

# Voice of Iraqi Workers

Nr.2

A Paper published by the Union of Unemployed in Iraq - Representative Abroad -UUI  
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## Press Konference of Qasim Hadi , president of the Union of Unemployed in Iraq -UUI and Adil Salih ,one of the activist of UUI after their release from the US-prisons in Bgahdad .

### A Report about this Press Conference :

Today, 3.12.2003, in Baghdad, a press conference was held by Union of Unemployed in Iraq -UUI and Worker Communist Party of Iraq which have been attended by the different news agencies and some families of the American Soldiers who have been killed in Iraq. In this press conference Kasim Hadi and Adil salih explained how the treatment of US administration toward them was and how they have been arrested and US administration tried to manufacture false accusations and incorrect charges against them. They told the Medias how they have been detained outside for more than 4 hours with their hands tightened form the back in a very cold weather and their imprisonment had lasted for 5 days without any official accusation and after that the US forces apologised to them and released them from the Prison and they said that their arrest was a wrong incidence.

After that, Kasim and Adil answered different questions from the participants including several question from the family members of the American

soldiers who have been killed in Iraq after the occupation and war on Iraq. Many news agencies attended this conference including the TV channel Al-Iraqiya which published a live report about this conference, correspondents of Al-Hayat newspaper in Baghdad and some of the international Medias like CNN, a TV channel from Greece and others.

**We would like here to thank all the trade unions, political parties, freedom loving individuals, political figures and human rights activists who sent protest letters to US Administration against the arresting of Kasim Hadi and Adil Salih and expressed their solidarity with us and we congratulate all freedom loving people in Iraq and all over the world, and specially the members of the UUI for the release of both UUI activists.**

**Union of the Unemployed in Iraq-UUI  
Aso Jabbar , Representative Abroad  
5. December 2003**

**The Conference of the Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq – WCUI has Successfully Concluded in Baghdad** *read more on P. 6*

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**~~Iraqi People is the Victim of the War of the Terrorists.~~**

# Boycott the Ba'athist Yellow Unions.

Appeal from the Union of Unemployed in Iraq- UUI Representative Abroad

5.12.2003

We would like to inform you that there are some Baath activists trying to show themselves as representative of workers of Iraq and they claimed that they are from the General Federation of Trade Unions in Iraq specially we realized that people like **Karim Hamza**, or **Jammel Aljabouri** who claimed that he is the Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions in Iraq which is commonly known in Iraq as the **Yellow Union** or the **Ba'athist union**, are trying to contact different trade unions and organizations abroad to achieve their support for their so called trade union which has been denounced by the working class in Iraq. These people were actually criminals and suppressers of the workers in Iraq along 30 years of the rule of Baath party. They were Baathists with high positions in the Baath party. Every worker in Iraq knows the history and background of these people who have nothing to do with representation of workers and they were figures of the brutality of the old fascist regime in Iraq.

During the rule of Ba'ath regime there were no independent unions and the trade unions were controlled by the regime and they were a tool at

the hands of the Ba'ath regime to suppress workers and exploit them in many different inhumane ways. Countless numbers workers met their death as a result of the actions of the so-called trade unionists.

Also these unions implemented the Ba'ath regime's policy of changing the identity of Workers to "Officer" in an attempt to denounce the existence of working class in Iraq and to oppose the worker demands as illegal demands and to suppress the workers protests with steel and fire. They tried brutally to deprive the workers in Iraq from their basic requirements and demands and to implement the military laws and anti-worker policies in industries and factories of Iraq. The history of the Ba'athist trade unions is as gloomy and bloody as the history of the Ba'ath regime.

Since the fall down of the Ba'athist regime, the workers managed to establish their independent trade unions and to organize their protests. The establishment of the Union of Unemployed, the council of the Oil Workers Company in the North of Iraq and also the preparatory committee for establishment of workers councils and trade unions which has its first conference in Baghdad on 8/12/2003

to establish the real workers unions and the successive strikes and protests of industrial workers in last few months are a few instances of the strength of the in progress workers movement in Iraq. All these workers organizations have been established with direct contribution of workers themselves to advocate and endorse their rights, welfare and freedom.

