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Italian hostage freed in Afghanistan

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10 June, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Italian hostage freed in Afghanistan

BNE: An Italian aid worker, held hostage in Afghanistan for almost a month, has been freed by her captors. Clementina Cantoni, 32, was kidnapped by an armed gang as she was driving through Kabul on May 16. She was forced out of her car at gunpoint and whisked deep into central Kabul's labyrinthine streets. Her abduction sent shockwaves through the expat and aid worker community in Kabul. Rumors quickly circulated of a hostage taking campaign by remnant Taliban operatives.

Italian state television announced the news of her release in a special bulletin on Thursday evening. A spokesman from the Italian foreign ministry confirmed the news to waiting press. The air had been thick with speculation all day after Italy's defence minister Antonio Martino spoke optimistically of her imminent release. It is believed no ransom was paid to secure her freedom. It is still unclear who the kidnapers were or what their motives were.

Ms. Cantoni works for the aid agency CARE International helping Afghan widows and their children. Her plight became the focus of attention for many Kabul residents. Thousands of schoolgirls petitioned in the streets for her swift release. The Kabul government was also instrumental in negotiating with her captors. Interior Ministry spokesman Latfullah Mashal reported Cantoni to be "in good health given the 24-day ordeal she went through". Needless to say, her family in Milan is over the moon.

WARM-UPS

1. HOSTAGE: Pairs / Groups. What would it be like to be kidnapped? What kinds of feelings would you have? What kinds of thoughts would run through your mind? What would you think about these things:

My future / My past / My government / Sleep / Pain / My family / Food / Freedom

2. AID WORKER OPINIONS: Talk with your partner(s) about how much you agree with these opinions.

- a. Aid workers who go to Afghanistan or Iraq are crazy.
- b. Foreign governments should pay as much money as kidnappers want to secure the release of hostages.
- c. All aid workers should have personal bodyguards.
- d. The kidnappers of aid workers are the world's biggest cowards.
- e. I think doing aid work would be very exciting and interesting.
- f. Aid workers are too inexperienced. They put themselves in harm's way.
- g. Everyone should do aid work at some time in their lives.
- h. Aid workers are saints.
- i. Kidnappings would stop the minute the world's press stopped covering them.
- j. I want to be an aid worker, but somewhere safe.

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Aid workers / Afghanistan / being kidnapped / armed gangs / Taliban / optimism / paying ransoms / freedom / aid agencies / terrible ordeals / the moon

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. AID DESTINATIONS: In pairs / groups, talk about in which of these locations you would choose to be an aid worker. Which would you avoid?

- a. Cambodia – clearing landmines
- b. Darfur, Sudan – helping famine victims
- c. Baghdad, Iraq – rebuilding people's shattered lives
- d. Swaziland – working with patients dying from AIDS
- e. Sri Lanka – rebuilding homes destroyed in the Indian Ocean tsunami
- f. Bam, Iran – helping children recover from the trauma of the 2004 earthquake
- g. Brazil – helping indigenous people keep their land out of the hands of loggers
- h. North Korea – providing medical care to children

5. KIDNAPPED: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "kidnapped". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. An Italian national has been released by her captors in Kabul. | T / F |
| b. She was abducted at knifepoint. | T / F |
| c. An earthquake sent shockwaves through Kabul after her abduction. | T / F |
| d. The air in Italy had been thick with speculation of her release. | T / F |
| e. It is believed a \$100,000 ransom secured her release. | T / F |
| f. The kidnappers belonged to the New Afghan Taliban group. | T / F |
| g. Kabul schoolgirls petitioned in the streets for her swift release. | T / F |
| h. An Afghan official said the hostage's health had badly deteriorated. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| a. hostage | mazy |
| b. whisked | predicament |
| c. labyrinthine | hurried |
| d. remnant | trial |
| e. thick | captive |
| f. imminent | on cloud nine |
| g. plight | impending |
| h. petitioned | leftover |
| i. ordeal | appealed |
| j. over the moon | rife |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. held | Kabul's labyrinthine streets |
| b. whisked deep into central | with speculation |
| c. sent shockwaves through the | release |
| d. rumors quickly | of attention |
| e. The air had been thick | the moon |
| f. imminent | hostage |
| g. secure | negotiating with her captors |
| h. the focus | circulated |
| i. instrumental in | her freedom |
| j. over | expat and aid worker community |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

ODD WORD OUT: Circle the word from the groups of three in italics that does not fit.

Italian hostage freed in Afghanistan

BNE: An Italian aid worker, held *captive / hostage / in esteem* in Afghanistan for almost a month, has been *freer / freed / set free* by her captors. Clementina Cantoni, 32, was kidnapped by an *armed / gun toting / armless* gang as she was driving through Kabul on May 16. She was forced out of her car at gunpoint and *whisked / stirred / hurried* deep into central Kabul's labyrinthine streets. Her abduction sent *shockwaves / earthquakes / alarm* through the expat and aid worker community in Kabul. Rumors quickly circulated of a hostage taking campaign by *reminiscent / remnant / leftover* Taliban operatives.

Italian state television announced the news of her *release / freeing / publication* in a special bulletin on Thursday evening. A spokesman from the Italian foreign ministry confirmed the news to waiting *media / press / telecommunications*. The air had been *thick / dirty / rife* with speculation all day after Italy's defence minister Antonio Martino spoke optimistically of her *immature / imminent / impending* release. It is believed no ransom was paid to *fasten / secure / win* her freedom. It is still unclear who the kidnappers were or what their motives were.

