

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN)

Name: Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN)

Type of Organization:

- Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)
- “special forces”

Ideologies and Affiliations:

- Iranian-sponsored
- Shiite
- Jihadist
- Khomeinist
- global Islamist revolutionary

Place of Origin:

Nujaba, Iraq

Year of Origin:

2013

Founder(s):

Akram al-Kaabi

Places of Operation:

Iraq and Syria

Overview

Also Known As:

- Harakat al-Nujaba¹
- Nujaba Movement²
- Hezbollah al-Nujaba³
- Harakat Hizbollah al-Nujaba⁴
- Movement of the Noble of the Party of God⁵
- Ammar ibn Yasir Brigade⁶
- Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba Brigade⁷
- al-Hamad Brigade⁸
- al-Nujaba TV⁹
- Liwa Ammar bin Yasir¹⁰

Executive Summary

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN) is an Iranian-backed, U.S.-designated militia formed in 2013 by [Akram al-Kaabi](#) [1], co-founder of the IRGC-backed [Asaib Ahl al-Haq](#) [2] (AAH).¹¹ The exact relationship between AAH and HHN remains unclear. Kaabi denies there are any ideological disagreements with AAH, stating that the formation of HHN occurred due to disagreements “on style and how the work should be managed.”¹² HHN is primarily comprised of former members of AAH, Kata’ib Hezbollah (KH), and possibly the “Promised Day Brigades.”¹³

HHN is closely tied to Iran and Hezbollah and has been at the forefront of the fight against ISIS alongside the Syrian army, Hezbollah, and other Iran-backed Iraqi militias.¹⁴ Recent reports indicate that HHN has taken a new central role among the

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Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) following the deaths of IRGC Quds Force commander [Qasem Soleimani](#) [3] and PMF deputy chief and Kata'ib Hezbollah leader [Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis](#) [4].

HHN's secretary general, Akram al-Kaabi, has long been affiliated with Iranian-backed terrorist groups operating in Iraq. He began as a commander in the Sadrist militia Jaysh al-Mahdi, where he planned and led attacks against both the Iraqi army and coalition forces.¹⁵ In 2008, Kaabi was sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department "for threatening the peace and stability of Iraq."¹⁶ Kaabi formed HHN in 2013 in response to the rise of ISIS in Syria, calling for Iraqi Shiite militias to travel to Syria and fight on the behalf of the Assad regime.¹⁷ At the same time, he threatened to attack Turkish forces operating north of Mosul.¹⁸ HHN fought against Syrian opposition forces in Aleppo city and its countryside during the regime's 2016 offensive to retake the city.¹⁹ The United Nations accuses HHN of deliberately killing civilians attempting to flee the city during the offensive.²⁰

According to Iraqi lawmaker Shakhwan Abdullah, HHN is "helping Tehran create a supply route through Iraq to Damascus."²¹ In December 2019, HHN and other pro-Iran PMFs attacked and killed more than 500 peaceful anti-government protestors in Baghdad.²²

Doctrine

HHN follows a Shiite jihadist ideology rooted in the teachings of Iraqi Ayatollah Mohammed al-Sadr and Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.²³ While HHN spokesman Hashim alMousawi has downplayed the group's loyalty to Khamenei, HHN leadership has praised the Quds Force and declared "complete solidarity and support" with Hezbollah.²⁴ Furthermore, in August 2016, HHN leader Akram al-Kaabi spent a week in Iran meeting with top Iranian government officials and clerics, including the secretary of Iran's Expediency Council, Mohsen Rezaei.²⁵

In January 2020, Kaabi visited the family of Quds Force Commander Qasem Soleimani after his assassination, and met with Soleimani's successor, Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani.²⁶ At the same time, the group stated its willingness to oust any government in Baghdad that opposed Iran.²⁷

Organizational Structure

A Washington Institute for Near East Policy report describes HHN as a "front group for Harakat Hezbollah and AAH to send forces to Syria."²⁸ The group fielded an estimated 10,000 fighters in 2019 and is reportedly part of the 12th Brigade of the PMF.²⁹ Despite this, Kaabi claims that HHN is "not affiliated with the [PMF] organizationally."³⁰

In 2013, the group contained three subunits: Liwa al-Hamad, Liwa Ammar Ibn Yasir, and Liwa al-Imam al-Hassan al-Mujtaba—all of which were formed in or deployed to Syria.³¹ In 2015, Kaabi said the group also contained a fourth subunit, the Golan Liberation Brigade, as well as a the reserve al-Tabia forces, a paramilitary volunteer militia established by Iran's first supreme leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.³²