We call upon all workers, trade unions and leftist parties across the world to boycott these yellow unions (the General Federation of Trade Unions in Iraq) and any kind of Ba'athist initiatives by any one who is attempting to destroy the struggle of workers and their true Trade Unions and workers organizations in Iraq. We call upon all of you to support the radical workers movement in Iraq through giving your support to the Union of Unemployed and preparatory committee for the establishment of workers councils and the independent and real trade unions in Iraq.

**No to Ba'athist Criminals  
No to Yellow Unions**

**Union of the  
Unemployed in Iraq -UUI  
Aso Jabbar, Representative  
abroad**

## Solidarity Message with Antiwar Coalition in Japan

Dear Friends in Antiwar Coalition

As representative Abroad of the Network of the Union of Unemployed in Iraq abroad-UUI, I would like to send you our solidarity message with your Demonstration against the military Intervention of Japan in Iraq tomorrow on 6.12.2003. Iraq War was one of the steps of USA to establish its New World Order and to implement its hegemony and Dominance over the World. On the other hand the political Islamic groups and Arabic national forces specially the remnant of the fascist Baath Regime in Iraq have changed and transferred Iraq to a battle field of their terrorist actions. Terrorism, insecurity and violence against the human rights and women rights are the prominent features and part of the lives of the people of Iraq. People of Iraq became the victims of the war of terrorists both state terrorism of USA and Islamic terrorism. Last week 2 Japanese Diplomats have been killed in Iraq. They were also victims as the people of Iraq of this dirty war. The invasion of Iraq brought terrorism not only to people of Iraq but also on the global scale. Democracies, freedom of Iraqi People from the fascist government of Iraq ...ect were only war propaganda. We are in Iraq as you in Japan stood against the brutality of Saddam Hussein, stood against the war of USA against People of Iraq, stood against the Embargo and stood against the political Islam. We were very glad when we received your solidarity message for the release of Kasim Hadi and Adil Salih, the trade unionist leaders in the US prisons in Baghdad and now we are sending our solidarity message to you. We hope that you will be successful to prevent intervention and military involvement of the Japan-Government in Iraq because the result of all these Conflicts are only more blood sheds of the millions of innocent people in the war of Terrorists.

Long live antiwar Movement

Long live freedom and equality.

Down with the war of terrorists

**Aso Jabbar, Representative abroad of the Union of Unemployed in Iraq**

5.12

# **Ba'athist Yellow Unions are not allowed to represent Trade Unions in Iraq!**

by Houzan Mahmoud

On 30/11/2003, a rally was organized by the so-called **Workers' Revolutionary Party** to mark the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their organ "News Line". They had invited two Ba'athist trade unionists, Karim Hamza, and Jammel Aljabouri Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions in Iraq (these trade unions existed during the previous regime). I went along to this meeting to distribute publications of the Union of the Unemployed in Iraq, a post war union established by the unemployed workers to demand their rights. But what I came across was disgusting and outrageous. The generous welcome and applaud offered to these Iraqi Ba'athist trade unionists were unbelievable. Members of the WRP told me and my friend Dashti Jamal who is representing the UUI in London to go out and not to distribute our literature. I tried, in case they were not aware of the affiliation of those Iraqi trade unionists and that they were supporting Ba'athist unions and this was clearly an act against the workers in Iraq.

The funny thing was that they were exchanging niceties and international greetings and solidarity in the name of workers in Iraq. My attempts to inform them of the true nature of the trade union that their guests were representing were in vain. The "General federation Of Trade Unions in Iraq" is commonly known in Iraq as the **Yellow Union** and it was a Ba'athist union.

During the Ba'ath regime there were no independent unions and the trade unions at that time were controlled by the regime and they were a tool at the hands of the Ba'ath regime to suppress workers and exploit them in many different inhumane ways. These Unions played a crucial role in sending thousands of workers to the war fronts during the Iran – Iraq war. These union leaders took pride in reporting to the security forces those

refusing to go to the fronts. Countless numbers workers met their death as a result of the actions of the so-called trade unionists.

