

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (ICFTU)

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Iraq: ICFTU Calls Election a "Key Step", Condemns Kidnap of Union Official

BRUSSELS, 21 January 2005, (ICFTU Online): The ICFTU today described the holding of the elections in Iraq as a key step towards democracy, noting the limitations on the conduct of the poll which were inevitably caused by the violence prevailing inside the country.

"The determination of so many millions of people to take part in the election, under extremely difficult circumstances, shows just how determined Iraqis are to build a genuine democracy and take full control over their own destiny", said ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder, adding "the will of the Iraqi people must be allowed to prevail, and the occupation of their country has to end as soon as possible".

Acknowledging UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's comment that the election "augurs well for the transition process", the ICFTU believes that the international community must give every support to the building of a true democracy in Iraq, with the UN having a primary role in this as in the other aspects of reconstruction. The legitimate rights of all Iraqis, including fundamental rights at work, must be fully respected as an integral part of developing a democratic Iraq and rebuilding its economy.

The ICFTU also condemned the kidnapping on 27 January of Talib Khadim Al Tayee, President of the Iraqi Mechanics', Metalworkers' and Printworkers' Union (IMM&PU) by six gunmen. The kidnappers repeatedly hit Talib with their gun-butts, tying him up and removing him to an unknown location. Following the vicious torture and murder of Hadi Saleh, International Secretary of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) on 4 January, this kidnapping highlights the dangers facing Iraqi trade unionists, as anti-democratic forces seek to eliminate and instill fear into those who defend workers' rights as cornerstones of democratic development.

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 233 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a partner in Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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