Liwa Ammar Ibn Yasir

In June 2013, HHN announced the formation of the subgroup Liwa Ammar Ibn Yasir (LAIY).³³ The name refers to the Shia Ammar ibn Yassir shrine in Raqqa, Syria, that was destroyed by Sunni rebels.³⁴ In spring 2014, the group was deployed in Iraq, despite its stated purpose of defending the Shia Sayyeda Zainab shrine in Damascus.³⁵ In December 2016, Kaabi said that LAIY had 3,000 fighters in Aleppo.³⁶ LAIY was also shown in Aleppo on social media posts in February and March 2014.³⁷

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Liwa al-Imam al-Hassan al-Mujtaba

On July 23, 2013, the creation of Liwa al-Imam al-Mujtaba (LIHM) was officially announced on social media.³⁸ This group claims to predominantly protect the Damascus Airport and sections of rural Ghouta.³⁹ LIHM also has publicized subunits: Kata'ib al-Ashtar (Ashtar Battalion), the "mortar and rocket battalion" Kata'ib abu Hamr (Abu Hamr Battalion), and the Martyr Ahmed Kayara unit.⁴⁰ The Ahmed Kayara unit was named after Abu Hamza, a commander in the largely Iraqi Liwa Abu Fadl al-Abbas.⁴¹ The Kata'ib al-Ashtar unit has been described as a "rapid response unit" and was reportedly deployed to al-Buidha, Rif Dimashq.⁴² LIHM also fought in the southern Damascus suburb of Hajira and the southeast suburb of Jaramana in November 2013.⁴³

Liwa al-Hamad (Praise Brigade)

Liwa al-Hamad, or the Praise Brigade, was first announced in a YouTube video in July 2013.⁴⁴ The group is less present on social media than other HHN subunits and little is known about the group's activities. The Praise Brigade was reportedly in Aleppo in January, March, April, and May of 2014, according to the group's Facebook posts.⁴⁵

Golan Liberation Brigade

In 2017, HHN media announced the formation of the Golan Liberation Brigade.⁴⁶ Upon its formation, Kaabi stated that the group was prepared to work with the Syrian Arab Army to "liberate" the Golan Heights from Israel.⁴⁷ He claimed the unit was well equipped and included "special forces" fighters.⁴⁸

Financing

HHN was formed in 2013 with direct support from the IRGC.⁴⁹ Kaabi openly admitted in 2015 that "technical and logistical support comes from the [Iranian] Islamic Republic."⁵⁰ In a 2015 interview, Kaabi acknowledged that HHN "received military and logistical support from the Republic [of Iran] in continuing form and according to the needs of the fronts."⁵¹ He also confirmed the gifting of a reconnaissance aircraft (known as Yasir) by the IRGC to the group.⁵²

In May 2019, a report by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy stated that U.S. and Israeli intelligence were concerned that Iran was supplying "long-range artillery rockets" to its Iraqi proxies, including HHN.⁵³ The report claimed that HHN and other Iranian-backed PMFs are able to import missiles and equipment from Iran without Baghdad's knowledge.⁵⁴ Additional funding comes via the Iraqi government, thanks to HHN's membership in the PMF system.⁵⁵

Recruitment

The group has been described as a "leading network of recruiters for foreign fighters in Syria" and a "pioneer of online recruitment for foreign fighters."⁵⁶ New recruits reportedly began in Iranian training camps before deploying to Aleppo, Syria, where they were then placed in HHN.⁵⁷ It is unclear if this system continued after the Assad regime's capture of Aleppo city in December 2016.

Training

In a January 2019 interview, Kaabi openly stated that the group receives "all levels of training, arming and the provision of advice through the presence of leaders and field advisers from the brothers in the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards," as well as from Hezbollah.⁵⁸ Kaabi further stated that the group received a reconnaissance aircraft from the IRGC, as well as training to use it.⁵⁹

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- ⁵⁶ James Haines-Young, "US Sanctions Iranian Militia in Iraq: Here's What You Need to Know about Harakat Hezbollah Al Nujaba," *National* (Abu Dhabi), March 6, 2019, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/us-sanctions-iranian-militia-in-iraq-here-s-what-you-need-to-know-about-harakat-hezbollah-al-nujaba-1.833952> [27].
- ⁵⁷ Phillip Smyth, *The Shiite Jihad in Syria and Its Regional Effects* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2015), Appendix 2, 1, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PF138Appendices/PF138_Appendix_2.pdf [26].
- ⁵⁸ Ali Hashem, "Iraq's Shiite Forces Claim Victory over IS," *Al-Monitor*, March 16, 2015, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-shiite-hezbollah-nujaba-victory-islamic-state.html> [6]; "Al-Nujaba Militia Leader Sheikh Akram Al-Kaabi: IRGC And Lebanese Hizbullah Officers Have Guided Us In Fighting The American Forces Since 2004: 'We Started Using Explosively Formed Penetrators... They Would Explode inside the Tank, Destroying It and Killing' the Americans Inside," Middle East Media Research Institute, January 24, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/al-nujaba-militia-leader-sheikh-akram-al-kaabi-irgc-and-lebanese-hizbullah-officers-have> [38]; Roi Kais, "Iranian Backed Militia Forms Golan Liberation Brigade," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Tel Aviv), March 12, 2017, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4934399,00.html> [29].
- ⁵⁹ Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Interview with the Leader of Harakat al-Nujaba: Interview and Analysis," Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog, April 15, 2015, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/04/interview-with-the-leader-of-harakat-al-nujaba> [9].