Also these unions implemented the Ba'ath regime's policy of changing the word Worker to "Officer" in an attempt to eliminate workers demands and say that there is no such thing as working class in Iraq, and that every one who works is an "officer" not a worker.

The history of the Ba'athist trade unions is as grim and bloody as the history of the Ba'ath regime. They have only played a destructive role in the lives of workers in Iraq. These unions were working, and promoting the anti workers policies of Ba'ath party in which workers had no rights of association, strikes, and freedom of speech and expression.

Since the collapse of the Ba'athist regime the genuine and real workers movement has expressed its manifestation in various ways. The workers in Iraq have managed to present a radical agenda of change and to carry forward the demands of workers. The establishment of the Union of Unemployed, the workers councils, and the union of the Oil Workers Company in the North of the country and also the preparatory committee for establishment of workers councils and trade unions is having its first conference in Baghdad on 8/12/2003 to establish the real workers unions are a few example of the extend of the current workers movement in Iraq. All these workers organizations have been set up with direct participation of workers themselves to advocate and promote their rights, welfare and freedom.

The Union of the Unemployed in Iraq have carried out many mass strikes since its establishment in (1/05/2003) to demand jobs, security and welfare for the unemployed workers in Iraq, and this union has more than 130,000

members across Iraq. Its leaders are workers who have been resisting the Ba'ath regime, and they have endured intimidation and arrests by the coalition forces for defending workers, and the unemployed people of Iraq. These are the real people and representatives of workers in Iraq.

The Workers' Revolutionary Party is trying to help to restore the rein of the Ba'ath party in the name of workers solidarity. The working class in Iraq has been the silent victim of the regime and have suffered untold hardships at the hands of the Ba'ath regime and its so-called trade unions.

Promoting this kind of people who have the blood of Iraqi workers on their hands is a disgrace. Supporting and providing a platform for these people is an affront to the Iraqi working class and is tantamount to collaborating in the atrocities committed against the workers in Iraq.

I call upon all workers, trade unions and leftist parties in the UK and across the world to boycott these yellow unions and any kind of Ba'athist initiatives by any one who is trying to damage the struggle of workers and their true Trade Unions and workers organisations in Iraq. I call upon all of you to support the radical workers, women and youth movement in Iraq through giving your support to the Union of Unemployed, Organisation of Women's Freedom, and preparatory committee for the establishment of workers councils and trade unions in Iraq.

**No to Ba'athist Criminals**

**Houzan Mahmoud**

1.12

Political activist and women's rights activist from Iraq

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**Jobs or US\$100 a month as unemployment insurance for every unemployed person**



## Appeal to international labour organisations and trade unions :

# Iraqi workers need your support

Iraqi workers find themselves in exceptionally difficult circumstances. On top of the war, bombing and carnage, the massive unemployment and months of unpaid wages have brought them much hardship and distress. Their protests for jobs, unemployment benefit and basic rights have come under attack by the US forces. After 35 years of repression under the Baathist regime, they are faced with new repression and new repressors. The US administration and local reactionaries are united in their opposition to workers' rights. In July a peaceful sit-in of the unemployed was attacked by the US military forces who arrested Qasim Hadi, the President of the Union of the Unemployed in Iraq (UUI), as well as 54 other demonstrators. Only after strong protest by international labour organisations were they forced to release the detainees. Also, in a raid recently on the headquarters of the union, US soldiers arrested the union's president and another leading member of the union, but were forced to release them under international pressure. UUI has also been the target of attack by Islamic groups, who find the growth of a strong labour movement inimical to their reactionary plans for Iraqi society. They

