



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

H. E. Dr. Thamer Jaafar Al Zubaidi,
Minister of Civil Society of the
Republic of Iraq

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Government attacks on the leadership of the Iraqi Teachers Union

Your Excellency,

I write on behalf of Education International (EI) – the Global Union Federation of education unions representing over 30 million members in 171 countries and territories, to express EI's concern about the anti-union and anti-democratic measures taken against the Iraqi Teachers' Union (ITU), and to urgently request that the fundamental trade union rights of the ITU are guaranteed.

EI has been informed by the President of ITU of attempts by Government officials to take over the leadership of the teacher organization prior to the trade union elections. A so-called 'Election Committee' composed of representatives of the Iraqi government has pressurized the current leaders of the teacher organization to hand over the keys to the union premises, financial assets and all the unions records (financial accounts and membership lists). The current elected leaders of the teacher organization have been threatened with years of imprisonment if they do not obey.

Such interferences are blatant violations of international human rights law, including conventions of the International Labour Organisation on trade union rights. Harassment of ITU leaders and attempts to take control over the organization are de facto denying the rights of teachers to elect and join the trade union organization of their choice. The rights of workers' organizations can only be exercised in a climate that is free from violence, pressure or threats of any kind against the leaders and members of these organizations, and it is for governments to ensure that this principle is respected.

EI, its member organizations worldwide, and other regional and international trade union organizations are committed to see trade union rights and civil liberties flourish for teachers and all workers in Iraq. EI and others will continue to monitor the situation very closely and will take action under the international supervisory mechanisms if the Government does not take immediate steps to guarantee full trade union rights to the teachers in Iraq.

Education International urges you and other relevant authorities to immediately stop confiscating the records and assets of the ITU and to withdraw the threats against trade union leaders. In addition, your Government should take steps to secure an environment conducive to free independent trade unionism in Iraq.

Sincerely yours,

Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary

Copies sent to:

- Ministry of Labour
- Ministry of Education
- Embassy of Iraq in Brussels – Fax: 02.374.76.15 - ambassade.irak@skynet.be
- ITUC – ETUC
- ILO
- UNESCO Iraq Office -