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN)

Key Leaders



Akram Al-Kaabi
Co-founder; former commander of Syrian
branch



Nasr al-Shammary
Deputy secretary-general



Hashim al-Mousawi
Spokesperson



Bashar al-Saidi
Spokesperson

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN)

History:

- **January 2020:** Kaabi is pictured with Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani's successor, Brigadier-General Esmail Ghaani.
Tamer Badawi, "What is Role of Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba in Uniting PMU?," Al-Monitor, January 28, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/iraq-iran-pmu-nujaba-muqtada.html>.
- **January 2020:** Kaabi visits the family of assassinated Quds Force Commander Qasem Soleimani.
Kaabi also threatens revenge against U.S. forces for the U.S. airstrike that killed Soleimani on January 3. Sources: "Iraq's Pro-Iran Factions Ramp Up Threats to US after Iran Missile Strikes," Agence France-Presse, January 8, 2020, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iraqs-pro-iran-factions-ramp-up-threats-to-us-after-iran-missiles/>; "Commanders of Shi'ite Militias in Iraq Continue to Threaten U.S. Forces While Seeking to Mend Internal Rifts," Middle East Media Research Institute, January 13, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/commanders-shiite-militias-iraq-continue-threaten-us-forces-while-seeking-mend-internal>.
- **November 28, 2017:** A prominent Shiite leader in Qom, Iran, Grand Ayatollah Kazem al-Haeri, condemns the U.S. sanctions on HHN.
Source: Ahmad Majidiyar, "Qom-Based Cleric Lashes Out at U.S. for Blacklisting Harakat al-Nujaba," Middle East Institute, November 28, 2017, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/qom-based-cleric-lashes-out-us-blacklisting-harakat-al-nujaba>.
- **November 23, 2017:** An HHN spokesman claims that the group would give any heavy weapons it had to the Iraqi military once ISIS was defeated and rejected proposed U.S. legislation designating it a terrorist group.
Source: Ahmed Aboulenein, "Iraqi Militia Indicates Will Hand Heavy Guns to Army after Islamic State Quashed," Reuters, November 23, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-nujaba/iraqi-militia-indicates-will-hand-heavy-guns-to-army-after-islamic-state-quashed-id-USKBN1DN1JY>.
- **November 3, 2017:** The U.S. House of Representatives introduces a new bill to sanction HHN entitled the "Iranian Proxies Terrorist Sanctions Act of 2017."
Source: Ahmad Majidiyar, "Qom-Based Cleric Lashes Out at U.S. for Blacklisting Harakat al-Nujaba," Middle East Institute, November 28, 2017, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/qom-based-cleric-lashes-out-us-blacklisting-harakat-al-nujaba>.
- **August 2017:** Kaabi sends a letter to Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah declaring HHN's "complete solidarity and support with your loud cry against the oppressive Zionist regime."
Source: Babak Dehghanpisheh, "The Iraqi Militia Helping Iran Carve a Road to Damascus," Reuters, September 22, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-iraq-nujaba/>.
- **May 2017:** Kaabi visits militants in Qayrawan, an Iraqi town near the Syrian border that HHN had captured from ISIS.
Source: Babak Dehghanpisheh, "The Iraqi Militia Helping Iran Carve a Road to Damascus," Reuters, September 22, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-iraq-nujaba/>.
- **December 2016:** Kaabi vows to "break the siege of the Shiite towns of Fuaa and Kafriyeh" in Syria.
Source: Albin Szakola, "Iraq Militia Sets Sights on Encircled Idlib Towns," NOW News, December 14, 2016, <http://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/567553-iraq-militia-sets-sights-on-encircled-idlib-towns>.
- **September 2016:** Kaabi meets with the secretary of Iran's Expediency Council, Mohsen Rezaei, in Tehran.
Source: "Iraqi Official Warns of US Plans for Permanent Military Base in Mosul," Tasnim News Agency, September 4, 2016, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2016/09/04/1178182/iraqi-official-warns-of-us-plans-for-permanent-military-base-in-mosul>.
- **September 2016:** Kaabi declares that his followers adhere to the Khomeinist interpretation of *Velayat-e Faqih* (Guardianship of the Jurist), which, according to former Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, mandates rule by an Islamic religious authority figure over all parts of the government.
Source: Babak Dehghanpisheh, "The Iraqi Militia Helping Iran Carve a Road to Damascus," Reuters, September 22, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-iraq-nujaba/>.
- 11. **August 2016:** Kaabi spends a week in Iran meeting with top Iranian regime officials and clerics, briefing them about his group's activities in Iraq and Syria.
Source: Amir Toumaj, "Iraqi Militia Leader Receives Warm Reception in Tehran," Long War Journal, September 9, 2016, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/09/iraqi-militia-leader-receives-warm-reception-in-tehran.php>.
- 12. **September 2015:** Kaabi accuses Israel of attacking HHN in a speech to militants in Aleppo.
Source: Roi Kais, "Iranian Backed Militia Forms Golan Liberation Brigade," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Tel Aviv), March 12, 2017, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4934399,00.html>.
- 13. **June 2015:** Kaabi vows revenge "in a timely manner" against the U.S. after an explosion near Abu Ghraib in Iraq kills 10 members of AAH.
Source: Bill Roggio, "Iraqi Shiite Militia Commander Threatens to Attack US," Long War Journal, June 9, 2015, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/06/iraqi-shiite-militia-commander-threatens-to-attack-us.php>.
- 14. **June 2013:** HHN announces the formation of the subgroup Liwa Ammar Ibn Yasir (LAIY), named for a Shiite shrine in Raqqa, Syria.
Source: Phillip Smyth, *The Shiite Jihad in Syria and its Regional Effects* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2015), 5, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus138_Smyth-2.pdf.
- 15. **2013:** HHN officially announces its presence in Syria.
Source: Phillip Smyth, *The Shiite Jihad in Syria and Its Regional Effects* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2015), Appendix 1, 1, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PF138Appendices/PF138_Appendix_1.pdf.