have used physical violence and death threats to undermine the struggle of the unemployed. In July a march of the jobless in the city of Naseriye was attacked by Islamists with stones. Iraqi workers need the support of international labour organisations in their fight for their rights. This support is crucial not only in helping them win their justified demands, but also in order to help avert the nightmare scenarios in the making by both the bullying US administration and political Islam. A stronger Iraqi working class can save Iraqi society from the hands of the likes of Bush, Blair, Bin Laden and Saddam. A stronger labour movement in Iraq can ensure that Iraqi society follows a better, fairer and more humane path. As shown by the history of the labour movement, any society's degree of respect for justice, fairness and freedom is in direct proportion to the social weight and presence of its working class. Today, a strong, assertive and organised working class in Iraq is the absolute need and hope of Iraqi society. The Union of the Unemployed in Iraq is one of the first attempts of Iraqi workers to organise themselves to defend their rights and livelihood. With over 100,000 members, it is a strong voice

for welfare and freedom in Iraq today. For the past six months, it has been waging a vigorous fight for jobs and unemployment benefit for the millions of Iraqis made unemployed as a result of the war. It deserves the wholehearted support of the international labour movement.

The USA is the natural ally of the upstart bourgeois and reactionaries in Iraq. Their representatives have already taken their seats on the hand-picked Iraqi Governing Council - an oppressive and reactionary assembly of religious mafia, political charlatans, despots and misogynists, ethnic and tribal chiefs and criminal bandits.

In their fight for their rights, Iraqi workers have their own natural allies: international labour organisations, socialists, civil rights activists and the rest of civilised humanity. Your solidarity is crucial for saving Iraqi society from the nightmare of life under US-sponsored despotism or political Islam and ensuring a better future for Iraqi workers and people and their children.

**Worker Communist Party of Iran , December 2003**

## The Workers of Ibin al-Bettar Hospital Form their own Union.

On Thursday, November 13, the workers of Ibin al-Bettar Hospital successfully formed their own union and elected their representatives. Delegations from the Preparatory Committee for Establishing the Workers' Councils and Trade Unions and the Worker-communist Party of Iraq attended the election that took place in a free atmosphere. The workers elected four of their colleagues as representatives of the union. Jasim Muhammad Hussein was elected as the secretary general of the union. The representative of the WPIraq addressed the workers and talked about the party's struggle for workers' rights and a socialist society. On this occasion many workers joined the party.

The Preparatory Committee for Establishing Workers' Councils and Trade Unions  
November 14, 2003

**The Union of Unemployed in Iraq- UUI is the official representative of unemployed people in Iraq.**

## **The Labour Ministry Agrees to Work with the Union of Unemployed to Solve the Problem of Unemployment**

The Union of Unemployed with the Worker-communist Party and the Organisation of Women's Freedom, launched a protest march on November 15 against the procrastination of the Occupying Authority in dealing with the issue of unemployment.

The march came days after various media outlets broadcast a statement by the labour minister claiming that unemployed people registered with the labour ministry will receive 50,000 Dinars as a gift for Ramadan month, which means that millions of unemployed people in Iraq and hundreds of thousands of unemployed registered with UUI will be deprived of such a grant.

The protesters demanded extending this grant to all unemployed people in Iraq.

The march started at al-Mustansaryia square where representatives of the UUI and the WPIraq addressed the protesters. Qasim Hadi of the UUI talked about the UUI's struggle and its achievements during last six months and how it turned the demand of unemployment benefits into a mass demand.

Qasim Hadi added that UUI was able to convey the voice of the workers and deprived people to the international public. Shamal Ali member of the political bureau of the WPIraq expressed their full support for the UUI and its stand in the forefront of the unemployed people's struggle.

The protesters then marched to the building of the ministry chanting, among other slogans, "No to Unemployment, No to Occupation," and "Join the Fight for Workers' Rights."

The protesters gathered in front of the ministry. Qasim Hadi, and Layla Muhammad as the delegation of the UUI and the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq met with the labour minister. In this meeting, the labour minister denied what media broadcasted. He said there is no grant for unemployed workers registered with the labour ministry. The labor ministry agreed to present a joint plan with UUI to the Governing Council to solve the issue of unemployment. The labour minister also agreed to provide unemployment grants to the unemployed registered with the UUI in case such grants would become available in the future.

