

ICFTU ONLINE . . .

Iraq: Global Unions Deplore Unacceptable and Unjustified Decision To Go To War 20/3/2003

ICFTU OnLine (Brussels, 20 March 2003): The international trade union movement has repeatedly warned of the dangers of a "slide into war" in Iraq. The launching of this military conflict by certain governments in the absence of clear United Nations authority is unacceptable and unjustified. Real possibilities for resolving this crisis through peaceful means and with the broadest international support have been squandered by this rush to war.

For years, the Iraqi dictatorship has defied the United Nations and world opinion by violating the human rights of its people and through belligerent actions against others, and few would mourn the passing of this brutal regime. Global Unions* deplore the recourse to the rule of force rather than the use of legitimate UN processes at a time when the role of the UN and the multilateral system in ensuring global peace, security, human rights and economic development is needed as much as at any time in history. Nations must work to avoid and resolve conflicts through diplomacy and in accordance with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law. Governments must now take urgent action to restore commitment to the UN.

Global Unions are deeply concerned at the likely loss of life that will result from this conflict, and urges that every possible measure be taken to minimise casualties and protect life, including the lives of civilians, humanitarian workers, media workers and others whose work brings them into proximity with the conflict. We call upon all parties to the conflict to respect in full the principles enshrined in all relevant provisions of international humanitarian law.

Urgent action is required to deal with the looming refugee crisis and humanitarian emergency. The international trade union movement urges all countries to fulfill their obligations to assist and support those affected. A major re-building task in Iraq will also be required, and we urge all governments to work together through the UN to carry out this task. The governments which have initiated this conflict have particular responsibilities in financing the necessary reconstruction through the UN, and in ensuring that the Iraqi people themselves have full control over and benefit from the enormous potential wealth of the country. The UN's International Labour Organisation should have a key role in this process, in supporting economic reconstruction and in ensuring respect for human rights and specifically the rights of working people as foundations for a truly democratic society.

Global Unions are gravely concerned at the likely wider implications of an armed conflict, in particular in the Middle East region. In the long term, peace and stability in the region depends crucially on the spreading and deepening of democracy, the full respect of workers' and other human rights and just and sustainable development. It depends as well upon a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. We urge the international community act without any further delay to help bring Palestinians and Israelis onto the road to peace, co-existing as two sovereign states on the basis of the relevant UN Resolutions.

Working people and their trade unions around the world have raised their voices to call for the Iraq crisis to be resolved peacefully and through the UN. Now, many trade unions are calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities. The international trade union movement shares these concerns and fully supports all legitimate and peaceful protests by trade unions against this decision to go to war.

New determination and new initiatives to tackle conflict peacefully must now be the resolve of the entire international community, and we must redouble our struggle to make social justice a reality for all people.

The Global Unions grouping will continue and redouble its efforts to ensure that the paramount objectives of international peace and security are met at all times in accordance with the provisions of international law, through the United Nations. We call on all our affiliates to intensify their actions to promote respect for the United Nations and commitment to its vital role in avoiding and resolving conflicts peacefully.

Global Unions is the grouping of international trade union organisations comprising the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the Global Union Federations, and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD.

For more information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2 224 0232 or +32 477 580 0486.

The ICFTU represents 158 million workers in 231 affiliated organisations in 150 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions:
<http://www.global-unions.org>

***International Confederation of Free Trade Unions(ICFTU)
Boulevard du Roi Albert II 5, B1, B-1210 Brussels, Belgium. For more
information please contact ICFTU Press on: +32 (2) 224 0232 -
press@icftu.org***