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN)

Violent history:

A bill introduced in the U.S. Congress in November 2017 cited allegations by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that HHN participated in the 2016 siege of Aleppo, where “pro-Iraq militia groups executed dozens of civilians.”⁶⁰ U.N. spokesman Rupert Colville said that civilians were “being shot in the street trying to flee and shot in their homes” during the Aleppo siege. He went on to specifically name HHN as one of the Iraqi militias involved.⁶¹

- **March 2015:** Kaabi states that “operations to liberate the city of Salahuddin with the participation of our brothers in the resistance factions” has started.⁶²
- **September - November 2015:** HHN members are seen fighting in the Kweiris offensive in the southeast of Aleppo’s countryside alongside Hezbollah, Iranian militias, Iraqi forces, and SAA units.⁶³
- **November 2015:** Kaabi states in an interview that the PMF would overthrow the Iraqi government if ordered by Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.⁶⁴
- **August 2016 - December 2016:** HHN announces the deployment of 2,000 fighters to southern Aleppo in support of the Syrian regime’s offensive. HHN forces in Aleppo are reportedly led by IRGC officers.⁶⁵
- **July 2017:** HHN fighters launch an offensive against ISIS in southeast Syria.⁶⁶
- **2019:** HHN reportedly takes part in the murder of two Kurdish civilians.⁶⁷
- **December 2019:** HHN is named as one of the militias that participated in the killing of more than 500 peaceful protesters in Baghdad.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ Iranian Proxies Terrorist Sanctions Act, H.R. 4238, 115th Cong. (2017), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4238/text?r=2&s=1> [39].

⁶¹ Stephanie Nebehay and Tom Miles, “Syrian Army, Iraqi Militia Accused of ‘Slaughter’ of Civilians in Aleppo,” Reuters, December 13, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-un/syrian-army-iraqi-militia-accused-of-slaughter-of-civilians-in-aleppo-idUSKBN1420ZX> [20].

⁶² Ali Hashem, “Iraq’s Shiite Forces Claim Victory over IS,” Al-Monitor, March 16, 2015, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-shiite-hezbollah-nujaba-victory-islamic-state.html> [6].

⁶³ Amir Toumaj and Caleb Weiss, “Iraqi Militia Parades in Southern Aleppo,” Long War Journal, August 12, 2016, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/08/iraqi-militia-parades-in-southern-aleppo.php> [40]; Scott Lucas, “Syria Daily, Oct 20: Regime-Russia-Iran Press for Breakthrough Near Aleppo,” EA Worldview, October 2, 2015, <https://eaworldview.com/2015/10/syria-daily-regime-russia-iran-press-for-breakthrough-near-aleppo/> [41].

