

Iraq: Feb '08

Author: [IWPR Iraq](#)

IWPR reporters produce cover story for leading German current affairs title.

Eight IWPR Iraq correspondents reported a cover story for a prominent German magazine, offering German readers a rare glimpse of life and issues inside the country.

The reports, which were published in the monthly magazine *Geo's March* issue, covered subjects ranging from oil smuggling to the marshes in the south. They were reported by IWPR journalists across Iraq, including Mosul, Salahaddin province, Baghdad, Karbala and Diwaniya/Nassriya, Basra and the marshes in southern Iraq.

The stories have "raised a lot of attention", said Christoph Reuter, a *Geo* international correspondent who edited the reports.

"The feedback has been excellent so far," he said. "People like the fact that they got first-hand reportage from inside Iraq, where no foreigner would or could spend too much time reporting. No [foreigner] would have this intimate knowledge."

With a circulation of 500,000, *Geo* is Germany's largest and most prominent monthly magazine. Reuter had served as an investigative reporting trainer with IWPR's Iraq programme and said he wanted to offer IWPR reporters the opportunity to work for the magazine.

The stories included a report from Mosul about a tattoo studio where customers got their names and phone numbers inked onto their shoulders so that their bodies could be identified if they were beheaded. Another report focused on people who fled to the marshes in southern Iraq, despite the hardships of life there, because the marshes are safer than Iraq's cities.

Several stories were based on IWPR reports, including a piece on citizens who decided to build mud schools because the government was not providing educational infrastructure; and a story about how television helps Iraqis escape the harsh realities of daily life.

The collaboration, said Reuter, served as an important training exercise for the reporters, "By and large, many of them have learnt how to work intensively and for a longer period of time on a text [and] to do additional research."

One reporter, who has trained with IWPR since 2003 and whose name is not being published because of security concerns, said that working for *Geo* helped him to practice long-form journalism and understand the European, as well as the American, styles of journalism.

"Through the German magazine [*Geo*], I have been able to write about sensitive issues in Iraq that I couldn't write about otherwise," he said.

According to Zaineb Naji, an IWPR-trained journalist, who contributed to the *Geo* report, and has also written for news organisations such as the *Financial Times* and the *Economist*, says IWPR's provision of opportunities to work for international media bolsters trainees' confidence.

"IWPR helped us not only with *GEO*," said Naji. "IWPR opened many doors for all Iraqi reporters who have received training from this unique institute. [The training has] helped them build their skills and show that they can write about the Iraqi crisis for the international media."

Tiare Rath is IWPR's Middle East editor.

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