A New Generation of Trainers Step in to Build Digital Resilience in Iraq

"Internews helped me fulfill my dream and empowered me to shape my career."

Dyar Adil is a 29-year-old journalist and freelance reporter in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). Although he aimed to have a career in Cybersecurity, his chances of pursuing his dreams were hindered by the lack of required skills, access to opportunities, as well as mentoring and support, as he explained: "*I have always had a dream to be a successful trainer in the field of digital security, which is not common in my region. I tried to collect as much information as possible, but I had no idea how and where I should start.*"

Digital safety is a [key issue](#) for activists in the IKR, as they are increasingly exposed to the danger of online threats and violations of rights to freedom of opinion and expression. The COVID-19 pandemic has further put additional pressure and drained resources available for journalists and activists, who are already operating in an increasingly hostile environment.

In 2020, Dyar participated in two training programs held under Internews' Azadi Zanyari project: digital safety and advanced security mentoring. Choosing to be relentless, he partook in the Internews' digital safety training of trainers and described it as: "*A huge step to shape my career path as a digital security trainer.*"

Dyar's participation in all these activities provided him with the knowledge and confidence to

eventually get a foot in the door at [Spark Organization](#) where he delivered his first digital safety training for youth and civil activists in Sulaymaniyah and Halabja. Not only did he fulfill his dream, but also succeeded in building digital resilience in the IKR. The Program Coordinator at Spark Organization, Ranjdar Khalid, said: "*he is a great asset and helping us reach out to the youth community and raise awareness of digital safety in the IKR.*"

So far, 58 at-risk individuals benefitted from his digital security awareness training workshops and now are better able to defend themselves against digital attacks. One participant remarked that he has, "*a better understanding of how to protect my digital identity.*" Another participant said, "*I stopped using public Wi-Fi, creating weak passwords and using unsafe communication applications which will help me avoid digital threats.*"

Internews' Azadi Zanyari "Information Freedom" project, which is funded by the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, advances human rights and the rule of law in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region by increasing journalists' digital, physical, and legal safety.