

Radio Drama Competition

Friends and Health Awareness in Schools¹

Plot Summary

The topic of this simple drama that I have submitted is in my opinion is very important, and reflects our situation in Iraq, and the situation in other countries that suffer from the spread of diseases and other disasters as a result of war and political instability that affect the economic, health, social and cultural situation. Naturally, the ones who suffer most in such situations are children, who are to somewhat extent helpless. And unfortunately, the calamities of war will affect them whether they like it or not.

Official sources from the Iraqi Government and the United Nations have confirmed the outbreak of cholera in Iraq. The first case of cholera was first detected in Kirkuk, Northern Iraq, on 14 August 2007; a man, suffering from acute diarrhea, was the first victim. It later spread to Sulaymaniya, a province in Iraqi Kurdistan, where 200 cases of the disease were recorded daily. And despite efforts to curb the disease, it continued to spread, and has become Iraq's biggest cholera outbreak in recent memory, with more than 2,100 suffering from the deadly disease.

Northern Iraq declared a state of emergency to prevent the further spread of cholera, that spread through water or contaminated food. Officials from the Ministry of Health warned of a catastrophe if WHO and other international agencies do not provide urgent assistance to the people of Iraq. The UN is coordinating efforts to stop the spread of the disease.

As for me, and due to my concern for the children of Iraq, who suffer because of war and disease, and through this simple play, I present this idea to my friends in Iraq and to young people in other countries in the same situation as us, to show that young people can have an active role to play, even if it is through simple ideas like participating in school activities that can help to overcome certain problems. This role is portrayed by the five friends in this play, who help after one of their friends' brother catches this fatal disease of which cases still appear in Iraq due to bad health conditions resulting from war, neglect and instability.

¹ This drama is translated from Arabic.

Characters:

The narrator, and the other characters are: Salwa, Dina, Marwa, Janna and Fulla. They are all 15-year-old students and their science teacher Miss In'am.

Part 1

Narrator: Dear Friends, we are now in an Iraqi city, where some months ago, the disease cholera began to spread. Children are always the worst hit when there is any sort of epidemic. Salwa, Dina, Marwa, Janna and Fulla are five close friends, who are very active at school. One day, during a break they got together. Let's listen to what they had to say.

Salwa (in surprise): What's wrong with you today Dina, you're not your usual self. You seem a bit sad?

Marwa (in surprise): Yes, Dina, you really seem sad.

Janna (gently): I hope nothing's wrong. Has something bad happened?

Fulla (gently): We're your friends. You can tell us if there is something wrong. Maybe we can help.

Dina (crying softly): Last night my brother got really sick, we were afraid and took him to the hospital. There we were told that he has the symptoms of cholera. We are all worried about him and are afraid that something bad might happen to him. (and continues crying softly).

Salwa (sadly): Oh Cholera. It is all over the country. I hope your brother recovers from it.

Marwa (in a scared voice): How did he get it and how serious is it?

Dina (sadly): We don't know how he caught it. It is caused by a bacteria and there are different ways of catching it.

Janna (in a serious voice): It is good that you took him to the hospital quickly. I'm sure he'll survive, and I'm sure that he will soon recover.

Fulla (compassionately): Yes, Dina, don't be sad. He is sure to get better soon, God willing.

Salwa, Marwa and Janna (together): Yes, we pray to God that he will.

Dina (stops crying and sounds more hopeful): Thank you my friends for your support and prayers that my brother will get better.

The bell rings indicating the end of break time.

Salwa: Come on, we have a science class now, and it is a good time to discuss this subject with our teacher.

All together: Let's go.

Part 2

The scene is the classroom, the hustle and bustle of the students can be heard as they enter the classroom. There is silence as the teacher enters the classroom.

Teacher: Good morning, girls.

Students: Good morning.

Teacher: Okay, before we start today's lesson, has anyone got any questions?

Salwa: Before we start, can you tell us a bit about cholera, and then maybe we could plan an activity to raise awareness in school about this disease and its dangers, and how to protect oneself from it ?

Teacher: Well, the timing is right because this disease has started to spread in most areas. It is a gastrointestinal disease caused by bacteria. It causes a watery diarrhea called rice-water stool and can lead to severe dehydration and possibly death if untreated. If a person is taken to hospital for treatment at the very beginning, and receives early treatment, then there is a big chance the person will recover.

Marwa: How is the disease transmitted?

Teacher: Who knows the answer to this question?

Janna: You can catch this disease from contaminated water, or contaminated food such as fresh vegetables, and exposed food.

Teacher (in a serious voice): Well done, Janna, a good answer.

Fulla: And can we protect ourselves from this disease by avoiding the things that Janna mentioned?

Teacher: Of course, and would you like to organize a health campaign in school about the disease so that we can fight it and help to overcome it?

All students (enthusiastically): Yes, Miss In'am, we are all prepared to do it.

Teacher: Okay, Let's have some ideas, then.

(Slight noise is heard as students discuss quietly among themselves).

Salwa (excitedly): Dina and I are quite artistic, we can make some posters about cholera and protection against it, and we can hang them in school and outside school. We can also distribute among students.

Teacher: Great work, Salwa. Who has other ideas?

Janna (excitedly): I can prepare some information about it and give a lecture to the school's students including protection and treatment.

Teacher: Wonderful idea, Jenna. Well done. Any other ideas?

Marwa (enthusiastically): Fulla and I are good at writing. And with the help of our classmates we could write weekly leaflets, print them and distribute them to all students. Each week we could write about a different disease affecting our country such as cholera, malaria, chicken pox, tuberculosis, measles and others.

Teacher: God bless you all. I'll take down the name of the students who have volunteered to be added to the school honour list. And at the end of the school year, we will present medals and prizes to all those who take part in this health awareness campaign. I am also willing to help. The country needs everyone's help, no matter how simple the help may be. I wish you all success.