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2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

-Iraqi Doves of Peace Get Wings with PRT Help-

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Diyala Province, Iraq - Women in Diyala Province have come a step closer to broadcasting their concerns for peace and progress thanks to a collaboration between the local Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and its military counterpart the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment.

Working with their Iraqi partners, the Americans recently helped organize a women's radio talk show known as "Doves of Peace." Every Wednesday, the host of the show, Donia, welcomes a few female guests from the local community to discuss a wide-range of topics of interest to the women of Diyala.

The first show, launched in July, welcomed a local journalist named Faeha and a woman named Selwa who has a background in law. They discussed cultural differences between men and women and the security situation in the province, which has seen a recent jump in the numbers of female suicide bombers.

The women talked about the possible reasons behind this female violence and what needs to be done to reach out to women who feel they are being targeted by terrorist recruiters to carry out these attacks.

The following week, Selwa again joined the guest list of the show along with a schoolteacher named Hadil who discussed educational matters pertaining to women. The two received calls from both men and women eager to express their views during the one-hour show.

The show's host, Donia, is young and dresses very fashionably. The telephone keeps ringing even after the show has wrapped for the day as people seem to be embracing the program, which is a first in the Province.



Host of radio show "Doves of Peace" Donna (on right) interviews English teacher Hadil.

Donia uses a cellular telephone and screens the callers as music is played in between calls. If she decides the caller should be on the air, she motions to her colleague in the studio who reduces the volume of the music and Donia sets her telephone to loudspeaker and holds it to the microphone so the caller can be heard on the air.

The eleven women of the Diyala Provincial Council have been asked to participate in the show and many of them have said they like its concept so much that they plan to start similar programs in many of the other towns in the province.

The female Council members have identified places where women seem particularly vulnerable or have carried out suicide attacks in Diyala and plan to use Doves of Peace as a way to reach out to them. A rival radio station has already launched a similar program with women and children being the target audience.

The print and electronic media in Diyala are struggling to stay afloat but people seem to be responding to the radio programs which means they stand a better chance of earning income as their listenership grows; at least that's the hope for everyone in Diyala, not only women.