⁶⁴ Bill Roggio and Caleb Weiss, “Iraqi Shiite Militia Leader Says He Would Overthrow Government If Ordered by Iran’s Supreme Leader,” Long War Journal, November 12, 2015, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/11/us-designated-terrorist-of-iraqi-militia-reportedly-in-aleppo.php> [42]; Thomas Joscelyn, “Assad Regime, Allies Break Islamic State’s Siege of Air Base in Aleppo,” Long War Journal, November 11, 2015, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/11/assad-regime-allies-break-islamic-states-siege-of-air-base-in-aleppo.php> [43].

⁶⁵ Maks Czuperski, Emma Beals et al, “Foreign Fighters—From Many Lands,” in *Breaking Aleppo* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, 2017), <https://www.publications.atlanticcouncil.org/breakingaleppo/militant-groups/> [44]; Amir Toumaj, “Iraqi PMF Attempts to Cut Off Islamic State in Mosul,” Long War Journal, November 4, 2016, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/11/iraqi-popular-mobilization-forces-attempt-to-cut-off-islamic-state-in-mosul.php> [45].

⁶⁶ Ahmad Majidiyar, “Iran-Backed Iraqi Group Seizes ‘Large’ Areas in Southeastern Syria,” Middle East Institute, July 14, 2017, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/iran-backed-iraqi-group-seizes-large-areas-southeastern-syria> [46].

⁶⁷ Kosar Nawzad, “Iraqi Shia Militias Kill Two Unarmed Kurds in Iran: Rights Group,” Kurdistan 24, May 2, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/8b22ff69-6d4d-4d70-92f5-a2c820e125ef> [47].

⁶⁸ Seth J. Frantzman, “Iraq’s Government Linked to Murder as Protest Leaders Assassinated,” *Jerusalem Post*, December 17, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Iraqs-government-linked-to-murder-as-protest-leaders-assassinated-611217> [48].

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN)

Designations:

Designations by U.S. Government:



Designated as a terrorist organization by the United States on March 7, 2019.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Public Notice 10,703, 84 Fed. Reg. 9585, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-03-15/pdf/2019-04508.pdf> [10].

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN)

Associations:

Ties to Extremist Entities:

Mahdi Army

Kaabi was the military commander of Muqtada al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army until 2007.⁷⁰ Kaabi was also a student of Sadr’s father, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr, and maintains important relationships with other Sadrists in the Madhi Army.⁷¹



[Hezbollah](#) [49]

Kaabi was pictured with Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah during a visit to Lebanon in 2018.⁷² He has since returned for subsequent visits. Kaabi has declared HHN’s “complete solidarity and support” with and for Hezbollah.⁷³ In an interview with Al-Nujaba TV, Kaabi stated, “Both Nasrallah and Mughniyah sympathized with us. Both said that they had tried to contact us many times prior to the events in Najaf, and that had they succeeded we would have been able to accomplish greater victories, and to change the balance of power significantly. But they said that this was the will of the Lord and that Hizbullah will not deny us anything. They said: ‘All of our capabilities and expertise are at your disposal.’”⁷⁴



[Islamic](#)

[Revolutionary Guard Corps \(IRGC\)](#) [50]

The IRGC-Quds Force provided direct support to HHN, which included a visit by commander Qasem Soleimani to HHN positions in Aleppo in 2016.⁷⁵ HHN was formed in 2013 with direct support from the IRGC.⁷⁶ Kaabi openly admitted in 2015 that “technical and logistical support comes from the [Iranian] Islamic Republic.”⁷⁷ In a 2015 interview, Kaabi acknowledged that they “received military and logistical support from the Republic [of Iran] in continuing form and according to the needs of the fronts.”⁷⁸ He also confirmed the gifting of a reconnaissance aircraft (known as Yasir) from the IRGC.⁷⁹ After Soleimani’s death, Kaabi was pictured with the new Quds Force commander, Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani, in January 2020.⁸⁰



[Asaib Ahl al-Haq \(AAH\)](#) [51]

HHN is often described as a breakaway group from AAH, which Kaabi co-founded alongside current AAH leader Qais al-Khazali.⁸¹ Kaabi led AAH from 2007 to 2010 while Khazali was in an Iraqi prison.⁸²

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN)



[Kata'ib Hezbollah](#)

(KH) [52]

KH representatives were seen at a PMF meeting after U.S. forces killed the leader of KH in January 2020.⁸³ Al-Monitor analyst Tamer Badawi claims that HHN has been chosen by the IRGC to lead a new unifying process between all Iranian-backed PMF groups after Soleimani's death.⁸⁴ KH's presence at the meeting indicates an intrinsic link between the two groups with potential for greater collaboration.⁸⁵

Ties to Extremist Individuals:

