

*Asaib Ahl al-Haq*

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**Name:** Asaib Ahl al-Haq

**Type of Organization:**

- Militia
- political party
- religious
- social services provider
- terrorist
- transnational
- violent

**Ideologies and Affiliations:**

- Iranian-sponsored
- Islamist
- jihadist
- Khomeinist
- Shiite

**Place of Origin:**

Iraq

**Year of Origin:**

2006

**Founder(s):**

Qais al-Khazali

**Places of Operation:**

Iraq, Syria, Lebanon

**Overview**

*Executive Summary:*

Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) is an Iranian-backed Shiite militia and political party operating primarily in Iraq, as well as in Syria and Lebanon.<sup>1</sup> The group is implicated in numerous acts of sectarian violence and potential war crimes in Iraq and Syria.<sup>2</sup>

Formed in 2006 by [Qais al-Khazali](#), AAH has between 7,000 and 10,000 members and is one of the most powerful Shiite militias in Iraq.<sup>3</sup> Until the U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq in December 2011, AAH launched more than 6,000 attacks on American and Iraqi forces, including highly sophisticated operations and targeted kidnappings of Westerners.<sup>4</sup> The group seeks to promote Iran's political and religious influence in Iraq, maintain Shiite control over Iraq, and oust any remaining Western vestiges from the country.<sup>5</sup>

AAH broke away from the Mahdi Army (JAM), the militia run by influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, in 2006.<sup>6</sup> In August 2007, the U.S. designated AAH a "Special Group," a label given to Iranian-backed Shiite militias operating in Iraq.<sup>7</sup> On January 3, 2020, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the U.S. government would designate AAH as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.<sup>8</sup> AAH is one of three prominent Iraqi Shiite militias funded and trained by Iran's external military wing, the Quds Force of the [Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps \(IRGC\)](#). AAH overtly displays its loyalty to Iran's leaders, including the current supreme leader, [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#), and his predecessor, the late Ayatollah [Ruhollah Khomeini](#).<sup>9</sup> In Iraq, and reportedly in Syria as well, the group operates under the command of Iran's Quds Force.<sup>10</sup>

Following the January 3, 2020, assassination of Quds Force commander [Qasem Soleimani](#) in Iraq, AAH joined with other Iranian-

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sponsored Iraqi militias in vowing revenge on the United States.<sup>11</sup>

Following the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in December 2011, AAH announced its intention to lay down its weapons and enter Iraqi politics.<sup>12</sup> The group opened a number of political offices and religious schools and offered social services to widows and orphans.<sup>13</sup> According to a Reuters report, “The model [AAH] uses is Hezbollah in Lebanon,” another Iranian proxy.<sup>14</sup>

The Shiite-led Iraqi government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki reportedly welcomed AAH into politics,<sup>15</sup> noting that Khazali had “committed no crime under Iraqi law” and was therefore “welcome to play a role in public life.”<sup>16</sup> According to analyst Sam Wyer, AAH “expanded at an unprecedented and alarming rate.”<sup>17</sup> The group formed a political bloc, al-Sadiqun (the Honest Ones), and ran under al-Maliki’s State of Law bloc in the April 2014 Iraqi national elections, winning one seat.<sup>18</sup> AAH’s political branch has since sought to distance itself from the group’s militant branch, accused by international human rights organizations of various war crimes. In an effort to soften its image, AAH has removed the rifle from its official logo and has begun referring to itself as the “Asaib movement.”<sup>19</sup> In May 2017, the group earned a license to operate as a political party and run in the next Iraqi elections under its own name.<sup>20</sup>

Since entering politics, AAH has not fulfilled its vow to halt armed resistance, instead continuing to carry out sectarian violence,<sup>21</sup> execute homophobic attacks,<sup>22</sup> and threaten the “interests” of Western countries participating in strikes in Syria.<sup>23</sup> One of AAH’s Syrian offshoots—the IRGC-backed Harakat al Nujaba militia—is reportedly the largest Iraqi militia operating in Aleppo, where reports of war crimes against Sunni civilians are widespread. Another AAH offshoot, Imam Ali Brigades, dispatched forces to both Aleppo and Palmyra in 2016.<sup>24</sup> AAH forces are themselves reported to maintain unofficial units in Syria under the direct control of Qasem Soleimani.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, the group is itself suspected of carrying out war crimes, alleged to be behind a series of abductions, killings, and torture targeting hundreds of Sunni boys and men in Iraq’s eastern Diyala province.<sup>26</sup> AAH has also recruited former ISIS members in the province, who are used to stoke anti-Kurdish violence in the areas under its control.<sup>27</sup>

AAH is one of the leading militias in Iraq’s anti-ISIS volunteer forces, Haashid Shaabi (also known as the Popular Mobilization Forces/Units or PMF/PMU).<sup>28</sup> Despite reports of sectarian atrocities and war crimes, AAH and other PMF militias—including the [Badr Organization](#) and the U.S.-designated [Kata’ib Hezbollah](#)—were formally recognized by Iraqi Parliament in November 2016.<sup>29</sup> In January 2018, AAH, [Kata’ib Hezbollah](#) (KH), and the [Badr Organization](#) joined with other PMF units to form the Fatah Alliance political party in preparation for Iraq’s May 2018 elections.<sup>30</sup> The alliance won 47 parliamentary seats in the election, though the parliament soon after initiated a manual recount.<sup>31</sup> In June, Fatah formed a coalition agreement with Muqtada al-Sadr’s Sairoon Alliance, which won the Iraq elections.<sup>32</sup> Following a country-wide recount, AAH was awarded 15 seats in the parliament.<sup>33</sup> This new coalition places Fatah—and by extension AAH—in a position to influence the new Iraq government. Under the newly formed government, AAH member Abdul-Amir Hamdani was given the position of minister of culture.<sup>34</sup> On July 13, 2018, Iraqi protesters in the country’s south attacked the political offices of AAH and other Iran-backed groups as they called for Iran to withdraw from Iraq.<sup>35</sup>

On July 1, 2019, Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi issued a decree ordering the militias of the PMF to choose between full integration into the Iraqi armed forces or disarmament by July 31. The prime minister’s decree stated that the PMF factions had to choose between either political or paramilitary activity, and if they choose politics they would not be allowed to carry weapons.<sup>36</sup> The decree was an attempt by Abdul Mahdi at curtailing the autonomy of Iranian-backed militias, which boast more than 120,000 fighters. Some critics suggested the United States and Saudi Arabia instigated the decree after U.S. officials concluded that drone attacks on Saudi Arabia’s oil pipeline in May 2018 were launched from Iraq, not Yemen, which raised the concerns over the activities of Iran-backed militias in Iraq.<sup>37</sup>

U.S. officials want the Iraqi government to do more to rein in Iranian-allied militias that have grown in power since they helped win the war against ISIS, including preventing them from using Iraqi territory as a launchpad for attacks against the American military or its allies. According to Mahdi’s decree, all PMF factions must abandon their old names and receive new names in compliance with the regulations of the Iraqi army. The decree forbade political parties and parliamentary blocs from having ties with the PMF. Also, all the headquarters, economic offices, and checkpoints manned by militias are to be shut down.<sup>38</sup> Unlike other leaders in the PMF, AAH’s leader Qais al-Khazali supported the decree.<sup>39</sup> Abdul Mahdi issued a new decree in September 2019 that restructured the PMF’s leadership.<sup>40</sup>

### *Doctrine:*

AAH is a religiously motivated group with allegiance to Iran. The group is demonstrably anti-American and sectarian in its ideology.

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AAH seeks to establish an Islamist, Shiite-controlled Iraq and promote Iranian objectives.<sup>41</sup> While AAH has origins within the Iraqi Sadrist movement, the group is openly loyal to Iranian leaders, most notably the Ayatollahs Khomeini and Khamenei. Similarly, AAH shows deference to the Guardianship of the Jurists (*velayat-e faqih*), a judicial system that serves as one of the cornerstones of Iran’s Islamic Revolution system.<sup>42</sup> Writing for the Institute for the Study of War, analyst Sam Wyer characterizes AAH as a Khomeinist organization that aims “to create a suitable environment for the return of Imam Mahdi through the imposition of strict Shi’a Islamic governance.”<sup>43</sup> Wyer’s assessment is corroborated by *Guardian* Middle East correspondent Martin Chulov, who writes that AAH is a “proxy arm of the Revolutionary Guards’ al-Quds Brigades, whose main brief is to export Iran’s 30-year-old Islamic Revolution.”<sup>44</sup> AAH is also ideologically aligned with Iranian proxy Hezbollah, a Shiite Lebanese terrorist group.<sup>45</sup>

AAH is also virulently anti-American, a stance that has not abated since the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in December 2011. In March 2015, for example, AAH boycotted the Haashid Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces) attack against ISIS in Tikrit because AAH rejected U.S. airpower support.<sup>46</sup> By the end of the month, AAH only agreed to rejoin the battle after Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi promised that the U.S. would stop its airstrikes.<sup>47</sup> AAH Spokesman Naim al-Aboudi said that the prime minister “realized this battle can’t be finished” without AAH and other militias,<sup>48</sup> demonstrating AAH’s continued prioritizing of its anti-American position above its other goals.

As a Shiite, Iranian-backed group, AAH also follows and implements a sectarian ideology that has deepened the fault lines between Sunnis and Shiites. According to Martin Chulov, AAH leader Qais al-Khazali’s speeches have galvanized “thousands” of Iraqi Shiites to fight for Assad’s regime in Syria, worrying many Iraqi communities about “a sectarian conflict that increasingly respects no border.”<sup>49</sup> In August 2012, AAH militants reportedly bombed the Sunni Sabatayn Mosque in Iraq, an attack that stirred a new wave of sectarian tensions in the country.<sup>50</sup> Since then, Human Rights Watch has documented numerous AAH attacks on Sunnis in Iraq in which AAH militants target Sunni mosques or towns.<sup>51</sup>

In December 2016, AAH leader Qais al-Khazali was interviewed on Iraqi TV saying that “[a]fter ISIS, Kurds are the greatest problem.”<sup>52</sup> In response, a representative from the Kurdish Peshmerga ministry said that Khazali is responsible for “behead[ing] hundreds of Iraqis based on [their] ethnic or religious identity” and asserting that he “must be tried for these crimes.”<sup>53</sup>

In line with this sectarian strife, AAH members have reportedly appropriated the derogatory term *rafidah* (a pejorative meaning “rejecters” that some Sunnis use for Shiites) as a badge of honor and “self-identity.” A January 2014 *Foreign Policy* piece reported that on an AAH linked-website, AAH proudly identified its fighters as *rafidah* “as a sign of mocking defiance against their foes.”<sup>54</sup>

Ahead of the May 2018 Iraqi elections, AAH updated their website with a new political platform that reflected a more moderate position. The core of AAH’s platform is achieving “the supreme interests of the Iraqi state in preserving its sovereignty and guaranteeing its freedom in its decision-making, achieving social and economic welfare, and stabilizing the security of our people according to the available capabilities.” Yet while AAH voices support for the Iraqi constitution, the group argues that it “was written in particular circumstances and contains several paragraphs that must be reviewed and adapted to align with the nature and need of the Iraqi people.” AAH’s platform also denounces the use of violence to “impose convictions” on the population and calls for respecting “religious, sectarian, and national diversity.” Lastly, while they make no explicit reference to Iraq’s relationship with the United States or Iran, they claim that “there is a real need to review the working machinery for the Iraqi embassies and representatives in all of the countries of the world and appointing ambassadors and diplomatic personnel.”<sup>55</sup>

AAH has so far taken no actions to support these new positions.

