



Int Dept/KT/gp

DATE
2013-04-03

OUR REFERENCE
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His Excellency Mr. Nouri Al Maliki
Prime Minister of Iraq
Baghdad
Iraq

Harassment of oil union leader

Dear Prime Minister,

The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), representing 1.5 million members, is deeply concerned about the continuing violations of union rights and freedoms in Iraq, in particular in the oil sector.

Most recently, Hassan Juma'a Awad, Chairman of the Federation of Oil Unions, has been charged with organising an entirely legitimate strike at the Southern Oil Company. However, Hassan Juma Awad declares that these charges are false and that he is being accused as part of a government effort to slander and undermine him and the unions. We also understand that eight Southern Oil Company workers have been summoned to the General Inspector's Office in the Ministry of Oil in order for the Ministry to investigate their role in recent demonstrations in Basra, where workers engaged in peaceful protest.

The Iraqi constitution guarantees freedom of association and peaceful demonstrations, and the Iraqi Government is, by virtue of its membership of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) bound to uphold freedom of association and free collective bargaining. Yet for years, we have had to complain that the Ministry of Oil has repeatedly harassed union activists, including transferring them to distant work sites, reprimanding them, filing criminal complaints against them and imposing heavy fines and penalties on them.

The Ministry has banned union organising at the companies affiliated to it, which is also a violation of ILO convention 98, which Iraq has ratified. These attacks on freedom of association and the right to organise and bargain collectively maintain the repressive laws and policies of Saddam Hussein's regime. Decree 150 of 1987, which bans union organising in the public sector, is clear evidence of that, as is the continued enforcement of

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The Swedish Trade Union Confederation

labour law number 71 and the union organising law number 52 of 1987, both of which are in contradiction with ILO conventions and international labour standards, though Iraq has ratified sixty-six international labour conventions.

The Iraqi government should cease forthwith with the continued repression of freedom of association and worker rights, based on laws issued under a dictatorship. We further believe that the government you represent should immediately cancel the orders issued by the Ministry of Oil to union activists, including all transfer orders, reprimands and arbitrary penalties against union activists. Charges against Hassan Juma'a Awad, and any other workers who have had retaliatory legal action taken against them, should be dropped.

The LO urges you to expedite the passage of a new, ILO-compliant labour law, allowing all workers the right to join unions and bargain collectively.

We look forward to your positive response on these urgent and important matters.

Sincerely,

THE SWEDISH TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (LO)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson', written in a cursive style.

Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson
President