



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

-Music Helps Spread Democratic Message in Iraq-

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Al Kut, Iraq - Discouraging on the rule of law and human rights does not normally summon a large crowd looking for entertainment, but people here recently swarmed to the al Kut Municipal Theater to hear such a message while enjoying first-rate singing.

Approximately 900 people attended a two-day performance by popular Iraqi singers, organized by the Wasit Provincial Reconstruction Team. "It has been five years since singing was allowed in Wasit," said Sabah al-Kayat, one of the performers.



A joyful audience dances and waves their hands to the music of Sabah al-Kayat at the PRT sponsored rule of law and human rights singing event. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson)

The PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Team) are a Department of State-led civilian-military initiative that helps provincial and local governments build capacity to serve their citizens through a range of governance and economic development programs. Launched in late 2005, the PRTs were greatly expanded in 2007 to match the military surge in Iraq and help to solidify security gains. There are a total of twenty nine teams throughout Iraq manned by over four-hundred civilian volunteers and an equal number of military personnel. A range of other US agencies participate including USAID, USDA, and the Department of Justice.

On the first night of the performances Maj. Gen. Hamood Facil Hanin, provincial directorate of police, read excerpts from the Iraqi Constitution, which outlines rights and freedoms entitled to every Iraqi. The reading and his remarks were met with enthusiastic applause from the crowd.

General Hanin said, "I'm really so happy and joyful to be among you today, with my sons and brothers from the (Iraqi) Police and the Iraqi Army in this song recital, which expresses the freedom of all Iraqi people in our society to express themselves in various ways according to the law."

Colonel Richard M. Francey, Jr., the 41st Fires Brigade Commander, also attended both days of the event to show support by U.S. and Coalition forces. "I'd like to thank each of you for your growing support of increased security in al Kut and Wasit," he told the audience. "This increased security makes possible events like today's singing festival."

Vanessa Beary, the Wasit PRT public diplomacy officer, said, “The PRT continues to plan and support cultural events that stimulate a cultural revitalization and return to normalcy in Wasit through plays, films, poetry contests and journalism conferences.”

This return to normalcy would not be possible without the support of the Iraqi Security Forces, the PRT and Coalition forces, she added.

According to Beary, these non-religious and apolitical cultural events help strengthen the community and serve as indicators of cultural progress in Wasit. “We organized and planned the event with the help of the IP (Iraqi Police). Events such as this one help educate the citizens about the Iraqi constitution, and the role that security, with the peoples’ support, plays in protecting these rights,” she added.

During the first night’s intermission, Capt. Hayder Adnan Ali Al-Saidy, the Iraqi Police Wasit Province liaison officer to Coalition forces, handed out t-shirts with the ‘Sing’ logo on the front and on the back “For Love, Peace, To build a civilized Iraq, we will all sing together.” “I will continue to work with the PRT, to bring these cultural events to the people,” said Hayder.