### *Organizational Structure:*

AAH is led by its founder, Qais al-Khazali, who broke off from the Mahdi Army (a.k.a. Jaysh al-Mahdi or JAM), a Sadrist militia, in 2006. According to a 2012 report by analyst Sam Wyer, Khazali sits on AAH’s five-person board of trustees along with two deputies. As an Iranian proxy, AAH coordinates with senior Iranian commanders, notably IRGC-Quds Force leader Qasem Soleimani.<sup>56</sup>

AAH first began as a military unit within JAM. With the 2003 Iraq War, AAH reorganized into battalions assigned to four sectors: Baghdad, Maysan, Najaf, and Samarra. When Khazali made AAH an independent group in 2006, he retained this structure. AAH’s military arrangement is thought to be based on fellow Shiite militant group Hezbollah, with which the group has close ties.<sup>57</sup> Within the PMF structure AAH operates three brigades, the 41st, 42nd, and 43rd.<sup>58</sup> AAH dominates the northern Baghdad belts and the southern Salah al-Din region of Iraq, including Taji, Dujail, and Balad. AAH also has economic and political power in the area from Samarra to Baghdad.<sup>59</sup>

Since the U.S. withdrew its forces from Iraq in December 2011, AAH has expanded significantly into politics, “opening a string of political offices”

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throughout Iraq, according to the *Washington Post*.<sup>60</sup> AAH runs two political offices in Baghdad, and others in the Iraqi cities of Basra, Najaf, Hillah, al-Kalis, and Tal Afar. AAH has also sent political representatives to the southern Iraqi provinces of Dhi Qar, al-Muthanna, and Maysan to meet with tribal and minority leaders. In the April 2014 parliamentary elections, AAH ran in alliance with Prime Minister Maliki's Dawlat al-Qanoon (State of Law) in a political bloc known as al-Sadiqun (the Honest Ones).<sup>61</sup> In addition to political operations within Iraq, AAH has also conducted political outreach outside of Iraq's borders, AAH has maintained maintaining political representation in Beirut since early 2011.<sup>62</sup> Despite reports of sectarian atrocities and war crimes, AAH and other PMF militias (including the Badr Organization and the U.S.-designated Kata'ib Hezbollah) were formally recognized by Iraqi Parliament in November 2016.<sup>63</sup> In May 2017, AAH received a license from the Iraqi government to operate a political party under its own name.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to operating in Iraq, AAH militants have also reportedly operated in Syria under the command of IRGC Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani.<sup>65</sup> The group's Syrian offshoot—IRGC-backed Harakat al Nujaba militia—is the largest Iraqi militia operating in Aleppo, dispatching an estimated 3,000-4,000 fighters to Aleppo.<sup>66</sup> Another AAH offshoot, Imam Ali Brigades, dispatched forces to both Aleppo and Palmyra in 2016.<sup>67</sup>

AAH has continued to expand its influence in Iraq during the fight against ISIS. In March 2017, AAH leader Qais al-Khazali gave a speech calling for an Iraqi university run by the PMF paramilitary forces. As Khazali said, Iraq needs a “strong and effective ‘PMU University, through which we could address our enemies and tell them, ‘If you fear us now, you must know that the PMU is present in every university, college and department.’” Analysts have noted with concern that the call appears to mimic Iranian-style “cultural revolution” tactics from the 1970s. Following Khazali's remarks, he released a statement saying that Iraqi students “need to organize their ranks, which would allow them to overthrow any corrupt government or regime.”<sup>68</sup>

In January 2018, AAH, Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), and the Badr Organization joined with other PMF units to form the Fatah Alliance political party in preparation for Iraq's May 2018 elections.<sup>69</sup> As a member of the Fatah Alliance, AAH exerts political influence in Iraq's government. Prior to the elections, Khazali claimed that “the next prime minister will be someone chosen by the Fatah Alliance or selected in accordance with conditions set by the Fateh Alliance.”<sup>70</sup> In May, the alliance exceeded expectations, winning 47 parliamentary seats in the election. The following month, Iraq's parliament ordered a manual recount of the 11 million votes amid claims of fraud.<sup>71</sup> Notwithstanding, on June 11, the Fatah Alliance formed a coalition government with Muqtada al-Sadr's Sairoon Alliance, which received the largest number of parliamentary seats in the elections. The coalition placed Fatah in a position to obtain high-level government positions and have a final say in who will be Iraq's next prime minister.<sup>72</sup> AAH, specifically, won 15 parliamentary seats in the May 2018 Iraqi elections, an increase from the one seat it won in 2014. One of AAH's victorious candidates, Hassan Salam, was a former field commander in Sadr's Mahdi Army who oversaw violent anti-Sunni gangs and later helped send Shiite jihadists to Syria.<sup>73</sup> In June 2020, AAH succeeded in swaying new Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to sack his nominee for Iraq's cultural minister in favor of a candidate selected by AAH, Hassan Nadhem.<sup>74</sup>

### *Financing:*

AAH has received training, arms, and financial support from Iran, particularly through Iran's external military branch, the IRGC-Quds Force, as well as from Iran's Lebanese proxy Hezbollah.<sup>75</sup> Colonel Rick Welch, a retired U.S. Army intelligence officer, said that during the 2007 U.S. surge in Iraq, Iran was giving AAH “\$20 million a month or some outrageous figure like that” in order to train AAH fighters.<sup>76</sup> After U.S. forces withdrew from Iraq in December 2011, the financial pipeline from Iran continued. As of 2012, Iran was giving AAH \$5 million in cash and weapons per month, according to an Iraqi close to the group. As of March 2014, the group was receiving an estimated \$1.5 million to \$2 million a month from Iran.<sup>77</sup>

AAH receives arms primarily from Iran and Russia, according to findings by Amnesty International. In January 2017, Amnesty International outlined various human rights abuses documented by AAH and other extremist Shiite militias in Iraq, and called upon foreign states to cease their “irresponsible arms transfers” to the extremist groups.<sup>78</sup> Amnesty International noted that AAH stands accused of egregious human rights violations and possible war crimes, including a wave of enforced disappearances, abductions, killings, and torture of Sunni boys and men.<sup>79</sup> The group also stands accused of employing child soldiers, potentially as young as 11 years old.<sup>80</sup>

### *Recruitment:*

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AAH has recruited thousands of fighters, including child soldiers, according to findings by Human Rights Watch.<sup>81</sup> Fifteen-year-old Muthanna Qasim al-Kibali, for example, was killed in October 2015 while fighting alongside AAH.<sup>82</sup>

AAH recruitment focuses on two strategies: traditional propaganda efforts to raise the group's profile, and a comprehensive religious system aimed to indoctrinate and recruit members. AAH has also emulated groups like ISIS by using social media to expand recruitment throughout the Middle East, South Asia, and the West.<sup>83</sup> The group also owns and operates Iraqi TV channel al-Aahd.<sup>84</sup>

One of the main ways AAH draws recruits is by advertising itself as a protector of the Shiite community within Iraq and abroad. AAH uses posters and issues calls for recruits on Iraqi television stations, often emphasizing its connection with Iran and Hezbollah.<sup>85</sup> One AAH member said that he was drawn to AAH because it was "protecting the Shiite community inside Iraq and abroad as well."<sup>86</sup> In the past, the most important galvanizing point for Iraqis to join AAH and go to Syria to fight alongside Assad forces was the defense of the Sayeda Zenab shrine, a Shiite holy site in a Damascus suburb.<sup>87</sup>

AAH has seized homes and offices in Baghdad in order to establish recruiting centers where would-be volunteers could go to join other Shiites fighting in Syria.<sup>88</sup> In southern Iraq, posters urge men to join the fight in Syria with other Iraqi Shiites and provide a hotline number to call.<sup>89</sup> In August 2012, AAH distributed over 20,000 posters with AAH's logo; a photograph of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei; and a photograph of the late Iraqi Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr. The posters were plastered on buildings and billboards and also used in street demonstrations.<sup>90</sup>

AAH's second, but perhaps most comprehensive, recruitment strategy is a religious activism and education system. The group has used two mosques in particular, the Sabatayn mosque in Baghdad and the Abdullah al-Radiya mosque in al-Khalis, as hubs for recruitment.<sup>91</sup> AAH leaders give sermons at these mosques, advocating social and religious reform in Iraq in an attempt to entice attendees into joining, financing, or otherwise contributing to AAH's mission.<sup>92</sup>

AAH has expanded its reach through a network of religious schools known as the "Seal of the Apostles." These schools, spread throughout Iraq, serve as propaganda and recruitment facilities for the group. As with its military and political structures, AAH also appears to be emulating Hezbollah by launching social services programs for widows and orphans.<sup>93</sup> In March 2017, AAH leader Qais al-Khazali gave a speech calling for PMF influence in the Iraqi university system, and specifically calling for a "PM[F] University." Analysts have noted with concern that the call appears to mimic Iranian-style "cultural revolution" tactics from the 1970s.<sup>94</sup> AAH's recruitment efforts are funded in large part by Iran.<sup>95</sup>

### *Training:*

Iran's IRGC-Quds Force trains AAH in addition to funding and arming the group.<sup>96</sup> AAH's training program reportedly resembles that of Iran's Lebanese proxy, Hezbollah.<sup>97</sup> As of March 2014, AAH was receiving an estimated \$1.5 million to \$2 million from Iran a month.<sup>98</sup> U.S. Colonel Rick Welch said that during the 2007 U.S. surge in Iraq, Iran was giving AAH "\$20 million a month or some outrageous figure like that" in order to train its fighters.<sup>99</sup>

In the past, AAH militants have received training from Lebanese Hezbollah operative Ali Mussa Daquduq.<sup>100</sup> The Quds Force placed Daquduq in charge of overseeing training for Iraqi Shiite militants in the region, including AAH fighters. From 2005 to 2007, Daquduq was particularly instrumental in recruiting and training AAH fighters.<sup>101</sup>

In June 2014, following calls for volunteer fighters from the Iraqi government and Iraq's highest Shiite religious authority, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, there was a surge in Shiite volunteers to join the fight against ISIS.<sup>102</sup> Many found their way through AAH recruiting centers in Iraq.<sup>103</sup> According to an Iraqi source from 2014, AAH recruits aiming to join Assad forces in Syria are sent to Iran for approximately two weeks of training before going off to fight.<sup>104</sup>

### *Also Known As:*

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- Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq<sup>105</sup>
- Ahl al-Kahf<sup>106</sup>
- Al-Sadiqun<sup>107</sup>
- Band of the Righteous<sup>108</sup>
- Bands of Right<sup>109</sup>
- Bands of the Righteous<sup>110</sup>
- Honest Ones<sup>111</sup>
- Islamic Shiite Resistance in Iraq<sup>112</sup>
- Khazali Faction<sup>113</sup>
- Khazali Network<sup>114</sup>
- League of Righteousness<sup>115</sup>
- League of the Righteous<sup>116</sup>
- People of the Cave<sup>117</sup>
- Special Groups<sup>118</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yaroslav Trofimov, "After Mosul, Will Iraq's Shiite Militias Head to Syria?" Wall Street Journal, December 29, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/after-mosul-will-iraqs-shiite-militias-head-to-syria-next-1483007404>;

Matthew Hilburn, "One-time US Prisoner Now Key in Battling IS," Voice of America, last modified March 15, 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/content/qais-khazali-onetime-us-prisoner-now-key-in-battling-islamic-state/2679431.html>;

"Iraq: High Electoral Commission Grants License To Shiite Militia," Stratfor, May 24, 2017, <https://www.stratfor.com/situation-report/iraq-high-electoral-commission-grants-license-shiite-militia>.

<sup>2</sup> "Iraq: Turning a Blind Eye: the Arming of the Popular Mobilization Units," Amnesty International, January 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde14/5386/2017/en/>;

"Iraq: Ban Abusive Militias from Mosul Operation," Human Rights Watch, July 31, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/31/iraq-ban-abusive-militias-mosul-operation>.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Hilburn, "One-time US Prisoner Now Key in Battling IS," Voice of America, last modified March 15, 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/content/qais-khazali-onetime-us-prisoner-now-key-in-battling-islamic-state/2679431.html>; Phillip Smyth, "Iranian Militias in Iraq's Parliament: Political Outcomes and U.S. Response," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 11, 2018, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iranian-militias-in-iraqs-parliament-political-outcomes-and-u.s.-response>.

<sup>4</sup> Liz Sly, "Iranian-backed militant group in Iraq is recasting itself as a political player," *Washington Post*, February 18, 2013, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/iranian-backed-militant-group-in-iraq-is-recasting-itself-as-a-political-player/2013/02/18/b0154204-77bb-11e2-b102-948929030e64\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iranian-backed-militant-group-in-iraq-is-recasting-itself-as-a-political-player/2013/02/18/b0154204-77bb-11e2-b102-948929030e64_story.html); Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 6, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Knights, "Iran's Ongoing Proxy War in Iraq," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 16, 2009, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-ongoing-proxy-war-in-iraq>.

<sup>6</sup> Marisa Cochrane, "Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network," Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008, 9, [http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/reports/Asaib Ahl al Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/reports/Asaib%20Ahl%20al%20Haq%20and%20the%20Khazali%20Special%20Groups%20Network.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Marisa Cochrane, "Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network," Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008, 9, [http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/reports/Asaib Ahl al Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/reports/Asaib%20Ahl%20al%20Haq%20and%20the%20Khazali%20Special%20Groups%20Network.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> "State Department Terrorist Designations of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and its leaders, Qays and Laith al-Khazali," U.S. Department of State, January 3, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/state-department-terrorist-designations-of-asaib-ahl-al-haq-and-its-leaders-qays-and-laith-al-khazali/>.

<sup>9</sup> Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Lara Jakes, "Iran ayatollah is poster boy for influence in Iraq," Associated Press, September 25, 2012, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/iran-ayatollah-poster-boy-influence-iraq>.

<sup>10</sup> Babak Dehghanpisheh, "Special Report: The fighters of Iraq who answer to Iran," Reuters, November 12, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/12/us-mideast-crisis-militias-specialreport-idUSKCN0IW0ZA20141112>.

<sup>11</sup> Simon Kerr, Chloe Cornish, and Andrew England, "Middle East braced for backlash after killing of Qassem Soleimani," *Financial Times*, January 3, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/52a2fce4-2e0f-11ea-a126-99756bd8f45e>; Shelly Kittleson, "Iraqi armed factions vow revenge for Shiite commanders' killings," *Al-Monitor*, January 5, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/soleimani-assassination-iran-iraq-us-pmu.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 6, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.

