



American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers
AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Healthcare

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April 6, 2006

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

I am writing on behalf of the 1.3 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, to express our concern about restrictions that have been placed on free trade unions by the Iraqi government.

We have been informed by teachers in Iraq with whom we work that in August of last year, the Cabinet General Secretary on behalf of the Iraqi Council of Ministers issued a decree taking control of all union funds and placing unions under the control of a committee composed of various Iraqi government ministries. This new decree overturned a policy enacted in 2004 which allowed unions to operate and function freely, a welcome change from the 30-year domination and control of unions by the regime of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party.

Now, however, under Decree no. 8759, the current Iraqi government has created a government-controlled committee to dominate the decisions of all labor unions. One particularly troubling aspect of the decree is the full control it gives to the government of all existing union funds, including union dues and rental incomes. This has essentially halted union operations. The teacher union headquarters, for example, has lost water and electricity and cannot meet its payroll.

In effect, the government of Iraq has shut down the operation of free and independent trade unions. Decree no. 8759 eliminates the right of workers to control their organizations and violates their fundamental right to free association. The decree is a clear breach of the human and trade union rights of the Iraqi people and a violation of the commitments the government of Iraq has made as a member state of the International Labor Organization.

The AFT has a long history of support for the establishment and strengthening of democratic institutions. While free and fair elections are a necessary element of a democracy, they are not sufficient. There can be no democracy without a thriving civil society, of which trade unions are an essential component. We are proud of our work with educators in Iraq who are striving to develop a free and democratic country, where the rights of all citizens are recognized and respected. We are very concerned that the actions of the Iraqi government regarding the freedom of

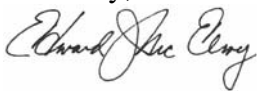
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workers to organize unions and to control their resources will undermine the development of a stable and flourishing democracy.

We urge you make clear to the Iraqi government that the freedom of workers to organize is a fundamental right that must be respected. We hope you will take every appropriate step to ensure that our representatives in Iraq make clear to the Iraqi government that Decree no. 8759 must be repealed.

Please let me know if we can provide you with additional information on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Edward J. McElroy".

Edward J. McElroy
President

EJM : dp opeiu#2 afl-cio

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