[Qasem Soleimani](#) [3]

Qasem Soleimani was pictured inspecting HHN positions in Aleppo in 2016 and participated in HHN-IRGC meetings on at least five occasions.⁸⁶ After Soleimani's death in January 2020, Kaabi visited his family.⁸⁷

[Qais al-Khazali](#) [53]

Kaabi co-founded AAH alongside current AAH leader Qais al-Khazali and led the organization from 2007 to 2010 while negotiating for Khazali's release from an Iraqi prison.⁸⁸

⁷⁰ Bill Roggio and Caleb Weiss, "Muqtada al Sadr Reactivates Mahdi Army, Promised Day Brigade," Long War Journal, January 3, 2020, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/01/muqtada-al-sadr-reactivates-mahdi-army-promised-day-brigade.php> [54]; James Haines-Young, "US Sanctions Iranian Militia in Iraq: Here's What You Need to Know about Harakat Hezbollah Al Nujaba," *National* (Abu Dhabi), March 6, 2019, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/us-sanctions-iranian-militia-in-iraq-here-s-what-you-need-to-know-about-harakat-hezbollah-al-nujaba-1.833952> [27]; Tamer Badawi, "What is Role of Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba in Uniting PMU?," Al-Monitor, January 28, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/iraq-iran-pmu-nujaba-muqtada.html> [16].

⁷¹ Bill Roggio and Caleb Weiss, "Muqtada al Sadr Reactivates Mahdi Army, Promised Day Brigade," Long War Journal, January 3, 2020, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/01/muqtada-al-sadr-reactivates-mahdi-army-promised-day-brigade.php> [54]; Tamer Badawi, "What is role of Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba in uniting PMU?," Al-Monitor, January 28, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/iraq-iran-pmu-nujaba-muqtada.html> [16].

⁷² "Al-Nujaba Militia Leader Sheikh Akram Al-Kaabi: IRGC and Lebanese Hizbullah Officers Have Guided Us in Fighting the American Forces Since 2004: 'We Started Using Explosively Formed Penetrators... They Would Explode inside the Tank, Destroying It and Killing' the Americans Inside," Middle East Media Research Institute, January 24, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/al-nujaba-militia-leader-sheikh-akram-al-kaabi-irgc-and-lebanese-hizbullah-officers-have> [38].

⁷³ "U.S. Sanctions Iranian Proxies in Iraq," United States Institute for Peace, March 5, 2019, <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2019/mar/05/us-sanctions-iranian-proxies-iraq> [22]; Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Interview with the Leader of Harakat al-Nujaba: Interview and Analysis," Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog, April 15, 2015, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/04/interview-with-the-leader-of-harakat-al-nujaba> [9]; Babak Dehghanpisheh, "The Iraqi Militia Helping Iran Carve a Road to Damascus," Reuters, September 22, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-iraq-nujaba/> [55].

⁷⁴ "Al-Nujaba Militia Leader Sheikh Akram Al-Kaabi: IRGC and Lebanese Hizbullah Officers Have Guided Us in Fighting the American Forces Since 2004: 'We Started Using Explosively Formed Penetrators... They Would Explode inside the Tank, Destroying It and Killing' the Americans Inside," Middle East Media Research Institute, January 24, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/al-nujaba-militia-leader-sheikh-akram-al-kaabi-irgc-and-lebanese-hizbullah-officers-have> [38].

⁷⁵ Amir Toumaj, "Array of Pro-Syrian Government Forces Advances in Aleppo," Long War Journal, December 9, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/12/array-of-pro-syrian-government-forces-advance-in-aleppo.php> [56].

⁷⁶ "Shia Militia Group Says It Will Topple Any Iraqi Gov. Hostile to Iran in 'Weeks,'" *Kurdistan 24*, August 6, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/bf35833b-2b55-4df3-b6ec-1a4cf5da2d78> [11].

⁷⁷ Ali Hashem, "Iraq's Shiite Forces Claim Victory Over IS," Al-Monitor, March 16, 2015, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-shiite-hezbollah-nujaba-victory-islamic-state.html> [6].