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**Key Leaders**



**Qais al-Khazali**

Leader



**Naim al-Aboudi**

Spokesman



**Hassan Salem**

Chair of AAH's political bloc, al-Sadiqun



**Jawad al-Talabawi**

Commander and spokesman



**Akram Al-Kaabi**

Co-founder; former commander of Syrian branch



**Laith al-Khazali**

Leader

## History:

- Following a November 7 drone attack on the Baghdad home of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, suspicions fall on AAH and KH, which deny responsibility.  
Iran also denies its involvement or the involvement of its proxies. Reports emerge of fractures between Iran and its proxies. AAH and KH have reportedly openly defied orders from Ghaani. Khazali and KH commander Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi allegedly tell the Iranians that Tehran's support for Kadhimi receiving a second term in office has broken the allies' bond. Some security analysts in Iraq allege Ghaani has lost control over the Iraqi militias. Sources: Suadad al-Salhy, "Betrayed by Iran? Iraqi armed factions given 'slap' with Kadhimi drone attack," Middle East Eye, November 29, 2021, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraq-iran-kadhimi-drone-attack-armed-groups-betrayed>;  
Jared Malsin, Ghassan Adnan, and Benoit Faucon, "Iraq Struggles to Control Iran-Allied Militias Believed Responsible for Attack on Prime Minister," *Wall Street Journal*, November 9, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/iraq-struggles-to-control-iran-allied-militias-believed-responsible-for-attack-on-prime-minister-11636475084>.
- In mid-June, Quds Force commander Ismail Ghaani Khazali meets with Iraqi militia leaders to order them to maintain calm while Iran and the United States engage in nuclear diplomacy.  
On June 17, Khazali says in a televised speech an "Iraqi" decision had been made to continue targeting the U.S. "occupier" without consideration for the nuclear talks. Sources: John Davison and Ahmed Rasheed, "EXCLUSIVE In tactical shift, Iran grows new, loyal elite from among Iraqi militias," Reuters, May 21, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/exclusive-tactical-shift-iran-grows-new-loyal-elite-among-iraqi-militias-2021-05-21/>; Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Samya Kullab, "Keeping up attacks, some Iraq militias challenge patron Iran," Associated Press, July 9, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-middle-east-religion-iran-lebanon-17a5d13c97f72e1992bb6254445e32f2>.
- **May 24, 2021:** Iran-backed Iraqi militias declare they are ending the unofficial truce they had announced in October 2020 and would resume attacks on U.S. forces.  
The militias make the decision because of "the lack of seriousness of the Iraqi and US governments in scheduling the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq," one commander tells international media. Source: Suadad al-Salhy, "Iraq: Armed factions end truce with US over failure to withdraw troops," Middle East Eye, May 24, 2021, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraq-armed-factions-truce-us-over-vow-increased-attacks>.
- - : In late September, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo calls upon the Iraqi government to act against Iranian-sponsored militias or else the United States will close its embassy in Baghdad.  
AAH issues a statement rejecting the ultimatum, calling the U.S. Embassy a "military base of an occupying force" instead of a diplomatic mission. On October 10, representatives from various militias, calling themselves the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Commission, publish a joint statement agreeing to suspend attacks in exchange for the Iraqi government presenting a plan for a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. The following day, KH and other militias announce their agreement to suspend attacks on U.S. interests on the condition the Iraqi government works toward a full U.S. withdrawal from the country. The commission includes AAH, KH, KSS, and Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reportedly ordered the factions to stand down. Sources: John Davison, "Iraqi militias say they have halted anti-U.S. attacks," Reuters, October 11, 2020, [https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-iraq-militias/iraqi-militias-say-they-have-halted-anti-us-attacks-idUSKBN26W0IT?utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=1604119\\_](https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-iraq-militias/iraqi-militias-say-they-have-halted-anti-us-attacks-idUSKBN26W0IT?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1604119_); Edward Wong, Lara Jakes, and Eric Schmitt, Pompeo Threatens to Close U.S. Embassy in Iraq Unless Militias Halt Attacks," *New York Times*, September 29, 2020, [https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/29/us/politics/pompeo-embassy-baghdad-iraq.html?utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=1570526\\_](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/29/us/politics/pompeo-embassy-baghdad-iraq.html?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1570526_); "We'll cut the ground from under Americans: Iraqi resistance leader," *Tehran Times*, October 28, 2020, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/454043/We-ll-cut-the-ground-from-under-Americans-Iraqi-resistance-leader>; Suadad al-Salhy, "EXCLUSIVE: Iran's Khamenei ordered end to Iraqi attacks on US interests," Middle East Eye, October 22, 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iran-khamenei-iraq-attacks-us-interests-end>; Sinan Mahmoud, "Militias threaten to increase attacks on US assets in Iraq," *National* (Abu Dhabi), May 23, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/iraq/militias-threaten-to-increase-attacks-on-us-assets-in-iraq-1.1228054>.
- AAH joins with other Iranian-sponsored Iraqi militias in calling for revenge against the United States after the January 3 deaths of Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani and Kata'ib Hezbollah leader Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim, a.k.a. Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes, in a U.S. airstrike in Iraq. Khazali orders AAH fighters to prepare for battle. Khazali calls for a complete end to the U.S. presence in Iraq as the price for Ibrahim's death. Sources: Simon Kerr, Chloe Cornish, and Andrew England, "Middle East braced for backlash after killing of Qasem Soleimani," *Financial Times*, January 3, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/52a2fce4-2e0f-11ea-a126-99756bd8f45e>; Shelly Kittleson, "Iraqi armed factions vow revenge for Shiite commanders' killings," *Al-Monitor*, January 5, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/soleimani-assassination-iran-iraq-us-pmu.html>; "Iraqi militia commander orders fighters to prepare for battle: local TV," Reuters, January 3, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security-blast-khazali/iraqi-militia-commander-orders-fighters-to-prepare-for-battle-local-tv-idUSKBN1Z20Z>.
- **August 28, 2019:** Deputy Chairman of the PMF Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and AAH commander Qais al-Khazali travel to Tehran. They request that Iranian air defense systems be placed around all PMF bases to defend against drone strikes. Source: Ali Mamouri, "Will PMU form an air force unit?," *Al Monitor*, September 9, 2019, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/09/iraq-iran-pmu-airforce.html>.
- **August 26, 2019:** AAH leader Qais Khazali says during a show on Al-Ahd TV (Iraq), that he believes neither the U.S. nor Iran genuinely want war, but that Israel wants war because it acts in accordance with ideologies and prophecies that have their roots in the Torah. Khazali claims that there is a plan for war to break out between Iran and the U.S. before the end of President Trump's first term, and that recent Israeli attacks against camps belonging to the Iraqi PMF and Federal Police have been the first steps in this war. That same day, ISIS militants kill three AAH members at an outpost in Yathrib, Iraq. Sources: "Iraqi Shiite Militia Leader Qais Khazali: Israel Wants War in the Region; It Plans to Settle Palestinian Refugees in Iraq," Middle East Media Research Institute TV Monitor Project, August 26, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/tv/shiite-iraq-militia-leader-qais-khazali-israel-wants-war-based-torah-end-trump-first-term>; "3 Hashd Shaabi members killed in IS attack in central Iraq," Xinhua, August 27, 2019, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-08/27/c\\_138340541.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-08/27/c_138340541.htm).
- **July 16, 2019:** Joan Polaschik, the acting principal deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, tells the U.S. Senate that some Iran-backed PMF groups "plot against U.S. interests and plan operations that could kill Americans, coalition partners and Iraqis." Source: "Statement by Joan A. Polaschik," United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, July 16, 2019, [https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/071619\\_Polaschik\\_Testimony.pdf](https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/071619_Polaschik_Testimony.pdf).
- **July 1, 2019:** Iraq's Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi issues a decree ordering PMF militias to choose between full integration into the Iraqi armed forces or disarmament.  
The decree is Mahdi's latest attempt at gaining influence over the Iran-backed militias, which boast more than 120,000 fighters. Unlike other leaders of the PMF, AAH's leader Qais al-Khazali supports the decree. Sources: Jared Szuba, "Mahdi orders full integration of Shia militias into Iraq's armed forces," July 3, 2019, <https://thedefensepost.com/2019/07/03/iraq-mahdi-orders-popular-mobilization-units-integration/>; "Iraqi militias want more time to integrate into army," Middle East Eye,

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July 31, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraqi-militia-recruitment-centres-closed-integration-deadline-passes>.

- **March 5, 2019:** The U.S. State Department lists AAH's Syria affiliate Harakat al-Nujaba and its leader Akram 'Abbas al-Kabi as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.  
Source: "State Department Terrorist Designation of Harakat al-Nujaba (HAN) and Akram 'Abbas al-Kabi," U.S. Department of State, March 5, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2019/03/290002.htm>.
- Khazali attempts to distance AAH from both Iran and Hezbollah.  
In a series of speeches, Khazali claims that the group would not support Iran in a war against the United States "outside Iraq," and that the Shia community in Iraq should not follow the model of the Shia community in Lebanon. Source: Michael Knights and Frzand Sherko, "Can Asaib Ahl al-Haq Join the Political Mainstream?," Washington Institute, February 14, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/can-asaib-ahl-al-haq-join-the-political-mainstream>.
- **September 6, 2018:** Protesters set fire to dozens of mostly pro-Iran political party offices of in the city of Basra, including the offices of Badr, AAH, and Kata'ib Hezbollah.  
The following day, the Fatah Alliance, of which AAH is a major member, demands that Iraqi Prime Minister Hadi al-Abadi step down due to his inability to rein in the protesters. Source: Ali Mamouri, "Mortars hit Iraq's Green Zone as violent protests continue," Al-Monitor, September 7, 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/09/iraq-basra-green-zone-us-pmu-iran.html#ixzz5ixxo8DX2>.
- **July 13, 2018:** Largely Shiite protesters in southern Iraq attack the political offices of AAH, the Badr Organization, and Kata'ib Hezbollah as they call for Iran to withdraw from Iraq.  
Source: Seth J. Frantzman, "Mass Protests Sweep Iraq, Target Pro-Iran Militias and Parties," *Jerusalem Post*, July 16, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Mass-protests-sweep-Iraq-target-pro-Iran-militias-and-parties-562597>.
- **June 12, 2018:** AAH's Fatah Alliance allies with Muqtada al-Sadr's Sairoon Alliance after Sadr's party wins the Iraqi elections.  
However, a leader within Fatah states that the new coalition will not alter Iraq's standing relations with Iran or the United States. Source: Ali Mamouri, "Sadr allies with Iran-backed coalition to form government in Iraq," Al-Monitor, June 14, 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/06/iraq-election-muqtada-sadr-sairoon-fatah-hadi-amiri-iran.html>.
- **May 21, 2018:** AAH wins 15 parliamentary seats in the Iraqi elections, an increase from the one seat it won in 2014.  
One of AAH's victorious candidates, Hassan Salam, was a former field commander in Sadr's Mahdi Army who oversaw violent anti-Sunni gangs and later helped send Shiite jihadists to Syria. Sources: Phillip Smyth, "Iranian Militias in Iraq's Parliament: Political Outcomes and U.S. Response," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 11, 2018, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iranian-militias-in-iraqs-parliament-political-outcomes-and-u.s.-response>; Sinan Salaheddine, "Iraq expands manual recount to 7 provinces," *Washington Post*, July 9, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/iraq-starts-manual-recount-for-more-ballots-from-may-vote/2018/07/09/24c20976-8354-11e8-9e06-4db52ac42e05\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.0b3f886b5e39](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraq-starts-manual-recount-for-more-ballots-from-may-vote/2018/07/09/24c20976-8354-11e8-9e06-4db52ac42e05_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.0b3f886b5e39).
- AAH joins several PMF militias to form the Fatah Alliance, a political party running in the May 2018 elections.  
Fatah is led by Badr Organization's Hadi al-Ameri and includes the terror group Kata'ib Hezbollah. Source: Ahmad Majidiyar, "Iraqi Hezbollah calls on Baghdad government to set up US exit timeline," *Middle East Institute*, March 6, 2018, <http://www.mei.edu/content/iraqi-hezbollah-calls-baghdad-government-set-us-exit-timeline>.
- While on a trip to Lebanon's border organized by Hezbollah, AAH leader Qais al-Khazali releases a video clip in which he vows that AAH will stand with Hezbollah and support the Palestinian cause.  
Sources: "Iraqi Militias Vow to 'Defend Jerusalem' After Trump Announcement, Al Bawaba, December 9, 2017, <https://www.albawaba.com/loop/iran-backed-iraqi-militia-leader-filmed-israeli-border-1058660>; "Lebanese PM slams visit by Iran-backed Iraqi militia chief to Israeli border," *Times of Israel*, December 9, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/lebanese-pm-slams-iran-backed-iraqi-militia-visit-to-israel-border/>.
- AAH participates in an operation against Kurdish forces in Kirkuk. The Kurdish forces surrender on October 16.  
Source: Jennifer Cafarella, "Iran's Role in the Kirkuk Operation in Iraq," *Institute for the Study of War*, November 9, 2017, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran%E2%80%99s-role-kirkuk-operation-iraq>.
- **May 23, 2017:** AAH is registered as a political party under its own name.  
Source: "Iraq: High Electoral Commission Grants License To Shiite Militia," *Stratfor*, May 24, 2017, <https://www.stratfor.com/situation-report/iraq-high-electoral-commission-grants-license-shiite-militia>.
- AAH participates in the operation to retake western Mosul from ISIS militants.  
Source: Agence France-Presse, "Forces battling IS in Iraq's Mosul theatre," *Al-Monitor*, February 19, 2017, <http://al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2017/02/iraq-conflict-mosul-forces.html>.
- The United Nations implicates AAH's Aleppo offshoot, Harakat al Nujaba, in the slaughtering of dozens of civilians in Aleppo.  
Sources: "'It is past time for you to act' to end carnage in Aleppo, UN chief tells emergency Security Council session," *United Nations*, December 13, 2016, [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55789#.WFLBvIMrLU;Stephanie Nebehay and Tom Miles, "Syrian army, Iraqi militia accused of 'slaughter' of civilians in Aleppo," Reuters, December 13, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-un-idUSKBN1420ZX?mod=related&channelName=worldNews>.](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55789#.WFLBvIMrLU;Stephanie Nebehay and Tom Miles, )
- Asaib Ahl al-Haq participates in the operation to retake Mosul from ISIS militants.  
Human Rights Watch has called upon Iraq to ban the abusive militia due to human rights abuses by the Badr Organization and other Shiite militia groups. Source: "Iraq: Ban Abusive Militias from Mosul Operation," *Human Rights Watch*, July 31, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/31/iraq-ban-abusive-militias-mosul-operation>.
- AAH's Aleppo offshoot, Harakat al Nujaba, dispatches 1,000 fighters to Aleppo, raising the number of Nujaba fighters in Syria to between 3,000 and 4,000 and making Harakat al Nujaba the largest Iraqi militia operating in Aleppo.  
In late November, Iraq's parliament formally recognizes AAH and other PMF militias. Source: Sam Webb, "Aleppo's terrified women 'kill themselves to escape rape by Assad's troops' as ceasefire collapses in blitzed city," *Sun* (London), December 14, 2016, [https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2395680/aleppos-terrified-women-kill-themselves-to-escape-rape-by-assads-troops-as-ceasefire-collapses-in-blitzed-city;Hamza Hendawi and Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraq's parliament adopts law legalizing Shiite militias," Associated Press, November 26, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/38d21400b14444b08d8169ca03ecdb1b/mortars-kill-16-iraqi-civilians-mosul>.](https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2395680/aleppos-terrified-women-kill-themselves-to-escape-rape-by-assads-troops-as-ceasefire-collapses-in-blitzed-city;Hamza Hendawi and Qassim Abdul-Zahra, )

