



“The experience that Iraqi trade unions successfully went through in the campaign for the labor law is a valuable lesson for other categories in Iraq’s society. It showed that making history is in the hands of the people.”

tions in Iraq gave a special emphasis to the ways in which the struggle for labor rights goes beyond the unions, and is a key element of the much greater struggle for social justice in Iraq.

One of the main lessons and success stories in the labor law campaign was the new cooperation between Unions and civil society organizations (CSOs) that took place and resulted in the victory of this campaign. Once unions realized that they should develop new channels of cooperation with civil society activists (like for example the Iraqi Social Forum - ISF), big changes in the process began.

Meetings between the ISF, the unions, the Solidarity Center and several CSOs in Baghdad to discuss the unions’ needs going forward in the campaign (as well participation at the 2013 Iraqi Social Forum), ended up being very important parts of the Iraqi trade union campaign to raise public awareness and win support for their efforts from civil society.

Though this process, we have learned that building broad coalitions for change are necessary, and that the unions’ objectives of addressing social, economic and political is-

ssues by sketching out the policies of countries jointly with other social dialogue partners fits well into the social forum process.

Establishing a broad platform of collaboration like the Iraqi Social Forum, for example, happened at a time when Iraq is undergoing huge and complicated security, economic, social and political challenges.

These national challenges gave the Forum a crucial role being an open space for all spheres of society to meet (youth, women, legal, environmental, media related), as well as civil society organizations, union organizations and networks.

It is important to meet together to discuss and address various issues of mutual interest, to tackle the concepts of democracy, to freely exchange experiences, and also to progress from the stage of protest on certain issues to the stage of discussing and analyzing the economic and social policies in order to propose reasonable solutions for each and every issue.

At the 2015 Iraqi Social Forum in Baghdad, there was special session on the role of unions in social reconciliation, freedoms and social justice. Several topics were addressed

at that session, including the role of unions in promoting social peace, the role of union freedoms in enforcing public freedoms, the role of trade unions and federations in extending social justice, and the visions of trade unions and federations on the future social peace and social justice and freedoms under the prevailing deteriorated economic circumstances in Iraq.

We underscored (among other things) the importance for labor unions and social movements to collaborate and to brainstorm on the economic and social future of the country, identifying the actual problems, and proposing reasonable solutions, from their perspective.

So, as we go ahead in the struggle for a new Iraq, we need to continue to consider the role of trade unions as a top priority in making change in Iraq.

We need to refine our strategies on how the Iraqi Social Forum can make the Forum’s message clear to Iraqi unions in a transparent manner. And we need to ensure that trade unions not only attend social forums, but that they become key players. Together, we have a wide reach to actively mobilize in various directions of society in our struggle for civil peace in our country. ■

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