

Albany Iraqi War Veteran Provides Aid to Iraqi Interpreter Facing Death

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- Interpreter Finds New Life in United States through Special Immigrant Visa

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– Currently, there are thousands of Iraqi and Afghan citizens working with the U.S. military in Iraq. The service of these foreign men and women often put them in grave danger at home, as they face threats to their family and themselves on a daily basis. Such was life for Iraqi-born “Sarah,” who served as an interpreter at Camp Prosperity in Baghdad. For three and a half years, she went on missions with the military, disguised in a U.S. uniform. However, like many other foreign translators involved with U.S. Armed Forces, Sarah became the subject of threats due to her service. After a fellow interpreter’s mother was murdered, she began to seriously fear for her life and turned to the U.S. military officials she had grown close to for safety. After securing temporary housing and the necessary documents, Sarah left her mother, sister, and brothers in Iraq and traveled to the U.S. under a Special Immigrant Visa. The U.S. government made this move a reality for Sarah through the offering of 1,000 special immigration visas for Iraqis and Afghans working with U.S. forces. This allotment counts for just a small percentage of the roughly 9,000 interpreters working with the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan. Tens of thousands of others work with various government agencies and contractors. And the numbers do not include the interpreters’ families. According to the U.S. Department of State, the total number of Afghan or Iraqi foreign citizen translators who may be provided immigrant status under this special visa may not exceed 500 in 2008. The National Visa Center has already processed over 450 of these cases for the year as of March. With this kind of demand in place, many of the translators putting their own lives at risk to serve the U.S. may not have the opportunity Sarah has received. “Sarah has truly deserved her chance for a new life here in the U.S. She has given four years of service to the American Forces,” said Army National Guard Major Mathew B. Tully, who has taken Sarah into his Niskayuna home while she settles into her new life in America. “I served in Iraq and without courageous people like Sarah, we wouldn’t have been able to do our job over there without people like her. She has earned this opportunity.” Tully and his family have opened up their home to Sarah during her transition to the U.S. Once she receives her Green Card and Social Security Number, Sarah plans to work at Tully Rinckey PLLC, the law firm founded by Tully in 2004. A scholarship is currently in the works for Sarah at a local college, where she hopes to attend school while holding a full-time job. She hopes that the family she left behind will one day be able to join her in the U.S.