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- AAH engages in a series of abductions and killings targeting Sunnis throughout the month, retaliatory attacks which Human Rights Watch characterizes as “serious violations of international humanitarian law.”  
Source: “Attacks on Iraq’s Sunnis could constitute war crimes: rights group,” Reuters, January 31, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-abuses-idUSKCN0V90DA>.
- **January 15, 2016:** Three Americans are kidnapped late at night from an apartment building in southern Baghdad.  
The area is reportedly under the control of Shiite militias. According to neighbors, the apartment building had frequently undergone raids by Asaib Ahl al-Haq. Sources: Erin Cunningham and Mustafa Salim, “Iraqi official: 3 Americans missing in Baghdad were kidnapped by gunmen,” *Washington Post*, January 18, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/reports-3-americans-missing-in-baghdad/2016/01/18/02424ca6-6a3e-4e92-862d-83f18c81a451\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/reports-3-americans-missing-in-baghdad/2016/01/18/02424ca6-6a3e-4e92-862d-83f18c81a451_story.html); Ahmed Rasheed and Saif Hameed, “Americans missing in Baghdad kidnapped by Iran-backed militia,” Reuters, January 18, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-kidnapping-idUSKCN0UV0ZU>.
- **April 17, 2015:** AAH, the Badr Organization, and Kata’ib Hezbollah all claim responsibility after former top Saddam Hussein aide Izzat Ibrahim Douri is presumably killed near Tikrit in clashes between Sunni insurgents, the Iraqi army, and Shiite militias.  
Iraqi officials plan to conduct DNA tests to confirm Douri’s identity. Source: Loveday Morris and Brian Murphy, “Iraqi officials: Top Saddam Hussein aide may have been killed in fighting,” *Washington Post*, April 17, 2015, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/iraqi-officials-top-saddam-hussein-aide-killed-by-anti-insurgent-forces/2015/04/17/0c6497a2-e50c-11e4-b510-962fcfab310\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraqi-officials-top-saddam-hussein-aide-killed-by-anti-insurgent-forces/2015/04/17/0c6497a2-e50c-11e4-b510-962fcfab310_story.html).
- **April 11, 2015:** Reuters Baghdad bureau chief Ned Parker flees Iraq after a news show on AAH-owned TV station Al-Ahd broadcasted his picture and called for his expulsion.  
Source: “Reuters Iraq bureau chief threatened, denounced over story,” Reuters, April 11, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/11/us-mideast-iraq-reuters-idUSKBN0N20FY20150411>.
- **April 3, 2015:** Reuters Baghdad bureau chief Ned Parker and two other Reuters journalists release a report on human rights abuses by government forces and Shiite militias when they liberated the Iraqi city of Tikrit from ISIS in March.  
Source: “Reuters Iraq bureau chief threatened, denounced over story,” Reuters, April 11, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/11/us-mideast-iraq-reuters-idUSKBN0N20FY20150411>.
- **March 26, 2015:** As Iraqi forces initiate an offensive to reclaim Tikrit from ISIS hands, AAH and other Shiite militias bow out in protest of the role given to U.S. airpower.  
Source: Associated Press, “After US airstrikes, Iraq troops start final push for Tikrit,” Yahoo News, March 26, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-official-troops-launch-final-phase-tikrit-offensive-120918013.html>.
- **March 15, 2015:** AAH pledges to lead the fight against ISIS in Tikrit.  
Source: “Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq determine the time of resuming Tikrit military operation,” Shafaq News, March 15, 2015, <http://english.shafaq.com/security/13616-asa-ib-ahl-al-haq-determine-the-time-of-resuming-tikrit-military-operation.html>.
- **March 5, 2015:** Mourners chant slogans against ISIS during a funeral procession in Baghdad for six members of AAH.  
Source: “Insurgent Attacks in Iraqi Capitol Kill At Least 16,” *Daily Mail* (London), March 5, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-2980693/Attacks-Iraqi-capital-kill-8-people.html>.
- **November 2, 2014:** Human Rights Watch and other agencies accuse AAH militants of massacring 34 Sunni Muslims in a Baghdad mosque in August 2014.  
Source: David Zucchino, “Iraqi Shiite Group massacred Sunnis at mosque, Human Rights Watch says,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-shiite-iraq-massacre-sunnis-20141102-story.html>.
- In conjunction with other Shiite militias, AAH prosecutes a ground campaign, with indirect U.S. air support, to wrest the city of Amerli from ISIS’s control.  
Source: Michael Weiss and Michael Pregent, “How Iran is Making it Impossible for the U.S. to Beat ISIS,” *Daily Beast*, February 1, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/02/01/how-iran-is-making-it-impossible-for-the-us-to-beat-isis.html>.
- **October 14, 2014:** Amnesty International releases a report charging Shiite militias, including AAH, with widespread war crimes against the Sunni community.  
Source: Patrick Cockburn, “Iraq Descends into Anarchy,” *Independent* (London), October 14, 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/shia-militias-abducting-and-killing-sunni-civilians-in-revenge-for-isis-attacks-9792838.html>.
- **August 23, 2014:** Qais al-Khazali condemns the previous day’s Shiite militia terrorist attack on a Sunni mosque, and denies any responsibility for it.  
Source: Associated Press, “Iraq Suicide Bomber Kills at least 11 at Baghdad Intelligence Headquarters,” *New York Daily News*, August 23, 2014, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/suicide-bomber-kills-11-iraq-article-1.1914207>.
- **August 22, 2014:** A suicide bomber explodes at the entrance of a Sunni mosque in Iraq’s Diyala Province.  
Shiite gunmen then storm the mosque and open fire, killing 60 people. Source: Associated Press, “Iraq Suicide Bomber Kills at least 11 at Baghdad Intelligence Headquarters,” *New York Daily News*, August 23, 2014, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/suicide-bomber-kills-11-iraq-article-1.1914207>.
- **August 7, 2014:** AAH fighters desecrate and burn Saddam Hussein’s grave.  
Source: “Saddam Hussein’s Tomb Attacked, Burned by Militia,” NBC News, August 7, 2014, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/iraq-turmoil/saddam-husseins-tomb-attacked-burned-militia-iraq-official-n175031>.
- AAH is believed to be responsible for an attack on a suspected Baghdad brothel that leaves dead 32 women and two men.  
Source: Samuel Oakford and Sally Hayden, “Caught Between the Islamic State and Shiite Militias, Gays Are Dying in Iraq,” *VICE News*, November 19, 2014, <https://news.vice.com/article/caught-between-the-islamic-state-and-shiite-militias-gays-are-dying-in-iraq>

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- **June 15, 2014:** AAH beheads two teenagers believed to be gay and throws their heads in the garbage.  
Source: Samuel Oakford and Sally Hayden, "Caught Between the Islamic State and Shiite Militias, Gays Are Dying in Iraq," VICE News, November 19, 2014, <https://news.vice.com/article/caught-between-the-islamic-state-and-shiite-militias-gays-are-dying-in-iraq>.
- **June 14, 2014:** After ISIS insurgents attack Dhuluiya north of Baghdad, AAH militants fight to repel the Sunni Islamist army and retake the city.  
Source: "Insurgents Attack Town North of Baghdad," Reuters, July 24, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/13/us-iraq-security-town-idUSKBN0FI08220140713>.
- **June 1, 2014 - July 9, 2014:** Sixty-one Sunni men are killed in villages and towns around Baghdad, according to a Human Rights Watch report.  
Witnesses and government officials blame the deaths on AAH and other Shiite militias. Source: David D. Kirkpatrick, "Shiite Militias Pose Challenge for U.S. in Iraq," *New York Times*, September 16, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/17/world/middleeast/shiite-militias-pose-challenge-for-us-in-iraq.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/17/world/middleeast/shiite-militias-pose-challenge-for-us-in-iraq.html?_r=0).
- **May 15, 2014:** AAH members hang public lists of 24 "wanted" individuals, 23 of whom it claimed had carried out homosexual acts and one whose hair was too long.  
Source: Samuel Oakford and Sally Hayden, "Caught Between the Islamic State and Shiite Militias, Gays Are Dying in Iraq," VICE News, November 19, 2014, <https://news.vice.com/article/caught-between-the-islamic-state-and-shiite-militias-gays-are-dying-in-iraq>.
- **April 30, 2014:** Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law bloc wins 94 seats in national elections.  
AAH's political party, al-Sadiqun (the Honest Ones) ran as part of the State of Law bloc and won one seat. Sources: Ahmed Rasheed and Isra' Al-Rube'ii, "Iraq's Maliki wins at least 94 parliament seats in national election," Reuters, May 19, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/19/us-iraq-election-idUSBREA4I0C120140519>; Nicholas A. Heras, "Iraqi Shi'a Militia Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq Expands Operations to Syria," Jamestown Foundation, May 15, 2014, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=42367&no\\_cache=1#.VTINmiHBzGc](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42367&no_cache=1#.VTINmiHBzGc); John Hall, "Shocking image shows child aged under ten being used to fire rockets from car-mounted missile launcher in Iraq against ISIS targets," *Daily Mail* (London), December 24, 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2885162/Chilling-image-shows-child-aged-ten-used-fire-rockets-car-mounted-missile-launcher-Iraq-against-ISIS-targets.html>.
- **April 25, 2014:** Around 10,000 AAH supporters rally in Baghdad where Khazali gives a speech holding "heavy sectarian undertones with ominous threats."  
A bomb attack at the rally, claimed by ISIS, kills at least 33 attendants, including 10 AAH militants who fought alongside Assad forces in Syria. AAH had planned to announce its candidates in the upcoming Iraqi parliamentary elections. Source: Associated Press, "Shiite rally bombing sparks reprisals in Iraq," *Seattle Times*, April 26, 2014, <http://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/shiite-rally-bombing-sparks-reprisals-in-iraq/>.
- **- :** Forty-eight Sunni men are killed in villages and towns around Baghdad, according to a Human Rights Watch report.  
Witnesses and government officials blame the deaths on AAH and other Shiite militias. Source: David D. Kirkpatrick, "Shiite Militias Pose Challenge for U.S. in Iraq," *New York Times*, September 16, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/17/world/middleeast/shiite-militias-pose-challenge-for-us-in-iraq.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/17/world/middleeast/shiite-militias-pose-challenge-for-us-in-iraq.html?_r=0).
- **February 9, 2014:** The heads of three Sunnis are discovered in a market and six Shiites are shot dead in the northern Iraqi province of Saladin. AAH admits it has increased its targeted killings in response to a series of sectarian bombings against Shiite neighborhoods. AAH blames ISIS for targeting Shiites and trying to reignite sectarian conflict within Iraq. Source: Loveday Morris, "Shiite militias in Iraq begin to remobilize," *Washington Post*, February 9, 2014, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/shiite-militias-in-iraq-begin-to-remobilize/2014/02/09/183816c6-8f59-11e3-878e-d76656564a01\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/shiite-militias-in-iraq-begin-to-remobilize/2014/02/09/183816c6-8f59-11e3-878e-d76656564a01_story.html).
- Sectarian violence increases as a wave of bombings target Shiite neighborhoods in Iraq.  
Source: Loveday Morris, "Shiite militias in Iraq begin to remobilize," *Washington Post*, February 9, 2014, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/shiite-militias-in-iraq-begin-to-remobilize/2014/02/09/183816c6-8f59-11e3-878e-d76656564a01\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/shiite-militias-in-iraq-begin-to-remobilize/2014/02/09/183816c6-8f59-11e3-878e-d76656564a01_story.html).
- **November 30, 2013:** At least one person is killed after clashes erupt between AAH and the Mahdi Army in Baghdad.  
Source: Hamza Mustafa, "Iraq: Inter-Shi'ite violence in Baghdad kills at least 1," *Asharq Al-Awsat* (London), December 1, 2013, <http://www.aawsat.net/2013/12/article55324084/iraq-inter-shiite-violence-in-baghdad-kills-at-least-1>.
- **October 29, 2013:** Muqtada al-Sadr prohibits his followers from fighting with AAH.  
Source: Hamza Mustafa, "Iraq: Sadr avoids confrontation with Asaib Ahl Al-Haq," *Asharq Al-Awsat* (London), October 29, 2013, <http://www.aawsat.net/2013/10/article55320761/iraq-sadr-avoids-confrontation-with-asaib-ahl-al-haq>.
- **October 18, 2013:** In an interview with *Asharq al-Awsat*, JAM leader Muqtada al-Sadr says "there is no longer any Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq" and its members are returning to the Sadrist movement.  
He says what remains of AAH is "sponsored militias" that are "closer to the government." Source: Ma'ad Fayad, "Muqtada Al-Sadr: The View from Sadr City," *Asharq Al-Awsat* (London), October 18, 2013, <http://www.aawsat.net/2013/10/article55319642/muqtada-al-sadr-the-view-from-sadr-city>.
- **October 9, 2013:** In response to ISIS attacks against Shiites in Syria, Qais al-Khazali announces that AAH is sending "committees" to Syria to join security forces in "patrolling their areas and setting up roadblocks."  
In mid-October, AAH calls for Iraqi Shiite volunteers to join the fight in Syria. Sources: Sinan Salaheddin, "In Iraq, Sunni attacks spark Shiite call to arms," Associated Press, October 30, 2013, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/iraq-sunni-attacks-spark-shiite-calls-arms>; Hannah Allam, "Shiite militias: the other 'foreign fighters' in Iraq," McClatchy DC, November 20, 2013, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/11/20/209160/shiite-militias-the-other-foreign.html>.
- **September 6, 2013:** AAH threatens to attack "the interests" of the U.S. and of any other country participating in a strike on Syria.  
The U.S. intercepts Iranian instructions to AAH and other groups to attack the U.S. Embassy if the U.S. intervenes in Syria. Sources: Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Adam Schreck, "Iraqi officials, militants warn of threat to US," Associated Press, September 6, 2013, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/iraqi-officials-militants-warn-threat-us>; Julian E. Barnes and Adam Entous, "Iran Plots Revenge, U.S. Says," *Wall Street Journal*, September 6, 2013, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323893004579057271019210230>.

