

Iraqi Trade Union FWCUI Condemns Fuel Price Hikes, Corruption with Protest

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The Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq (FWCUI) recently organised a major workers protest against fuel price hikes, on 27 December, in Basra at the Petrochemical State Company. On 12 January, the union also participated in a successful demonstration against corruption in the electrical industry of Karbalā, a city some 100 kilometres south of Baghdad.

The strike at the massive petrochemicals plants in Basra last month was marked by slogan-wearing workers denouncing an Iraqi government policy. The government is increasing costs on all commodities, a move aimed at facilitating privatisation. FWCUI is adamant that rising production costs – mainly coming through fuel increases – will render the Basra's state refineries complex, where some 5,000 Iraqi workers are employed, uncompetitive, thus ripe for privatisation. Such a scenario is certain to produce job cuts.



Strike at Iraq's Petrochemical State Co., 27 December

“Under the pretext of a lack of production profits, layoffs of thousands of workers will come,” said FWCUI President Falah Alwan. Throughout the country, millions of Iraqis are suffering severe economic harm, as price increases have far outpaced pay and salary increases. The lifting of fuel subsidies, with another one due to be scrapped in March, will only make matters worse.

At the successful secular protest in Karbalā this weekend, multi-sector FWCUI was a major participant. The protest saw workers from many sectors, Shia and Sunni alike, march and protest against rampant corruption inside the regional authority's electric administration.

FWCUI has called for the end to the military occupation in Iraq, and believes it necessary that workers take a real and active role in determining the structures, labour laws, and constitution of the Iraqi government.