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2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

-Suicide Bomber Interviewed on Iraqi Radio-

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Diyala Province, Iraq - Building the capacity of Iraqi media to provide news and useful information is beginning to pay off with innovative programming like Hathara Radio's recent interview with young suicide bomber Raniya Ibrahim.

The 15-year old girl shared information about the motivations behind her aborted attack as well as her life in general with Donia, the talk show host of a recently launched program on Hathara Radio called "Dove of Peace."



Radio Hathara talk show host Donia interviews an Iraqi official

Raniya was discovered in a crowded marketplace on August 24 wearing a suicide vest loaded with enough explosives to kill everyone within 50 meters. Iraqi Police arrested her after the device failed to explode despite a remote control trigger that was designed to allow someone else to detonate it from a distance.

Raniya is just the latest in a string of female suicide bombers who have plagued Diyala this year and information about them is of immense interest to citizens concerned with security.

However getting information out remains a chore in Iraq. After years of domination and outright control by the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein, the growth of independent media, especially is a challenge here in Diyala as in much of the nation.

But progress is being made. Diyala's Hathara Radio, for example, is a fledgling station whose efforts to become a self-sustaining independent voice of news and programming are supported by the local Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT).

During the summer the Diyala PRT worked with Hathara Radio and Donia to identify guests for the Dove of Peace program. Female suicide bombers became a popular subject and settled into the Program's Wednesday morning time slot.

Then the Station got a scoop on September 3 when after receiving permission from Iraqi police the Dove of Peace show got a live on-air interview with Raniya from the prison where she is being held.

Donia began the program speaking to Nahida, a member of the Iraqi Police, about the female members of the Iraqi Police force in Diyala who have been trained to search women and check for suicide vests and other threats to public safety.

The Dove of Peace host was then connected to Raniya whom she interviewed for about ten minutes. For many of Hathara's listeners this was the first time they heard that Raniya had been coerced and drugged and that she did not know that her 23-year old husband was involved in terrorist activity. Raniya was married when she was 14 years old.

After the interview, Donia fielded question and comments from listeners who called in to the Station. Some said they believed Raniya; others did not buy her story. However, on the overall issue of suicide bombers the callers generally agreed they were evil and that the terrorists have sunk very low indeed if they are using girls as young as Raniya as their vehicle of destruction.

Donia, her associates at Hathara Radio, and the Dove of Peace program are important parts of Iraq's quest for a modern democratic society. As Americans we have enshrined freedom of the press as one of the rights of the people in a democratic society.

A free press is an ideal that Iraq is wrestling with. Sometimes the media wins the bout and sometimes it does not. This time however, thanks to the efforts of members of the Iraqi media, cooperation of the Iraqi police and support from the PRT officials, the idea of a free press won.