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- ⁷⁸ Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Interview with the Leader of Harakat al-Nujaba: Interview and Analysis," Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog, April 15, 2015, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/04/interview-with-the-leader-of-harakat-al-nujaba> [9].
- ⁷⁹ Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Interview with the Leader of Harakat al-Nujaba: Interview and Analysis," Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog, April 15, 2015, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/04/interview-with-the-leader-of-harakat-al-nujaba> [9].
- ⁸⁰ Laurie Mylroie, "US Sanctions Pro-Iran Militia in Iraq as Terrorist Group," Kurdistan 24, March 7, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/7abb816f-93b4-4525-b1a2-ca39cf791385> [7].
- ⁸¹ Ali Hashem, "Iraq's Shiite Forces Claim Victory over IS," Al-Monitor, March 16, 2015, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-shiite-hezbollah-nujaba-victory-islamic-state.html> [6]; Amir Toumaj, "Array of Pro-Syrian Government Forces Advances in Aleppo," Long War Journal, December 9, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/12/array-of-pro-syrian-government-forces-advance-in-aleppo.php> [56].
- ⁸² Sam Wyer, *The Resurgence of Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, 2012), 12, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf> [57].
- ⁸³ Tamer Badawi, "What is Role of Haraket Hezbollah al-Nujaba in Uniting PMU?," Al-Monitor, January 28, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/iraq-iran-pmu-nujaba-muqtada.html> [16].
- ⁸⁴ Tamer Badawi, "What is Role of Haraket Hezbollah al-Nujaba in Uniting PMU?," Al-Monitor, January 28, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/iraq-iran-pmu-nujaba-muqtada.html> [16].
- ⁸⁵ Tamer Badawi, "What is Role of Haraket Hezbollah al-Nujaba in Uniting PMU?," Al-Monitor, January 28, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/iraq-iran-pmu-nujaba-muqtada.html> [16].
- ⁸⁶ Nakissa Jahanbani "Beyond Soleimani: Implications for Iran's Proxy Network in Iraq and Syria," Combatting Terrorism Center, January 10, 2020, <https://ctc.usma.edu/beyond-soleimani-implications-irans-proxy-network-iraq-syria/> [58]; Amir Toumaj, "Soleimani's Presence in Aleppo Underscores Strategy of Crushing Rebels," Long War Journal, September 7, 2016, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/09/soleimanis-presence-in-aleppo-underscores-strategy-of-crushing-rebels.php> [59].
- ⁸⁷ "Commanders of Shi'ite Militias in Iraq Continue to Threaten U.S. Forces While Seeking to Mend Internal Rifts," Middle East Media Research Institute, January 13, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/commanders-shiite-militias-iraq-continue-threaten-us-forces-while-seeking-mend-internal> [25].
- ⁸⁸ Ali Hashem, "Iraq's Shiite Forces Claim Victory over IS," Al-Monitor, March 16, 2015, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-shiite-hezbollah-nujaba-victory-islamic-state.html> [6]; Amir Toumaj, "Array of Pro-Syrian Government Forces Advances in Aleppo," Long War Journal, December 9, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/12/array-of-pro-syrian-government-forces-advance-in-aleppo.php> [56]; Tamer Badawi, "What is Role of Haraket Hezbollah al-Nujaba in Uniting PMU?," Al-Monitor, January 28, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/iraq-iran-pmu-nujaba-muqtada.html> [16]; Sam Wyer, *The Resurgence of Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2012), 12, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf> [57].

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN)

Media Coverage:

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN)

Rhetoric:



[60]

[*Unnamed HHN official, August 2019 \[60\]*](#)

"[The] Americans know that if any Iraqi government takes a step against Iran, it will be toppled in some few weeks."⁸⁹



[61]

[*Nasr al-Shammari, May 13, 2019 \[61\]*](#)

"Confrontation with the United States will only stop once it is eliminated from the region, along with the Zionist entity."⁹⁰



[62]

[*Akram al-Kaabi, March 2019 \[62\]*](#)

"We in the Iraqi resistance stand with [Lebanese] Hizbollah...and we will stand with Hizbollah in any Israeli attack or action against it."⁹¹



[63]

[*Akram al-Kaabi, January 2019 \[63\]*](#)

"...[W]e are fighting a policy - the policy of the U.S. and British regimes, or the entire Zionist occupation. The Zionists constitute an army for which a state was created and for which they want to create a people. All the forces and all the Israelis on the land of Palestine are occupiers - even the newborn babies. There are no exceptions. They constitute an army brought over by the British occupiers, who created this cancerous tumor and planted it in the region."⁹²



[64]

[*Akram al-Kaabi, February 2018 \[64\]*](#)

"Israel is weaker than a spider web. Islamic resistance is capable of confronting the axis of evil and annihilating the occupying Zionist regime."⁹³



[65]

[*Akram al-Kaabi, December 2017 \[65\]*](#)

"Trump's foolish decision to make Jerusalem the Zionist capital will spark a major uprising to excise this entity (Israel) from the body of the Islamic nation, and is a legitimate justification to target American troops."⁹⁴



[66]

[*Akram al-Kaabi, August 2017 \[66\]*](#)

Kaabi sends letter to top Hezbollah official professing "complete solidarity and support with your loud cry against the oppressive Zionist regime."⁹⁵

[*Akram al-Kaabi, November 2015 \[67\]*](#)

"My enemy's enemy cannot be my friend if he is already my enemy. America is an enemy."