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- - : As many as 50 Sunnis are killed in Basra, Iraq, during a wave of violence blamed on AAH and other Shiite militias. At least 59 Sunni families flee Basra and the neighboring Nasiriya province after threatening letters are left on the doors of families from Basra's main Sunni tribe. Source: Ned Parker, "Iraq: The Road to Chaos," *New York Review of Books*, April 15, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2014/apr/15/iraq-road-chaos/>.
- **August 3, 2013:** Gunmen from AAH and the Mahdi Army clash in east Baghdad. AAH leader Sami Salem kills Mahdi member Jassem al-Hijami following an altercation. One AAH member is killed in the gun battle. Source: Ali Abel Sadah, "Sadr Army Reconsiders Political Roles, Mahdi Army," *Al-Monitor*, August 28, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/08/iraq-clashes-mahdi-army-asaib-ahl-al-haq-sadr.html>.
- **May 29, 2013:** AAH denies involvement in a recent string of sectarian bombings but says it is ready to defend itself. Source: Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Evening bomb blasts kill 30 in Baghdad," *Associated Press*, May 29, 2013, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/iraq-raises-death-toll-tuesdays-attacks-28>.
- **May 27, 2013:** Gunmen deploy across Baghdad in response to a spate of sectarian bombings. The identities of the gunmen are unconfirmed but some report that they are members of AAH. Source: Ali Abel Sadah, "Sadr Gives Maliki 'Final Warning,'" *Al-Monitor*, May 29, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/05/sadr-maliki-iraq-warning.html>.
- **November 28, 2012:** AAH political bureau head Adnan al-Dulaimi announces that AAH will not participate in Iraq's 2013 provincial elections. Source: Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 10, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
- AAH opens a new political office in Basra, Iraq. Source: Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 18, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
- **September 13, 2012:** AAH leader Qais al-Khazali threatens U.S. interests in Iraq in response to "Innocence of Muslims," an anti-Islamic short film that inflames anger across the Middle East. Source: Lara Jakes, "After prophet film, militia threatens US in Iraq," *Associated Press*, September 13, 2012, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/after-prophet-film-militia-threatens-us-iraq>.
- AAH hangs posters of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in Shiite neighborhoods of Baghdad and southern Iraq. Source: Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Lara Jakes, "Iran ayatollah is poster boy for influence in Iraq," *Associated Press*, September 25, 2012, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/iran-ayatollah-poster-boy-influence-iraq>.
- Qais al-Khazali, Mohammed al-Tabatabai, and Kazim al-Abadi give Friday sermons calling for national unity and the need for cultural resistance against Western infiltration. Source: Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 17, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
- **July 10, 2012:** AAH militia leader Bashar al-Safi is shot and killed in Baghdad. Source: Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 17, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
- **June 4, 2012:** AAH opens a political office in West Baghdad. During a ceremony to mark the event, an AAH fighter presents Qais al-Khazali with a captured American gun. Source: Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 15-16, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
- **April 26, 2012:** AAH opens its first political office in East Baghdad. Source: Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 15, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
- AAH returns to Iraqi authorities the remains of U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Ahmed Altaie, who was kidnapped in 2006 in Baghdad. Source: Michael M. Phillips, "Last Missing Soldier in Iraq: Family Finally Learns Fate," *Wall Street Journal*, February 27, 2012, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204653604577247372298544072>.
- **January 20, 2012:** AAH returns the body of British bodyguard Alan McMenemy to the British embassy in Iraq. McMenemy was kidnapped with four others in 2007. Source: Conal Urquhart, "Body of Iraq hostage Alan McMenemy handed over to British embassy," *Guardian* (London), January 20, 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/20/body-iraq-hostage-alan-mcmenemy>.
- **January 4, 2012:** Qais al-Khazali tells Reuters that AAH is ready to give up its weapons and join the political process in Iraq, but it will not join the current government. Al-Khazali also says AAH is willing to unconditionally turn over the remains of British bodyguard Alan McMenemy, who was kidnapped along with four others in May 2007. Al-Khazali apologizes for McMenemy's death, claiming that McMenemy and the other three bodyguards had been killed while trying to escape. Sources: Sudad Al-Salhy, "Iraq Shi'ite militia says ready to lay down weapons," *Reuters*, January 5, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/05/us-iraq-politics-militia-idUSTRE8041LY20120105>; Richard Norton-Taylor, "Shia militia ready to return body of kidnapped Briton Alan McMenemy," *Guardian* (London), January 5, 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/05/militia-to-return-body-of-alan-mcmenemy?INTCMP=SRCH>.
- **January 1, 2012:** AAH hosts the "Victory and Liberation Festival," a celebratory demonstration in Baghdad in response to the completed withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. AAH launches a media blitz to rebrand itself as a nationalist Islamic group that represents the Iraqi people. Source: Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 12, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.



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- **December 26, 2011:** AAH announces it will give up its arms and join Iraq's political process.  
Source: Agence France-Presse, "Iraq Shiite militia offshoot backed by Iran: Sadr," Al Arabiya, January 1, 2012, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/01/185740.html>.
  - **December 18, 2011:** The U.S. withdraws the last of its troops from Iraq.  
A week later, AAH announces it will surrender its arms and become a political party. The AAH leadership subsequently relocates to Baghdad. Sources: Tim Arango and Michael S. Schmidt, "Last Convoy of American Troops Leaves Iraq," *New York Times*, December 18, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/19/world/middleeast/last-convoy-of-american-troops-leaves-iraq.html>; Agence France-Presse, "Shiite militia ready to lay down arms: leader," Al Arabiya, December 26, 2011, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/26/184691.html>; Adam Schreck and Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Asaib Ahl Al-Haq, Iraq Shiite Militia, Will Reportedly Lay Down Arms," *Huffington Post*, January 6, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/06/asaib-ahl-al-haq-lay-down-arms\\_n\\_1189600.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/06/asaib-ahl-al-haq-lay-down-arms_n_1189600.html); Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 12, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
  - **November 14, 2011:** A roadside bomb kills U.S. soldier David Hickman, the last military casualty before the U.S. completes its pullout from Iraq.  
AAH is later blamed for the attack. Sources: J. Freedman du Lac, "In Iraq, the last to fall: David Hickman, 4,474th U.S. service member killed," *Washington Post*, December 17, 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/in-iraq-the-last-to-fall-david-hickman-the-4474th-us-service-member-killed/2011/12/15/gIQAglw00O\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/in-iraq-the-last-to-fall-david-hickman-the-4474th-us-service-member-killed/2011/12/15/gIQAglw00O_story.html); David D. Kirkpatrick, "Shiite Militants Pose Challenge for U.S. in Iraq," *New York Times*, September 16, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/17/world/middleeast/shiite-militias-pose-challenge-for-us-in-iraq.html>.
  - AAH and other Iran-backed militias execute attacks by on U.S. military bases in Iraq, killing 13 U.S. soldiers.  
Source: Jack Healy and Michael S. Schmidt, "Political Role for Militants Worsens Fault Lines in Iraq," January 5, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/06/world/middleeast/iraqi-moves-to-embrace-militia-opens-new-fault-lines.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/06/world/middleeast/iraqi-moves-to-embrace-militia-opens-new-fault-lines.html?_r=0).
  - -: AAH's representative in Lebanon holds a series of meetings with Hezbollah leaders as well as current and former Lebanese politicians.  
Source: Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 20, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
  - Muqtada al-Sadr returns to Iraq on January 5 after spending five years in Iran.  
He flees the country two weeks later after death threats from AAH, which declares it lawful to kill al-Sadr. Source: Bill Roggio, "Sadr's return short-lived after threats from Asaib al Haq," *Long War Journal*, January 27, 2011, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/01/sadrs\\_return\\_short-lived\\_after.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/01/sadrs_return_short-lived_after.php).
  - By early 2011, AAH establishes political representation in Beirut.  
It is AAH's first presence outside of Iraq. Source: Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 7, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
  - As of March 2010, the U.S. military has "no more than a handful" of AAH members in custody.  
By late 2009, hundreds of AAH members have been released in exchange for the bodies of killed British hostages. Sources: Ernesto Londoño and Leila Fadel, "U.S. failure to neutralize Shiite militia in Iraq threatens to snarl pullout," *Washington Post*, March 4, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/03/AR2010030303674.html>; Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 11, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
  - **February 26, 2010:** AAH releases a video of an unidentified man believed to be hostage Issa T. Salomi.  
Source: Associated Press, "Shiite Militants release video of abducted American contractor in Iraq," *New York Daily News*, February 26, 2010, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/shiite-militants-release-video-abducted-american-contractor-iraq-article-1.177931>.
  - **February 18, 2010:** AAH fires a Katyusha rocket at the International Green Zone in Baghdad.  
Source: "Incident Summary for GTDID: 201002180018," Global Terrorism Database, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtid=201002180018>.
  - **January 23, 2010:** AAH militants kidnap Iraqi-American contractor Issa T. Salomi.  
Source: Associated Press, "Shiite Militants release video of abducted American contractor in Iraq," *New York Daily News*, February 26, 2010, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/shiite-militants-release-video-abducted-american-contractor-iraq-article-1.177931>.
  - **January 17, 2010:** U.S. and Iraqi forces take two AAH members into custody.  
In response, AAH withdraws from the U.S.-directed reconciliation talks with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Sources: Ernesto Londoño and Leila Fadel, "U.S. failure to neutralize Shiite militia in Iraq threatens to snarl pullout," *Washington Post*, March 4, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/03/AR2010030303674.html>; Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 11, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
  - U.S. forces release AAH leader Qais al-Khazali from detention immediately following AAH's release of British hostage Peter Moore.  
Soon after, the AAH leadership reportedly moves to Iran, where they continue to direct attacks against U.S. forces, Sadrist, and Iraqi political figures. Sources: Ernesto Londoño and Leila Fadel, "U.S. failure to neutralize Shiite militia in Iraq threatens to snarl pullout," *Washington Post*, March 4, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/03/AR2010030303674.html>; Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'b Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 11-12, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>.
  - AAH releases British hostage Peter Moore.  
Source: Haroon Siddique, "Peter Moore reveals he suffered mock executions as hostage," *Guardian* (London), January 26, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/26/peter-moore-hostage-mock-execution>.
  - **November 12, 2009:** AAH fires a Katyusha rocket again at the U.S. Consulate building in Babil, Iraq.  
No damage or casualties are reported. Source: "Incident Summary for GTDID: 200911120001," Global Terrorism Database, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtid=200911120001>.
  - **October 28, 2009:** AAH fires four mortar rounds at the U.S. consulate in Babil, Iraq.  
No damage or casualties are reported. Source: "Incident Summary for GTDID: 200910280004," Global Terrorism Database, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtid=200910280004>
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- **September 16, 2009:** AAH fires two rockets at the International (Green) Zone in Al Karkh district in Baghdad, injuring two civilians. The attack coincides with the end of a meeting between U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Source: "Incident Summary for GTDID: 200909160015," Global Terrorism Database, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200909160015>.
- **August 17, 2009:** AAH spokesman Salam al-Maliki says that Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki promised to release all 300-400 AAH members in detention in exchange for AAH's pledge to observe a truce with Americans. Source: Rod Nordland and Sam Dagher, "U.S. Will Release More Members of an Iraqi Militia," *New York Times*, August 17, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/18/world/middleeast/18iraq.html>.
- **July 29, 2009:** British Prime Minister Gordon Brown releases a statement revealing that two of the three remaining British hostages in Iraq, security guards Alan McMenemy and Alec MacLachlan, are "very likely" deceased. Of the five British hostages captured in May 2007, only Peter Moore is believed to be alive. Source: John F. Burns, "Britain Says It Fears 2 Hostages in Iraq Are Dead," *New York Times*, July 29, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/30/world/europe/30britain.html>.
- **July 12, 2009:** A roadside IED explodes near a motorcade carrying U.S. Ambassador Christopher Hill to Iraq. Although there no injuries are reported, both AAH and the Mahdi Army (JAM) claim responsibility for the attack. Source: Incident Summary for GTDID: 200907120015," Global Terrorism Database, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200907120015>.
- **June 19, 2009:** AAH delivers the dead bodies of two British hostages to the British Embassy in Baghdad. The deceased hostages are identified as Jason Creswell and Jason Swindlehurst, two of the four security guards kidnapped by AAH in May 2007 along with British IT consultant Peter Moore. Sources: Reuters, "ID for Slain Britons Taken Hostage in Iraq," *New York Times*, June 21, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/22/world/middleeast/22hostages.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/22/world/middleeast/22hostages.html?_r=0); "Two British hostages killed in Iraq are named as Brown demands release of remaining three," *Daily Mail* (London), June 21, 2009, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1194489/Two-British-hostages-killed-Iraq-Prime-Minister-demands-remaining-released.html#ixzz3Y3OD6oGv>.
- **June 15, 2009:** AAH claims responsibility for an IED explosion that wounds two civilians in Al Khalis, Diyala, Iraq. Source: "Incident Summary for GTDID: 200906150022," Global Terrorism Database, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200906150022>.
- **June 9, 2009:** The Iraqi government frees Laith al-Khazali, reportedly as part of a hostage negotiations process with AAH. An Iraqi government spokesman denies that al-Khazali's release is connected to any hostage negotiations process, instead claiming that it is an overture to Iraq's militant groups. A spokesman for the U.S. military in Iraq confirms this narrative, saying, "As part of a reconciliation effort between the government of Iraq and Asa'ib al-Haq, the decision has been made to release Layth Khazali." Sources: Iraq releases man held in slayings of U.S. soldiers," CNN, June 9, 2009, [http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/06/09/iraq.prisoner.release/index.html?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/06/09/iraq.prisoner.release/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD); Lawrence Joffe, "Obituary: Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim," *Guardian* (London), August 29, 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2003/aug/30/guardianobituaries.iraq>; Alissa J. Rubin and Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Frees Suspect in Killing of 5 G.I.'s," *New York Times*, June 8, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/09/world/middleeast/09release.html>.
- Iraqi government negotiator Sami al-Askari asserts that AAH is willing to "join the political process and to abandon their armed activities," but that it will not do so until leader Qais al-Khazali is released from detention. Source: Alissa J. Rubin and Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Frees Suspect in Killing of 5 G.I.'s," *New York Times*, June 8, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/09/world/middleeast/09release.html>.
- **April 7, 2009:** AAH assailants throw a hand grenade into a grocery store. The store burns down, but no casualties are reported. Source: "Incident Summary for GTDID: 200904070002," Global Terrorism Database, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200904070002>.
- **April 6, 2009:** AAH detonates an IED in the 'Azamiyah district of Baghdad, wounding four civilians and damaging property. Source: "Incident Summary for GTDID: 200904060002," Global Terrorism Database, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200904060002>.
- **March 22, 2009:** The British embassy in Baghdad receives a video showing one of the five British hostages captured by AAH in May 2007. The video's stamp date indicates that it was filmed one week prior. Source: Associated Press, "New video released of British hostage in Iraq," *Guardian* (London), March 22, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/mar/22/iraq-british-hostages-video>.
- **November 3, 2008 - November 30, 2008:** The U.S. negotiates a prisoner release of 450 purported AAH members from U.S. custody in return for a cease-fire by the group. Source: Ernesto Londoño and Leila Fadel, "U.S. failure to neutralize Shiite militia in Iraq threatens to snarl pullout," *Washington Post*, March 4, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/03/AR201003030303674.html>.
- **November 2, 2008:** MNF-I arrests six suspected AAH members in Nasiriyah, Iraq. Source: Marisa Cochrane, "Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network," Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1TdOkFy>.
- **October 1, 2008 - October 18, 2008:** MNF-I seizes more than \$400,000 from the AAH criminal network. Source: Marisa Cochrane, "Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network," Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1TdOkFy>.
- **October 18, 2008:** MNF-I seizes more than \$205,000 during a hunt for an unnamed "high-level AAH financier" in Majar al-Kabir, Iraq. MNF-I did not find the suspects, but the coalition forces did discover items related to the group's criminal network including passports, Iranian visas, and various IDs. Source: Marisa Cochrane, "Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network," Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1TdOkFy>.