Ms. Cantoni works for the aid agency CARE International helping Afghan widows and their children. Her *predicament / plague / plight* became the focus of attention for many Kabul residents. Thousands of schoolgirls *petitioned / partitioned / plead* in the streets for her swift release. The Kabul government was also *influential / instrumental / inviolate* in negotiating with her captors. Interior Ministry spokesman Latfullah Mashal reported Cantoni to be "in good health given the 24-day ordeal she went through". Needless to say, her family in Milan is *over the moon / in seventh heaven / under the weather*.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'shock'** and **'wave'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. ODD WORD OUT: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about any relationships between the odd word in each group of three and the two acceptable words.

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT KIDNAPPING SURVEY: In pairs / groups write down questions about kidnapping, ransoms and terror.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| • armed | • imminent |
| • whisked | • motives |
| • shockwaves | • plight |
| • rumors | • swift |
| • bulletin | • instrumental |
| • air | • moon |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What was your initial reaction to this headline?
- b. Do you follow news of what happens in Afghanistan?
- c. Do you think news of kidnappings has become boring?
- d. Don't you think the world's press should stop reporting on kidnappings to starve the kidnappers of the publicity?
- e. Do aid agencies have a responsibility to protect their workers?
- f. Should governments pay ransoms to secure the release of hostages?
- g. How do you feel when a citizen from your country is kidnapped?
- h. Are aid workers who go to dangerous places irresponsible?
- i. What do terror groups achieve by killing their hostages?
- j. How much ransom would you expect your government to pay for your release?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. Are you interested in Afghanistan?
- c. Would you like to go there?
- d. Would you consider doing aid or voluntary work overseas?
- e. How would you react to being held hostage?
- f. What would be your biggest fear as a hostage?
- g. What do you think of aid workers who go to dangerous places?
- h. Should aid agencies be banned from operating in certain areas?
- i. Are there any aid agencies you particularly like?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

AID WORKER ROLE PLAY: This role play is to discuss whether or not aid workers are safe enough to be working in the world's danger zones. Team up with classmates who have the same role as you and develop your ideas and "strategies".

Introduce yourself to the other role players before the role play begins.

Role A

You are the perfect aid worker. Your greatest desire in life is to help others. You don't care if you die helping others. You know governments will never help those who need it most. You fully accept the risks of abduction and do not expect your government or any other agency to intervene to negotiate your release. You have no skills and a big heart.

Role B

You are the boss of an aid agency. You need as many volunteers as you can get to help your work. Training isn't important. You think that if the workers know the risks, there is no need to waste valuable aid money on bulletproof vests and bodyguards. You hate government officials who sit in their air-conditioned offices all day and tell you to be responsible.

Role C

You are a diplomat who has to do the negotiating and paperwork after an aid worker has been kidnapped. You are appalled by the lack of concern aid agencies have for their workers. You strongly believe all workers on the ground should have bulletproof vests and a bodyguard. You think only UN peacekeepers or local people should do aid work.

Role D

You are the Afghan leader of a local aid team in Afghanistan. You are fed up with the hordes of foreigners that come to your country to "help". All they do is get in the way. They cannot speak your language and do not know your people. They are paid too much. The aid money should be spent on medicine, salaries for local aid workers and food for the needy.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

Talk about whether you agreed with what you said in your roles.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Italian hostage freed in Afghanistan

BNE: An Italian aid worker, held hostage in Afghanistan for almost a month, has been _____. Clementina Cantoni, 32, was kidnapped by an armed gang as she was driving through Kabul on May 16. She was forced out of her car at gunpoint _____ central Kabul's _____. Her abduction sent shockwaves through the expat and aid worker community in Kabul. Rumors quickly circulated of a hostage taking campaign by _____.

Italian state television announced the news of her release in _____ Thursday evening. A spokesman from the Italian foreign ministry confirmed the news to waiting press. The air had been _____ all day after Italy's defence minister Antonio Martino spoke optimistically _____. It is believed no ransom _____ her freedom. It is still unclear who the kidnappers were or what their motives were.

Ms. Cantoni works for the aid agency CARE International helping Afghan widows and their children. Her _____ of attention for many Kabul residents. Thousands of schoolgirls _____ for her swift release. The Kabul government was _____ negotiating with her captors. Interior Ministry spokesman Latfullah Mashal reported Cantoni to be "in good health given the 24-day ordeal she went through". _____, her family in Milan is over the moon.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Afghanistan today. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. HOSTAGE INSTRUCTIONS: Write some instructions for what someone should do if they were taken hostage. Show your instructions to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you have the same ideas?

4. DIARY / JOURNAL: Imagine you have been taken hostage in Afghanistan. Write a diary / journal entry for one day in captivity. What happened to you on that day? Write about your fears and hopes. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. F c. F d. T e. F f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| a. hostage | captive |
| b. whisked | hurried |
| c. labyrinthine | mazy |
| d. remnant | leftover |
| e. thick | rife |
| f. imminent | impending |
| g. plight | predicament |
| h. petitioned | appealed |
| i. ordeal | trial |
| j. over the moon | on cloud nine |

PHRASE MATCH:

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
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| f. imminent | release |
| g. secure | her freedom |
| h. the focus | of attention |
| i. instrumental in | negotiating with her captors |
| j. over | the moon |

ODD WORD OUT:

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