

Kuwaiti workers to fight Cabinet resolution

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34 local unions met on Monday at the headquarters of the Kuwait National Union of Workers and Employees to respond to the Cabinet's resolution number 1113. This resolution recommends ministries and other government entities to take legal action against striking workers and clamp down on worker protests. The Cabinet resolution 1113 came after numerous strikes and threats of strikes caused work stoppages in several government offices including the state run Kuwait International Airport.

Not long after the wave of strikes, HH the Amir called for an international group to examine government pay scales and promised a decision on pay scales would be made in February. Local unions agreed to halt striking until the February report is issued.

Union heads issued a joint statement condemning Cabinet resolution 1113 citing it's unconstitutionality. They noted the resolution, which calls for legal action against strikers, goes against international labor treaties signed by Kuwait. The statement noted the unions reserved their right under the law to assemble anywhere they choose and called on the Cabinet to retract the resolution. They warned that any future government decisions to clamp down on unions and their freedoms would be unacceptable and added that they would take the appropriate measures to ensure their rights.

There was a disagreement among the 34 union heads as to whether or not their statement should include lodging a complaint with the International Labor Organization. But in the end, the line was removed from the groups final formal statement. After the head of the Kuwait National Union of Workers and Employees Khaled Al-Tahos read the approved statement, he answered questions from the media leaving some union heads unsatisfied with his answers, which were not jointly approved by each of the union's present.

In response to questions from the media, Al-Tahos said, "If the Cabinet's resolution 1113 is not retracted, the unions will file a complaint with the International Labor Organization among other international groups." When asked when the next strike would take place, Al-Tahos responded by saying, "We will strike anywhere or anyplace, whenever we need to." He added, "The strikes will continue, to strike is a right given to the people.

While the unions had agreed that striking is a constitutional right afforded to workers and that the resolution was collectively declared unconstitutional, they did not formally agree with Al-Tahos' comments regarding the possibility of workers striking prior to the February date nor did they agree on reporting government clampdowns to international groups.

The statement issued by the Kuwait National Union of Workers and Employees will be sent to Parliament.