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- **October 2, 2008:** MNF-I seizes two suspected AAH operatives in Amarah, Iraq.  
Source: Marisa Cochrane, "Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network," Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1TdOkFy>.
  - **September 24, 2008:** MNF-I seizes a suspected AAH operative in Amarah, Iraq.  
Source: Marisa Cochrane, "Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network," Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1TdOkFy>.
  - **August 19, 2008:** Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) labels AAH as an active group "affiliated" with Special Groups (the title MNF-I gives for Shiite extremist groups in Iraq).  
Source: Bill Roggio, "US military defines Mahdi Army as 'militia insurgency group,'" *Long War Journal*, November 30, 2008, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/11/us\\_military\\_defines.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/11/us_military_defines.php).
  - AAH hostage Peter Moore appears in a video that airs on Dubai-based network Al Arabiya.  
Source: "British Hostage Video Sent to Embassy," *Daily Telegraph* (London), March 22, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/5033155/British-hostage-video-sent-to-embassy.html>.
  - **May 29, 2007:** More than 100 AAH militants raid Iraq's Ministry of Finance in Baghdad and kidnap Peter Moore, a British computer consultant, and his four security guards.  
The AAH attack is reportedly led and masterminded by Iran's IRGC-Quds Force. Sources: Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 11, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>; James Meikle and James Sturcke, "Torture and table tennis: Iraq hostage Peter Moore recounts life in captivity," *Guardian* (London), March 21, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/12/peter-moore-recounts-iraq-captivity>; Mona Mahmood, Maggie O'Kane, and Guy Grandjean, "Revealed: Iran's involvement in Britons' Baghdad kidnapping," *Guardian* (London), December 31, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/dec/31/peter-moore-kidnapping-iran-militia>.
  - **January 20, 2007:** AAH kills five American soldiers after attacking the Iraqi government's provincial headquarters in Karbala.  
Sources: Sam Wyer, "The Resurgence of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq," *Middle East Security Report 7* (December 2012): 11, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ResurgenceofAAH.pdf>; "Iraq Releases Man Held In Slayings of U.S. Soldiers," CNN, June 9, 2009, [http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/06/09/iraq.prisoner.release/index.html?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/06/09/iraq.prisoner.release/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD).
  - **May 6, 2006:** AAH shoots down a British Lynx helicopter in Basra, Iraq, killing five.  
Source: Caroline Wyatt, "Major 'Staggered' at Changed Basra," BBC, April 30, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk/8014318.stm>.
  - **March 20, 2007:** AAH leader Qais al-Khazali, his brother Laith al-Khazali, and Lebanese Hezbollah member Ali Mussa Daqduq are arrested in Basra, Iraq.  
Source: "Iraq Releases Man Held In Slayings of U.S. Soldiers," CNN, June 9, 2009, [http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/06/09/iraq.prisoner.release/index.html?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/06/09/iraq.prisoner.release/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD).
  - **October 10, 2006:** AAH executes a mortar attack on American Forward Operating Base Falcon, according to AAH representative Akram al-Ka'abi.  
Al-Ka'abi takes credit for the attack, and claims that AAH killed more than 100 U.S. soldiers. The U.S. does not report casualties. Source: Rafid Fadhil Ali, "The People of Righteousness: Iraq's Shi'a Insurgents Issue Demands for Hostages," *Terrorism Monitor* 8 (February 12, 2010): 6, [http://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0310\\_iraqd.htm](http://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0310_iraqd.htm).
  - Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq formally splits from the Mahdi Army (JAM) and begins operations under the leadership of Qais al-Khazali.  
Source: Marisa Cochrane, "Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network," Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1TdOkFy>.
  - **July 17, 2006:** The Imam Ali brigade of AAH claims responsibility for attacks on Coalition Forces in Karbala and Hillah in Iraq.  
Source: Marisa Cochrane, "Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network," Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1TdOkFy>.
  - Ali Mussa Daqduq, Youssef Hashim, and Qasem Soleimani meet in Iran to discuss the reorganization of the Special Groups network.  
Sources: Bill Roggio, "US Transfers Dangerous Hezbollah Leader Involved In Murder Of 5 US Soldiers to Iraqi Custody," *Long War Journal*, December 16, 2011, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/12/us\\_transfers\\_dangero.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/12/us_transfers_dangero.php); Marisa Cochrane, "Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network," Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1TdOkFy>.

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**Violent history:**

- **November 2021:** On November 5, Khazali calls for calm as security forces and pro-armed faction protesters clash outside of Baghdad’s Green Zone. Khazali warns parties linked to the intelligence services are plotting to bomb the Green Zone and blame Iran-backed militias. On November 7, two explosives-laden drones target the Baghdad home of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, lightly wounding Kadhimi and wounding seven members of his security detail. The Iraqi military shoots down one of the drones. Shortly after the attack, Kadhimi posts to Twitter calling for calm and calling the attack cowardly. The United States, Arab League, and Palestine Liberation Organization condemn the assassination attempt. Anonymous Iraqi security officials tell Reuters the drones were made by Iran. The officials say Iran-backed militias were responsible and specifically accuse KH and AAH of carrying out the attack together. A militia source tells Reuters KH was involved, though KH separately denies responsibility. KH spokesman Abu Ali al-Askari accuses Kadhimi of “playing the victim” and says there are “less expensive” ways to target him if that is what the group had wanted. IRGC-Quds Force commander Ismail Ghaani visits Baghdad on November 8 and denies Tehran had any connection to the attack.<sup>119</sup>
- **June 13, 2021:** Militant groups within the PMF display new long-range unmanned aerial vehicles. The new UAVs are capable of striking other countries in the region, including Israel.<sup>120</sup>
- **May 14, 2021:** During an 11-day conflict between Hamas and Israel, a group called Ashab Ahl Kahf claims responsibility for firing three missiles from Syria across the Golan Heights into Israel. There are no reported casualties or damage. Ashab Ahl Kahf is allegedly part of AAH, whose leaders had previously promised to fight against Israel.<sup>121</sup>
- **August 27, 2019:** ISIS members attack an outpost manned by AAH in Yathrib, near Baghdad. At least three paramilitary members are killed in the attack. ISIS members have frequently carried out hit-and-run attacks against security forces and civilians since Iraqi security forces defeated the insurgents in 2017.<sup>122</sup>
- **May 1, 2019:** AAH militants fire rockets at U.S. contractors working in Taji. Local security forces arrest two AAH militants shortly after.<sup>123</sup>
- **January 12, 2019:** The Al Forat satellite network, owned by AHH political rival Hikma, reports that AHH was involved in the assassination of Imad Jabar, a restaurant owner in the east of Baghdad. The report drives AAH and its leader to launch a fierce media campaign against Hikma, accusing the party of controlling state buildings and lands in the neighborhood of Jadiriya in Baghdad, and calling for large demonstrations near the party’s headquarters to condemn the TV report.<sup>124</sup>
- **August 1, 2018:** Members of the Khazraj tribe in the town of Dujail accuse AAH of kidnapping and murdering three senior leaders of the tribe.<sup>125</sup>
- **February 25, 2018:** An explosion is targeted at the AAH base in the Saha Tayran neighborhood of Kirkuk. The number of casualties is unknown and no group claims responsibility for the attack.<sup>126</sup>
- **April 10, 2017:** The bodyguards of AAH leader Qais al-Khazali engage in violent confrontations with student protesters at University of Al-Qadisiyah. The attacks leave at least two Iraqi students injured, according to reports.<sup>127</sup>
- **January 2016:** AAH engages in a series of abductions and killings targeting Sunnis throughout the month, retaliatory attacks which Human Rights Watch characterizes as “serious violations of international humanitarian law.”<sup>128</sup>
- **January 15, 2016:** Three Americans are kidnapped late at night from an apartment building in southern Baghdad. The area is reportedly under the control of Shiite militias. According to neighbors, the apartment building had frequently undergone raids by Asaib Ahl al-Haq.<sup>129</sup>
- **April 17, 2015:** AAH, the Badr Organization, and Kata’ib Hezbollah all claim responsibility after former top Saddam Hussein aide Izzat Ibrahim Douri is presumably killed near Tikrit in clashes between Sunni insurgents, the Iraqi army, and Shiite militias.<sup>130</sup> Iraqi officials plan to conduct DNA tests to confirm Douri’s identity.<sup>131</sup>
- **April 11, 2015:** Reuters Baghdad bureau chief Ned Parker flees Iraq after a news show on AAH-owned TV station Al-Ahd broadcasted his picture and called for his expulsion.<sup>132</sup>
- **April 3, 2015:** Reuters Baghdad bureau chief Ned Parker and two other Reuters journalists release a report on human rights abuses by government forces and Shiite militias when they liberated the Iraqi city of Tikrit from ISIS in March.<sup>133</sup>
- **November 2, 2014:** Human Rights Watch and other agencies accuse AAH militants of massacring 34 Sunni Muslims in a Baghdad mosque in August 2014.<sup>134</sup>
- **October 14, 2014:** Amnesty International releases a report charging Shiite militias, including AAH, with widespread war crimes against the Sunni community.<sup>135</sup>