**Union of Unemployment in Iraq-UUI**

November 13, 2003

### A Letter to:

## **President of the Supreme Committee to Dismantle the Baath Party (SCDBP).**

### Subject:

**The „General Federation of Trade Unions in Iraq” which is commonly known in Iraq as the Yellow Union, were tools at the hands of the Ba’ath regime to suppress workers**

Dear Sir,

In support to the efforts to dismantle the Baath party and thwart forever any attempt by the deposited fascist regime to return to power in Iraq, the Preparatory Committee for Workers' Councils and Trade Unions in Iraq announces that it regards all trade union and labour organisation which belong to the deposited Baath regime illegitimate.

The PCWCTU considers the so-called General Union of Workers'

Trade Unions in Iraq dissolved, as this organisation like many other Baath regime's institutions and apparatuses, represents an oppressive and espionage apparatus against workers.

The PCWCTU occupied the Unions' building at Rashid Street, and has protected it from looting and vandalism since after the war. It has furnished the ground floor and put it under the disposal of workers' representatives. The PCWCTU also formed workers' committees in many enterprises, workshops and production units, preparing for electing workers' representatives and holding a founding congress to establish trade unions elected freely by workers without intervention or guardianship for anyone. However, we were shocked by the decision taken by al-Rasafa court, which asked us to evacuate the building and return it to the Baathists headed by Mr. Jamel Salman al-Jobory, president of the General Union of Workers' Trade Unions in Iraq and member of the Professional Bureau which belong to the so-called

Baath party's Regional Command along with Karim abdulla Hamza and other members of Professional Bureau, all very senior members of the dissolved Baath party.

In order to participate in implementing resolutions number 1 and 2 issued by your committee (SCDBP), we find it very necessary that we cooperate together to achieve this task.

The PCWCTU reclaiming its office, which originally belongs to workers, will help distancing the Baathists from a wide section of the society i.e. the workers.

**Falih Maqtof Qasid**  
**Legal representative of the**  
**Preparatory Committee for**  
**Workers Councils and Trade**  
**Unions**

**Baghdad**  
**29.November 2003**

## **The Conference of the Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq – WCUI has Successfully Concluded in Baghdad**

After 7 Months of serious and relentless work by the Preparatory Committee for the Foundation of Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq - PCFWCUI, the first conference of workers unions and councils in Iraq has zealously taken place in Baghdad on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003. This conference was the fruit of PCFWCUI activities and its hard efforts to gather many workers around the unions and councils, as well as the foundation of many local unions and workers councils across Iraq.

After 7 hours of serious discussions around main agenda topics, key issues were endorsed; a list of workers immediate demands, a draft for a new Iraqi Labour Code and the main outlines of its legislature, as well as the election of the union leadership committee members. The attendees then endorsed a resolution to dis-

solve PCFWCUI and establish the **Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq - WCUI**.

The main discussions of this conference were revolving around the most basic and pressing issues of workers. They have provided a clear horizon to address the needs of the working class and a clear vision in the form of an action plan for the union. The most wonderful phenomenon, which had drawn every body's attention, was the presence of workers representatives from across Iraq, from the farthest southern Basra to the northern Sulaimaniya. Also representatives of workers and Union of the Unemployed in Iraq-UUI from Kirkuk, Nassiriyah, Ramadi, Hilla, Kut, Samawa, in addition to Baghdad workers, were present at the conference.

This conference has proven to

all, that the workers of Iraq do not recognize any religious, racial, tribal, or ethnic divisions among their ranks. That they can unite despite the current political wrangling in Iraq, and the attempts to divide Iraq along ethnic, religious, and nationalistic lines. At the time when the rightwing anti-workers political powers are fighting among themselves to gain more positions and are unable to unite, the workers have proven to be able to establish their free and independent union.

