. Also to confirm the independence of trade union federations and their right to establish their organizations without any sort of external domination or guardianship.
 9. To enhance labor actions and their trade unions' positions against racial, ethnic and religious conflicts, and to declare that the labor movement is capable of eliminating all those disputes and establish instead the values of equal citizenship and national unity.
 10. Working together to make the new labor law in full effect by MoLSA through its special inspection committees, and to activate the role of the legal system, such as labor courts, to stop and prevent labor rights violations, and resolve conflicts and disputes between the partners of production.
 11. Urge the government to cover the informal sector with legal protections and prohibit arbitrariness that workers in this sector suffer from, and also include them in enjoying social benefits.



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12. To expedite passage of the pension and social security law in accordance with international labor standards and that guarantees equality with other workers in Iraqi state institutions, guaranteeing the same rights and interests.
 13. To emphasize the right of workers and civil servants in the public sector to enjoy union organizing, as was guaranteed by ILO and ALO conventions, and to empower their existing organizations, as well as cancelling laws that contradict with the right to organize and freedom of association. Also to provide legal protections for the union activities of workers and employees at state owned enterprises and in the public sector; they should no longer be punished because of their union affiliation or labor activities.
 14. To raise the minimum wage and pension rates for workers and civil servants both in accordance with the cost of living to ensure a decent life for themselves and their families.
 15. To guarantee full gender equality, and to activate the legislations that prohibit sexual harassment and exploitation, and to enable women to take leadership positions in their unions and federations.
 16. To promote the collaboration and solidarity with regional and international labor federations, and organize joint activities that contribute to supporting the Iraqi trade union movement and building their capacity.
 17. The Iraqi trade union federations extend their rejection of the privatization of public services and the re-structuring of public sector enterprises, they demand from the government to develop the necessary plans to activate the closed factories, and to maintain dialogue with trade unions and economy specialists to improve and protect national products.
 18. Trade unions and federations demand that the government guarantees that they will not cut wages of workers nor fire them from their jobs, but secure paying their salaries on time, including those who work for self-financed state companies. Additionally, to issue fixed term contracts for temporary workers and employees with state owned enterprises and in the public sector, and guarantee that they enjoy social protections and benefits.
 19. Iraqi trade union federations demand that the government involves them in all discussions and decision making that is related to economic and social policies in the country, because those have a direct impact on the lives of workers and their families. They urge the government to develop plans that prevent any negative effects from austerity policies that the government is currently enforcing on hard working workers. There is a serious need for real economic reforms that save Iraq

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from needing to borrow loans from IFIs, which are associated with conditions and policies that restructure Iraq's economy.

20. To make this conference a tradition that is repeated on an annual basis, aiming to unite the views and opinions of trade union federations on the common challenges and issues that Iraqi trade unions suffer from.

Finally, the conference attendants announce their support together with all Iraqi workers to stand side by side with Iraq's armed forces, the Popular Mobilization Forces (Hashd al sha'bi), Peshmarga (Kurdish armed forces), the tribes' patriotic fighters and all other units that are heroically battling ISIS terrorist gangs. They are confident that the complete and final victory in defeating those criminals will be accomplished soon. They also greatly appreciate and value the role of the Solidarity Center and the Iraqi Social Forum in organizing this conference.

Participants thank the young volunteers who participated in the preparations for this event, as well as thank all experts, organizations, and media groups who attended and worked hard on covering the highlights of the conference activities.

Baghdad 25th May, 2016

**Iraqi Federation of Oil
Unions**



**General Federation of
Workers Unions in Iraq**



**The Federation of
Workers Council &
Unions in Iraq**



**Kurdistan United
Workers Unions**



**General Federation
of Iraq Trade
Unions**