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- **August 23, 2014:** Qais al-Khazali condemns the previous day's Shiite militia terrorist attack on a Sunni mosque, and denies any responsibility for it.<sup>136</sup>
  - **August 22, 2014:** A suicide bomber explodes at the entrance of a Sunni mosque in Iraq's Diyala Province. Shiite gunmen then storm the mosque and open fire, killing 60 people.<sup>137</sup>
  - **July 2014:** AAH is believed to be responsible for an attack on a suspected Baghdad brothel that leaves dead 32 women and two men.<sup>138</sup>
  - **June 15, 2014:** AAH beheads two teenagers believed to be gay and throws their heads in the garbage.<sup>139</sup>
  - **June 14, 2014:** After ISIS insurgents attack Dhuluiya north of Baghdad, AAH militants fight to repel the Sunni Islamist army and retake the city.<sup>140</sup>
  - **June 1-July 9, 2014:** Sixty-one Sunni men are killed in villages and towns around Baghdad, according to a Human Rights Watch report. Witnesses and government officials blame the deaths on AAH and other Shiite militias.<sup>141</sup>
  - **May 15, 2014:** AAH members hang public lists of 24 "wanted" individuals, 23 of whom it claimed had carried out homosexual acts and one whose hair was too long.<sup>142</sup>
  - **March-April 2014:** Forty-eight Sunni men are killed in villages and towns around Baghdad, according to a Human Rights Watch report. Witnesses and government officials blame the deaths on AAH and other Shiite militias.<sup>143</sup>
  - **February 9, 2014:** The heads of three Sunnis are discovered in a market and six Shiites are shot dead in the northern Iraqi province of Saladin.<sup>144</sup> AAH admits it has increased its targeted killings in response to a series of sectarian bombings against Shiite neighborhoods. AAH blames ISIS for targeting Shiites and trying to reignite sectarian conflict within Iraq.<sup>145</sup>
  - **November 30, 2013:** At least one person is killed after clashes erupt between AAH and the Mahdi Army in Baghdad.<sup>146</sup>
  - **September 6, 2013:** AAH threatens to attack "the interests" of the U.S. and of any other country participating in a strike on Syria.<sup>147</sup> The U.S. intercepts Iranian instructions to AAH and other groups to attack the U.S. embassy if the U.S. intervenes in Syria.<sup>148</sup>
  - **September-December 2013:** As many as 50 Sunnis are killed in Basra, Iraq, during a wave of violence blamed on AAH and other Shiite militias.<sup>149</sup> At least 59 Sunni families flee Basra and the neighboring Nasiriya province after threatening letters are left on the doors of families from Basra's main Sunni tribe.<sup>150</sup>
  - **August 3, 2013:** Gunmen from AAH and the Mahdi Army clash in east Baghdad. AAH leader Sami Salem kills Mahdi member Jassem al-Hijami following an altercation. One AAH member is killed in the gun battle.<sup>151</sup>
  - **May 27, 2013:** Gunmen deploy across Baghdad in response to a spate of sectarian bombings. The identities of the gunmen are unconfirmed but some report that they are members of AAH.<sup>152</sup>
  - **September 13, 2012:** AAH leader Qais al-Khazali threatens U.S. interests in Iraq in response to "Innocence of Muslims," an anti-Islamic short film that inflames anger across the Middle East.<sup>153</sup>
  - **November 14, 2011:** A roadside bomb kills U.S. soldier David Hickman, the last military casualty before the U.S. completes its pullout from Iraq.<sup>154</sup> AAH is later blamed for the attack.<sup>155</sup>
  - **June 2011:** AAH and other Iran-backed militias execute attacks by on U.S. military bases in Iraq, killing 13 U.S. soldiers.<sup>156</sup>
  - **January 2011:** Muqtada al-Sadr returns to Iraq on January 5 after spending five years in Iran. He flees the country two weeks later after death threats from AAH, which declares it lawful to kill al-Sadr.<sup>157</sup>
  - **February 18, 2010:** AAH fires a Katyusha rocket at the International Green Zone in Baghdad.<sup>158</sup>
  - **January 23, 2010:** AAH militants kidnap Iraqi-American contractor Issa T. Salomi.<sup>159</sup>
  - **January 2010:** U.S. forces release AAH leader Qais al-Khazali from detention immediately following AAH's release of British hostage Peter Moore.<sup>160</sup> Soon after, AAH leadership reportedly moves to Iran, where they continue to direct attacks against U.S. forces, Sadrist, and Iraqi political figures.<sup>161</sup>
  - **November 12, 2009:** AAH fires a Katyusha rocket again at the U.S. consulate building in Babil, Iraq. No damage or casualties are reported.<sup>162</sup>
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- **May 29, 2007:** More than 100 AAH militants raid Iraq’s Ministry of Finance in Baghdad and kidnap Peter Moore, a British computer consultant, and his four security guards.<sup>170</sup> The AAH attack is reportedly led and masterminded by Iran’s IRGC-Quds Force.<sup>171</sup>
- **January 20, 2007:** AAH kills five American soldiers after attacking the Iraqi government’s provincial headquarters in Karbala.<sup>172</sup>
- **October 10, 2006:** AAH executes a mortar attack on American Forward Operating Base Falcon, according to AAH representative Akram al-Ka’abi. Al-Ka’abi takes credit for the attack, and claims that AAH killed more than 100 U.S. soldiers. The U.S. does not report casualties.<sup>173</sup>
- **July 17, 2006:** The Imam Ali brigade of AAH claims responsibility for attacks on Coalition Forces in Karbala and Hillah in Iraq.<sup>174</sup>
- **May 6, 2006:** AAH shoots down a British Lynx helicopter in Basra, Iraq, killing five.<sup>175</sup>

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**Designations:**

*Designations by the U.S. Government:*

- **December 6, 2019:** The Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated Qais al-Khazali pursuant to Executive Order 13818 for involvement in serious human rights abuses in Iraq.<sup>176</sup>
- **January 3, 2020:** U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the U.S. government would designate AAH as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.<sup>177</sup>
- **January 3, 2020:** The U.S. Department of State designated Qays and Laith al-Khazali as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.<sup>178</sup>

*Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:*

- In November 2014, the United Arab Emirates designated Asaib Ahl al-Haq as a terrorist organization following the implementation of Federal Law No 7 for 2014.<sup>179</sup>

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**Associations:**

*Ties to Extremist Entities:*

- **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)**  
AAH enjoys the patronage of the Iranian state, which is dominated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).<sup>180</sup> The IRGC's elite Quds Force unit is the key exporter of Iranian-sponsored terrorism and guardian of the regime's nuclear and ballistic missiles programs. AAH explicitly esteems the Iranian revolutionary regime and its theocratic figureheads.<sup>181</sup> Qasem Soleimani, the deceased leader of the IRGC's Quds Force, was reportedly AAH's "main patron."<sup>182</sup>
- **Hezbollah**  
A strong proponent of Shiite dominance in Iraq, AAH is ideologically aligned with, and a "close all[y]" of, the main Shiite extremist group in Lebanon, Hezbollah. AAH has reportedly enjoyed a "close relationship" with the Lebanese militant group, and has sought to emulate Hezbollah's modus operandi by establishing social services and religious schools throughout Iraq.<sup>183</sup>  
  
In December 2017, AAH leader Qais al-Khazali visited Lebanon's border with Israel on a trip organized by Hezbollah. He released a video clip in which he vowed that AAH would stand with Hezbollah and support the Palestinian cause.<sup>184</sup>
- **Hamas**  
According to research analyst Sam Wyer at the Institute for the Study of War, AAH has ties to Palestinian group Hamas. In October 2011, AAH's Beirut office representative Ammar al-Delphi reportedly met with Hamas official Ali Baraka during a seminar on Iraqi Resistance.<sup>185</sup>
- **Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH)**  
Formed a few months prior to the 2003 Iraq War, Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) is an Iraqi paramilitary extremist organization. AAH and KH, along with the Badr Organization, comprise Iraq's anti-ISIS popular mobilization forces (PMF).<sup>186</sup> In battles against ISIS, there is some degree of cooperation between the militias, though each militia leader ultimately retains his autonomy.<sup>187</sup> IRGC-Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani reportedly coordinated military operations for all three militias before his death in January 2020.<sup>188</sup> AAH founder and leader Qais al-Khazali met with KH leaders Hashem Abu Alaa and Adnan al-Hamidawi in December 2011.<sup>189</sup> The United States launched airstrikes against KH targets around Baghdad on March 12, 2020, in response to what it called the "threat posed by Iranian-backed Shia militia groups ... who continue to attack bases hosting ... coalition forces."<sup>190</sup>
- **Badr Organization**  
The Badr Organization, Kata'ib Hezbollah, and AAH are known as "Iran's three big Iraqi militias." While the direct ties between the Badr Organization and AAH are not clearly documented, it seems likely that there is some degree of cooperation given their shared loyalty to Iran's IRGC-Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani, who reportedly coordinated all three before his death in January 2020.<sup>191</sup>

*Ties to Extremist Individuals:*

- **Ayatollah Ali Khamenei**  
AAH acts as an Iranian proxy, and as such has "displayed its commitment to figures of the 'tradition of the Iranian Revolution,' including Ruhollah Khomeini, Ali Khamenei, Kazim al-Haeri, and Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi."<sup>192</sup>
- **Bashar al-Assad**  
AAH leader Qais al-Khazali has inspired thousands of Shiite Iraqis to volunteer in Syria in support of the Assad regime.<sup>193</sup> AAH spokesman Ahmad Kanani asserts that the group's militants "are not fighting alongside Syrian regime forces, but rather their mission is limited to the defense of holy places."<sup>194</sup> Some AAH militants have allegedly fought in the Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas Brigade, a pro-Assad militia composed of local and foreign Shiite fighters, including AAH, Lebanese Hezbollah, and Kata'ib Hezbollah.<sup>195</sup> According to a *Guardian* article from March 2014, AAH is increasingly "calling the shots" in both Iraq and Syria.<sup>196</sup>
- **Qasem Soleimani**  
The three main Shiite militias in Iraq—AAH, the Badr Organization, and Kata'ib Hezbollah—were reportedly overseen by Iran's military

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envoy to Iraq, the IRGC-Quds Force's Qasem Soleimani.<sup>197</sup> Soleimani died in a January 2, 2020, U.S. airstrike in Iraq.<sup>198</sup> According to Iraqi officials, Soleimani knew the heads of each militia personally.<sup>199</sup> Soleimani was allegedly AAH's "main patron". The group reportedly exhibits Soleimani's methods of influence, "a mix of strategic diplomacy, aggressive military operations and intimidation."<sup>200</sup>

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**Media Coverage:**

*Western Media*

One of the first Western media references to Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) appeared in a September 2008 *Long War Journal* report. Author Bill Roggio introduced AAH as a “little-known Shia terror group,” reporting that AAH allegedly “receives funding, training, weapons and even direction from the [Iranian] Qods Force.”<sup>201</sup> Soon after, a *New York Times* report from November 2008 referred to “armed militias that the Americans say are being trained by Iran,” specifically citing “Asa’ib ahl al-Haq, or Bands of Right,” but did not discuss the group’s violence towards U.S. troops.<sup>202</sup>

Before 2008, Western media did not mention AAH by name, though they did reference AAH activity. In these cases, news outlets would often attribute AAH attacks solely to Iran and its external military branch, the IRGC Qods Force.<sup>203</sup> A May 2007 *New York Times* report on Peter Moore’s kidnapping, for example, failed to implicate AAH.<sup>204</sup>

In early 2009, the *Daily Telegraph* and *New York Times* released reports that introduced AAH as the alleged suspect in the May 2007 kidnapping. The *Telegraph* wrote in March 2009 that “Coalition leaders believe the abduction was the work of a group known as Asaib Ahl al-Haq, or League of the Righteous, which is one of two major militias operating in Iraq that are believed to be backed by Iran.”<sup>205</sup> Reports on Peter Moore and his body guards at this time tended to focus more on the kidnapped individuals and less on AAH.