**Long Live Working Class' Solidarity**

**Long Live the Willpower of Workers**

**Congress of the Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq - WCUI**

**Baghdad, December 8, 2003**

**Contact the Union of Unemployed in Iraq - UUI:**

**Union of Unemployed in Iraq**

**Address: Bab Al-Sharki, Al Rasheed St., Old Labor Union Bldg. Baghdad, Iraq**  
**- Qasim Hadi , President of UUI**

**Email/ info@uuiiraq.org**

**- Aso Jabbar , Representative Abroad of UUI**

**Tel.0041 78 882 55 89, Email:asojabbar@yahoo.com**

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**Government in Iraq must be;  
 Non- Tribal and Non-Religious !!**



## Protest letters to US-Administration after the Arresting of Qasim Hadi and Adil Salih

After the arresting of both Qasim hadi ,president of UUI and Adil Salih on night 23/24.11.2003 in Baghdad ,the UUI - network abroad had started a campaign to pressurise the US Administration to release both UUI activists from its prisons in Baghdad. We received wormly many copies of protest letters from the political parties , Trade Unions and freedom loving figures all over the world which have been sent to US Administration in Bgahdad and we published in our newspaper ( voice of Iraqi Worklers Nr.1 on 28. 11.2003 ) part of these activities and letters . Here we wolud like to publish the names of those organisations and indivuiduals who sent protest letters in this regard to US-Administration;

### 1.The Women's international League for Peace and Freedom (UK)

Rosalie Huzzard

### 2.General Secretary of Pune Mahanagar Palika Kamgar Union ( Muncipal Workers Union)

Mukta Manohar

Maharashtra, India- 411051

### 3. Greg Durka N.J., U.S.A.

### 4. Mauritius Organisation: LALIT

Lindsey Collen

### 5. Union Education and Science

Lothar Ott

Adress: An den Postwiesen  
46, 60488 Frankfurt am Main,  
Germany

### 6. Irish Republican Socialist Party

Peter Urban

Address: 392 Falls Road,  
Belfast BT12 6DH, Ireland

### 7. Philadelphia Federation of Teachers

Marlene Santoyo

### 8. US Labor Against War

### 9.Chris Kaihatsu

Chicago-USA

### 10. Socialist Alliance Australia

Lisa Macdonald

per National Conveners

Socialist Alliance Australia

### 11.Therese Self-van Wegen Australia

12.Michael Lessard,

McDonA8@parl.gc.ca

Parliamentary Intern for

Alexa McDonough, New

Democratic Party (NDP)

Canada, Ottawa

Here is the letter /

Message received concerning the liberation of your fellow members.

I have printed and communicated your communique (included below) for Alexa McDonough, Canadian Member of Parliament, foreign affairs critique for the New Democratic Party (NDP).

And I will share it also with Canadian human rights activists.

In solidarity and hope,

13. Jan van Dalfsen and Andrew Howard in Australia who dostributed the appeal of UUI very widely.

### 14. Anti War Demonstration Preparatory Committee in Japan

Tsumura Hiroshi,Japan

### 15. Maggie Shambrook Australia

### 16. Philippe Beck Switzerland

17. ( 15 ) members of the

New Orleans based, anti-war/anti-imperialist organization

Jay Arena

C3 New Orleans

### 18. Sailors Union of the Pacific .

## Declaration on Political Freedoms in Iraq

In order to bring about a situation where free political activity for all people and political parties is ensured, political parties and mass organizations must be able to present their alternatives and solutions and the people must be able to practice their will in choosing a government of their choosing freely. For such an environment, the following measures must be introduced and imposed on all political forces:

**-Full and unconditional political freedom, freedom of belief, expression, press, assembly, demonstration, organisation, strike and the freedom of formation of political parties.**

**-Separation of religion from the state and education. All religious inspired laws and regulations must be repealed. Individuals must have freedom of religion and atheism.**

**-Full and unconditional equality of rights of men and women in legal, social and individual domains and the repealing of all laws and regulations that violate this principle.**

**-Full and unconditional equality of all residents regardless of sex, nationality, religion, race, ethnicity and citizenship.**

**-Abolition of the death penalty.**

**-The public and especially parties must have free access to the mass media.**

## The elections of workers' union in the Cotton Company

The workers of the Cotton Industry have elected their own union on Saturday October 25. The elections took place in an enthusiastic and free atmosphere where hundreds of workers participated and elected 43 representatives. Delegations from the Worker -communist Party of Iraq-WCPI, the Preparatory Committee for Establishing Workers' Councils and Trade Unions, and the Occupation Watchdog Organisation attended to monitor the election. The delegations monitored part of counting votes and concluded its visit by meeting the workers' leadership. After the election, the correspondent of Shoaeyia al-Omalia (Worker-communism), the WCPI's central organ interview three of workers' representatives; Falah Alwan, Abdul Salam Rahim, and Riyaad Hassan. Below is part of this interview;