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“[T]he PMF cannot stage a coup unless a religious authority makes a decision to change the rule in Iraq. If a religious authority decides, we rely on Allah and go ahead. It would be normal for us to implement.

[67]

“We should not have such an alliance because America is corrupt in every detail... America and Daesh [pejorative term for the Islamic State] are two faces of the same coin.”⁹⁶



[Bashar al-Saidi, October 20, 2015](#) [68]

“It makes no difference whether we’re in Iraq or Syria, we consider it the same front line because we are fighting the same enemy. We are all the followers of [Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali] Khamenei and will go and fight to defend the holy sites and Shiites everywhere.”⁹⁷

[68]



[Akram al-Kaabi, June 2015](#) [69]

After an explosion near Abu Ghraib in Iraq kills 10 members of Asaib Ahl al-Haq:

“All resistance movements will seek revenge in a timely manner.”⁹⁸

[69]



[Akram al-Kaabi, March 2015](#) [70]

“The US government is an unjust and arrogant government and we are not fighting with them in the same trench. Their presence in Iraq is negative and provocative, and we send out our troops and have informed the Iraqi government that we will target U.S. forces if they get near our troops. Our air defenses are ready to target their planes, which are helping IS by giving them weapons and ammunition.”⁹⁹

[70]



[Unknown HHN member, 2015](#) [71]

Released a *nasheed* hailing Qasem Soleimani “as the ‘living martyr’ (*al-shaheed al-hayy*) of Ayatollah Khamenei.”¹⁰⁰

[71]

⁸⁹ “Shia Militia Group Says It Will Topple Any Iraqi Gov. Hostile to Iran in ‘Weeks,’” Kurdistan 24, August 6, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/bf35833b-2b55-4df3-b6ec-1a4cf5da2d78> [11].

⁹⁰ Abu Adnan Zeed, “Iraqi Factions a Wild Card in US-Iran Blame Game,” Al-Monitor, May 18, 2019, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/05/iraq-us-troops-iran-nujaba.html> [72].

⁹¹ Laurie Mylroie, “US Sanctions Pro-Iran Militia in Iraq as Terrorist Group,” Kurdistan 24, March 7, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/7abb816f-93b4-4525-b1a2-ca39cf791385> [7].

⁹² “Al-Nujaba Militia Leader Sheikh Akram Al-Kaabi: IRGC and Lebanese Hizbullah Officers Have Guided Us in Fighting the American Forces since 2004: ‘We Started Using Explosively Formed Penetrators... They Would Explode inside the Tank, Destroying It and Killing’ the Americans Inside,” Middle East Media Research Institute, January 24, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/al-nujaba-militia-leader-sheikh-akram-al-kaabi-irgc-and-lebanese-hizbullah-officers-have> [38].

⁹³ Ahmad Majidiyar “Qom-Based Cleric Lashes out at U.S. for Blacklisting Harakat al-Nujaba,” Middle East Institute, November 28, 2017, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/qom-based-cleric-lashes-out-us-blacklisting-harakat-al-nujaba> [73].

⁹⁴ “بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ... : ” Al-Nujaba, December 8, 2017,

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<https://bit.ly/38CtvRq> [74].

⁹⁵ Babak Dehghanpisheh, "The Iraqi Militia Helping Iran Carve a Road to Damascus," Reuters, September 22, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-iraq-nujaba/> [55].

⁹⁶ Bill Roggio and Caleb Weiss, "Iraqi Shiite Militia Leader Says He Would Overthrow Government If Ordered by Iran's Supreme Leader," Long War Journal, November 12, 2015, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/11/us-designated-terrorist-of-iraqi-militia-reportedly-in-aleppo.php> [42].

⁹⁷ Scott Lucas, "Syria Daily, Oct 20: Regime-Russia-Iran Press for Breakthrough Near Aleppo," EA Worldview, October 2, 2015, <https://eaworldview.com/2015/10/syria-daily-regime-russia-iran-press-for-breakthrough-near-aleppo/> [41].

⁹⁸ Bill Roggio, "Iraqi Shiite Militia Commander Threatens to Attack US," Long War Journal, June 9, 2015, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/06/iraqi-shiite-militia-commander-threatens-to-attack-us.php> [75].

⁹⁹ Ali Hashem, "Iraq's Shiite Forces Claim Victory over IS," Al-Monitor, March 16, 2015, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-shiite-hezbollah-nujaba-victory-islamic-state.html> [6].

¹⁰⁰ Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Interview with the leader of Harakat al-Nujaba: Interview and Analysis," Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog, April 15, 2015, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/04/interview-with-the-leader-of-harakat-al-nujaba> [9].