Some Western media reports, however, failed to implicate AAH overtly in the kidnapping. A March 2009 *New York Times* piece reported AAH’s spokesman’s appearance in a video in which he mentioned Peter Moore and revealed details about a possible prisoner exchange. However, it made no explicit statement on AAH’s responsibility in the kidnapping. The article did implicate Qais al-Khazali and his brother Laith al-Khazali in the 2007 murder of five American soldiers in Karbala, Iraq, but did not mention their roles within AAH.<sup>206</sup>

Even as Peter Moore’s bodyguards were reported murdered, Western media failed to catch on to AAH and the threat it posed. A *Telegraph* report in June 2009 on the death of two of Moore’s body guards carried no reference to AAH. The report simply hinted at the involvement of Shiite captors: “Within hours the kidnapers demanded the release of nine Shia militiamen held by coalition forces.”<sup>207</sup> However, a *New York Times* article on June 29, 2009 did report that “the Leagues of Righteousness” (another name for AAH) was responsible for the kidnapping. There was no analysis of the group.<sup>208</sup>

During the last few months of the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, Western media began to increase their coverage of AAH but did not blatantly condemn the group. A *New York Times* article in August 2009 highlighted the chance for resolution between the Iraqi government and AAH. Authors Rod Nordland and Sam Dagher quoted the American military commander in Iraq, General Odierno, as saying, “This is about reconciliation. We believe Asa’ib al-Haq has taken initial steps to reconcile with the government of Iraq.” Nordland and Dagher also reported that the American military would release AAH militants from U.S. custody, “even though the military still believed that they were responsible for attacks that killed Americans.”<sup>209</sup>

A 2010 piece in the *Washington Post* openly criticized the U.S., asserting that the U.S. military had “failed” in its effort to neutralize AAH. Authors Ernesto Londono and Leila Fadel overtly blamed the U.S. military for its “failure” to “wean Asaib Ahl al-Haq from militancy.”<sup>210</sup> The criticism was followed by an objective history of AAH and a discussion of Shiite candidates in the upcoming Iraqi elections. The article sought to both introduce AAH and criticize the U.S. military’s strategies.<sup>211</sup>

As the U.S. withdrew its remaining troops from Iraq in December 2011, AAH began to rebrand itself as a political entity, vowing to lay down its weapons. A January 5, 2012 *New York Times* report slammed both AAH and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, calling AAH “one of the deadliest insurgent groups in Iraq in recent years,” and declared that al-Maliki’s welcoming of the group into Iraqi politics had “opened new sectarian fault lines in Iraq’s political crisis while potentially empowering Iran at a moment of rising military and economic tensions between Tehran and Washington.” Authors Jack Healy and Michael Schmidt warned that with al-Maliki accepting AAH, Iraq’s government might “embolden a militia with an almost nonexistent track record of peace while potentially handing Tehran greater influence.”<sup>212</sup>

One day later, the *Huffington Post* carried an Associated Press (AP) piece that condemned AAH as one of the Iran-backed Shiite groups that “carried out lethal attacks against U.S. bases in June, the deadliest month in two years for American forces in Iraq.” The report warned of similar consequences: emergence of AAH as a political group could “complicate Iraq’s political crisis,” “strengthen Iran’s clout,” “alienate the Sunni

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minority,” and “increase tensions between competing Shiite groups.”<sup>213</sup>

With the U.S. withdrawal complete and relations between the Iraqi government and AAH underway, the *New York Times* and *Huffington Post* articles overtly condemned not only AAH but the fledgling partnership between the government and Iranian proxies, clearly concerned by the implications for Washington.

As AAH continued its campaign into politics, Western media upped their criticism of AAH, underlined AAH’s relationship with Iran, and reiterated the group’s violent history against U.S. troops. A February 2013 *Washington Post* article warned against the imminent danger of AAH’s possible entry into politics, blaming Iran for the group’s political momentum. Author Liz Sly described AAH as an “Iranian-backed Shiite group...busily reinventing itself as a political organization,” and highlighted the group’s attempt to emerge as a social services-provider, comparing AAH to “one of its close allies,” Hezbollah. She wrote that AAH’s political success would empower a group that “boasts about its role in killing Americans.”<sup>214</sup>

Sly echoed the sentiment of a former U.S. official who said that “Asaib Ahl al-Haq’s resurgence looks a lot like a renewed attempt to create an alternative vehicle for projecting Iranian influence.” She quoted a U.S. official as saying that AAH’s entry into the Iraqi political landscape would be “deeply problematic,” backing it up with a recap of AAH’s attacks on Americans.<sup>215</sup>

Just before ISIS’s rise in Western media, the London-based *Guardian* released an in-depth exposé on AAH. In March 2014, author Martin Chulov referred to AAH as a “deadly militia” and the “most potent new Shia Islamic political force” in the Middle East. Chulov wrote that AAH has been operating in Iraq and Syria through “strategic diplomacy, aggressive military operations and intimidation,” and is run by Iranian general Qasem Soleimani. Chulov quoted an Iraqi minister who described AAH’s “tentacles” controlling the “security apparatus,” apparently distressed by the group’s “rise to prominence.”<sup>216</sup>

Chulov’s report described the group’s “stealth tactics and the denial of responsibility for [attacks],” strategies that the author categorized as directly influenced by Qasem Soleimani. Chulov also described various AAH attacks on western targets and discussed the group’s attempt to participate in the April 2014 Iraqi elections. The article highlighted grievances of Iraq’s local Shiite population, which Chulov essentially blamed on AAH leader Qais al-Khazali’s call to defeat the U.S. and the ensuing galvanization of Iraqi Shiites. AAH’s violent insurgency has, in Chulov’s words, “worried many communities across the Shia heartland.”<sup>217</sup> The *Guardian*’s report painted AAH as bad for the U.S., but worse for the local Iraqi population.

On April 25, 2014, the *New York Times* reported on ISIS’s bombing of a campaign rally held by AAH. The report referred to AAH as a “Shiite militant group that is trying to transform into a political force,” but made absolutely no mention of AAH’s past violence against U.S. troops.<sup>218</sup>

Coverage of AAH plummeted as ISIS flooded western media in the spring and summer of 2014. The few reports on AAH rebranded the group as a leader in the fight against ISIS, and not necessarily as an enemy of the west.

In July 2014, the BBC released an exposé on AAH, describing it as a “fearsome Iraqi militia.” Reporter Jeremy Bowen provided little criticism of the group, introducing AAH as a legitimate political party and militia that had gained experience from fighting western troops in the early 2000s. Bowen met AAH leader Qais al-Khazali, who reportedly “emphasised that the group was now a political movement as well as a military force. He claimed...that it was not sectarian, and would protect all Iraqis against foreign invaders.” Bowen noted, “[AAH is] one of the few Iraqi formations that might just scare Isis as much as Isis scares everyone else.”<sup>219</sup>

A September 2014 *New York Times* piece introduced AAH’s side of the story, quoting multiple members of the group and carrying relatively little criticism of its actions. Author David Kirkpatrick painted AAH with a heroic stroke, writing, “Once a leading killer of American troops, the militia is spearheading the fight against the Sunni extremists of the Islamic State,” implying that the group had a change of heart. Kirkpatrick quoted one AAH fighter as saying, “the most dangerous areas in Iraq were assigned to Asaib Ahl al-Haq to lead the battle, because of the capability and professionalism of our fighters.”

Kirkpatrick also noted the AAH spokesman’s intention to “protect all Iraqis, Sunnis as well as Shiites.” These unopposed sentiments were only followed by a brief description of AAH’s past attacks on U.S. troops. Kirkpatrick ended with a quote by AAH’s spokesman: “America has been intervening in most of the Arab countries of the region...and it never brings stability.”<sup>220</sup>

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### *Arab Media*

Qatar-based Al Jazeera has not carried a lengthy piece on AAH. The longest discussion on the group appeared in a June 2014 article titled “Mapping Iraq’s fighting groups.” The three paragraph synopsis described AAH as a “militia group that fought US forces” that now has “political representation in the Iraqi parliament.”<sup>221</sup> Other Al Jazeera articles have described AAH as a “hardline Shia group” and “paramilitary organization” (April 2014),<sup>222</sup> and a “Shia militia” (February 23, 2015).<sup>223</sup> On February 25, 2015, Al Jazeera carried an opinion piece in which Washington Institute for Near East Policy fellow Michael Knights referred to AAH as an “Iranian-backed...terror group.”<sup>224</sup>

*Asharq al-Awsat*, a pan-Arab daily based in London, has also failed to cover AAH in depth. In January 2011, *Asharq al-Awsat* carried a report describing AAH as a “Shiite insurgent group in Iraq” and mentioned its history of attacks on U.S. and Iraqi forces. Revealing information from “informed sources,” *Asharq al-Awsat* reported that AAH had allegedly threatened Muqtada al-Sadr, the leader of a powerful Iraq-based Shiite movement from which AAH broke away. The report detailed AAH’s close relationship with Iran, but stressed possible complications for Iran on the al-Sadr—AAH divide. *Asharq al-Awsat* quoted an anonymous source as saying, “Whilst al-Sadr follows [Grand Ayatollah] Kazem al-Haeri as his religious marja, Khazali follows [Grand Ayatollah] Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi.”<sup>225</sup>

An October 2013 piece in *Asharq al-Awsat* followed the al-Sadr—AAH story, reporting that al-Sadr had “prohibited his supporters from engaging in confrontations with [AAH].” Surprisingly, the Arab paper quoted AAH spokesman Ahmed al-Assadi numerous times. Al-Assadi reportedly assured *al-Awsat* that “The issue has been resolved in a tribal manner and apart from that nothing has happened recently.”<sup>226</sup>

Arab news sources in English rarely produce original content containing information on AAH, opting instead to republish Reuters and AFP articles that briefly mention the group alongside other Shiite militias. However, opinion pieces carried by Saudi-owned news outlets such as Al Arabiya and Arab News are passionately critical of AAH. In an August 2014 Al Arabiya opinion piece, Jordanian journalist Raed Omari stacked AAH alongside al-Qaeda and ISIS: “I wonder why it is that the Iraqi Asaib Ahl al-Haq (League of the Righteous) has not been labeled a terrorist organization... Terrorism is terrorism... ISIS, the Nusra Front, Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Syrian regime are all terrorist groups, responsible for mass killings, torture and crimes against humanity.”<sup>227</sup> Similarly, Arab News carried a March 2015 opinion piece in which Lebanon-based Diana Moukalled furiously wrote, “What is even more galling here is that these people will then insist that...Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq or any of these other groups Iran supports offer ‘less harrowing’ alternatives to [ISIS],” bashing both ISIS and Tehran.<sup>228</sup>

### *Iranian Media*

There is very little coverage of AAH in Iranian English-language media. In the few reports that exist, Iranian media are decidedly pro-AAH, presumably because of the group’s role as an Iranian proxy. In April 2015, Iran’s state-owned Press TV published an Agence France-Presse photograph of AAH fighters and captioned it: “This file photo shows Iraqi mourners carrying the coffin of a pro-government Asaib Ahl al-Haq fighter during his funeral in Iraq’s central shrine city of Najaf.” The article reported on the bombing of a “funeral of a pro-government volunteer fighter,” presumably with AAH allegiance. The article added, “There has been no claim of responsibility for the bombing, but such attacks are usually blamed on Takfiri ISIL terrorists.”<sup>229</sup>

An April 2014 article by Iran’s Tasnim News Agency reported on a bombing at an “[electoral campaign] rally of the Asaib Ahl al-Haq group.” Tasnim speculated that ISIS was responsible for attack, writing: “an al-Qaeda spin-off group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant uses similar tactics.” Tasnim mentioned AAH’s history of carrying out “deadly attacks” against U.S. troops and the group’s 2007 kidnapping of a British contractor.<sup>230</sup>

In January 2014, Iran’s Fars News Agency reported that AAH had “urged” Saudi Arabia to “halt its support” for terrorist groups in Iraq. Fars News Agency quoted AAH leader Qais al-Khazali as saying, “The Saudi house is frailer than the spider’s web and our reaction to its meddling in Iraq will perplex Riyadh since it will be hit from a side which it has never thought of.” The quotation is evidence of Iran’s—and its proxies—hostility toward Riyadh.<sup>231</sup>

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*Asaib Ahl al-Haq*

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**Rhetoric:**

*Qais al-Khazali, January 3, 2020*

“All fighters should be on high alert for upcoming battle and great victory. The price for the blood for the martyred commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis is the complete end to American military presence in Iraq.”<sup>232</sup>

*Qais al-Khazali, May 21, 2020*

“Ending the US military presence in Iraq and the region is an imperative issue. Moreover, ending the Israeli occupation of Arab lands is inevitable.”<sup>233</sup>

*Qais al-Khazali, May 21, 2020*

“The aggressive Israeli regime is not only harmful to Palestine and the Palestinian people, but also to the entire Arab and Muslim world.”<sup>234</sup>

*Qais al-Khazali, August 26, 2019*

“The Israeli bombing of the military camps of the PMU and the Iraqi Federal Police is an actual step towards war.”<sup>235</sup>

*Qais al-Khazali, August 26, 2019*

“The Israeli entity, based on ideological and prophetic premises that are connected to what is in the Torah, is the one that wants war.”<sup>236</sup>

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