### **-What is your assessment for the election?**

**Riyaad Hassan:** During the deposed regime's era, there was no room for democracy at all. The regime had militarized the whole society. In this company we used to get military orders including working on Fridays, and public holidays without payment. The workers had no rights to protest against these resolutions and they had no one to defend their rights. Today, when we hold elections in the General Company of the Cotton Industries, we put the main corner stone in building the state of law and civil institutions.

The pleasant thing is the awareness that the workers have. The voters elect the candidates on basis of competence and their ability to represent the workers away from the sensitivities created by the deposed regime in the Iraqi community like nationality, ethnic and political origins and association. The candidates represent the political spectrum in Iraq. We are happy with this achievement, as our main aim behind these elections was to find an association or union to defend the workers' rights and establish democracy in the Iraqi society.

### **-What obstacles lie in the way of your unionist struggle?**

**Abdul Salam Rahim:** In fact there are obstacles because the unionist struggle is a new experience for the

workers as there were no trade unions during the former regime's era. Many other obstacles are created by the company's administration. The experience is new therefore the workers do not know what are the union's jobs are and what are the unionist rights. Are the union connected to political parties? Do political parties support the union? Does the union has any legitimacy? The workers repeatedly ask this last question, while this is an existing and normal issue and the workers have the right to elect their representatives. The real legitimacy is what the workers decide, as long as there are elections and the process is democratic and it is not connected or limited to a group or a section of workers. In our case the process was free and we saw high rate of participation. I have been in this company for long time, and I witnessed elections sponsored by the ministry and there were numerous problems and more than 800 workers did not participate while 1400 workers participated in our elections. The other obstacle is the propaganda against the union. There are people whose interests are harmed by presence of the union in the company. A huge false propaganda is generated against the union which question it is intentions and claim that the union works for certain parties. However the union is the voice of the workers. There is progress and there is a movement among the workers as the result of the union. Workers resort to the union, seeking solutions to their problems and presenting their demands.

The main obstacle remains the administration. The administration is not cooperating with us and we do not know what is the reason.

### **-What are the conditions of the workers in your company and what are their urgent demands?**

**Falah Alwan:** obviously the current security and social conditions have added to the burden of the workers and have caused more deterioration of their already unbearable living condition. The dramatic increase in prices has eliminated any possibility to improve workers' conditions. By reviewing the list of demands listed by their representative after listening to

workers, we can know how numerous are these demands and what has happened to the living conditions in Iraq.

In regard to the seniority in the company, the workers are asking for a fair categorization and taking the seniority depending one number of years spend in the job in regard when it comes to the wages. The period spent in the army services is not been taken in account. The annual profit has not been distributed on the company's employees. During the Baath's era, the wages were divided to monthly salaries and annual salaries called annual profit. The workers have received half of the profits and the other half has disappeared or probably has been stolen. The Workers are demanding that the annual profit to be spend from company's budget, however the administration refuse to meet this demand under the excuse that there is no money in company's budget. Therefore the workers are asking that the company's accounts and income be revealed. In regard to the heads of the company's departments; the heads of departments used to be the agents of the Baath regime to pressurize the workers, now same people are holding these positions. The workers are asking for their removal and appointing more honest people instead.

The workers used to have 36 days as annual leave, and they are demanding to have same number of days. Under the previous regime there were no laws and legislations in regard to work injuries. Many workers were injured on work under the Baath regime. These workers must be compensated.

The workers are asking that all resolutions and orders by the administration to be revealed and hanged on the notice board so that the workers become clear about them.

This long list of demands reflect on one hand the miserable conditions of workers today and on the other hand they reflect the oppression prevailed during the Baath regime which left all these demands without answered. Now when workers have a chance to speak and have a platform to present their demands this long list appears.