



# Profile: Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba

by [Michael Knights](#)

Apr 27, 2021

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



### [Michael Knights](#)

Michael Knights is the Boston-based Jill and Jay Bernstein Fellow of The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, and the Persian Gulf states.



### Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Militia Spotlight: Profiles](#)

or see Part 1: [How to Use Militia Spotlight: Profiles](#)

## Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba proved its axis of resistance credentials in Syria, but its role in terrorism and repression within Iraq is more enigmatic.

**Name:** Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HaN) (Movement of the Party of God's Noble Ones).

**Type of movement:** Tier 2 *fasail* (armed group). Kinetic military operations (largely transnational in focus).

### History and objectives:

- Built around the personality and powerbase of Akram Kaabi, the senior military commander in Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaish al-Mahdi militia. Kaabi left Sadr's movement to continue militant operations against U.S. forces in 2005.
- Kaabi joined the embryonic [Asaib Ahl al-Haq](#) (AAH), which was formed by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) and Lebanese Hezbollah. Kaabi was listed by the U.S. Treasury Department as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) on September 16, 2008.
- In 2011-2013, Kaabi led a contingent of AAH fighters to participate in the Syrian civil war under the administrative and operational control of the IRGC-QF. He formed Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba in 2013, citing differences of approach



Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba logo

with AAH. Nujaba Television was formed at the same time.

- HaN subsequently became the most significant and successful Iraqi volunteer contingent (alongside [Kataib Hezbollah](#)) in the Syrian war during the major battles in Aleppo in 2015. Inside Iraq, HaN folded many of its fighters inside the 12th Brigade of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF).
- On November 4, 2015, Kaabi told al-Sumaria Television that he would answer any order from Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, including overthrowing the Iraqi government or fighting in any foreign war.
- In early March 2017, HaN announced on Iran's Tasnim News Agency that it was forming a Golan Liberation Brigade.
- On March 5, 2019, HaN was listed by the U.S. State Department as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) under Executive Order 13224.

#### **Chain of command:**

- *Iran.* There is clear and convincing evidence that HaN is subordinate to and partly financed by the IRGC-QF. The preponderance of the evidence shows that Iran provides the group with financial assistance, military assistance, and intelligence sharing, as well as help in selecting, supporting, and supervising its leadership. HaN units in Syria are under the direct operational and administrative control of the IRGC-QF.
- *Partly financed by the Iraqi state.* HaN operates the state-funded 12th Brigade of the PMF. Chain of command nominally runs through the Popular Mobilization Commission of the Prime Minister's Office and up to the prime minister. In practice, HaN PMF units frequently disobey the Iraqi government chain of command while legally remaining organs of the Iraqi state.

#### **Affiliate relationships:**

- Strong and supportive relations with Kataib Hezbollah, Lebanese Hezbollah, and other axis of resistance transnational fighters. Akram Kaabi has a well-publicized personal friendship with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. Following the January 2020 killing of IRGC-QF commander Qasem Soleimani, HaN visitors were given high-profile treatment in Tehran, suggesting they had attained a higher status than all other groups except Kataib Hezbollah.
- Loose support to Badr and other resistance factions, especially concerning profile and recruitment, giving way to coordination when such factions are all threatened.
- Sibling rivalry with AAH, from which Kaabi defected to form HaN.
- Member of the [Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee](#) (al-Haya al-Tansiqiya lil-Muqawama al-Iraqiya, or Tansiqiya for short), as explicitly stated by HaN spokesman Nasr al-Shammari on Dijlah TV on February 28, 2021.

#### **Subordinate elements:**

- Syrian-based forces, including the Golan Liberation Brigade, Ammar ibn Yasir Brigade, Imam al-Hassan al-Mujtaba Brigade, and al-Hamad Brigade.
- The 12th Brigade of the PMF, an Iraqi state organ. This formation is under the administrative and operational control of HaN leaders.
- Covert action cells inside Iraq that may have overlapping membership with HaN's PMF brigade.
- The preponderance of the evidence indicates that HaN controls Farqi Ekhwat Jihad al-Electroni (Brothers of Electronic Jihad) and NJ Telegram channel.
- Al-Nujaba TV, which was listed alongside HaN by the U.S. State Department as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) under Executive Order 13224.
- Jamiyat Fetyat al-Nujaba al-Kashfiya (al-Nujaba Boy Scouts) is an official branch of HaN.



[View/Print Page as PDF](#)

SHARE



EMAIL ALERTS



[Sign Up](#)



TO TOP

## PART OF A SERIES

### Militia Spotlight: Profiles

[How to Use Militia Spotlight: Profiles](#)

[Profile: Saraya Awliya al-Dam](#)

[Profile: Qasem al-Jabbarin](#)

## RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

### Preventing Domestic Terrorism: The DHS Approach and the New U.S. Strategy

June 23, 2021, starting at 1:00 p.m. EDT

John D. Cohen

BRIEF ANALYSIS

### The Iraqi Muqawama Is Feeling Isolated and Threatened

Jun 19, 2021

Hamdi Malik



#### IN-DEPTH REPORTS

## Promoting Sovereignty and Accountability in Iraq: Guidelines for the Biden Administration

Jun 17, 2021

Bilal Wahab

#### TOPICS

Arab and Islamic Politics

Arab-Israeli  
Relations

Military and Security

Terrorism

#### REGIONS & COUNTRIES

Iran

Iraq

Israel

Syria

#### STAY UP TO DATE



SIGN UP FOR EMAIL ALERTS



THE  
WASHINGTON INSTITUTE  
*for Near East Policy*

1111 19th Street NW - Suite 500  
Washington D.C. 20036  
Tel: 202-452-0650  
Fax: 202-223-5364

[Contact](#)  
[Press Room](#)  
[Subscribe](#)

*The Washington Institute seeks to advance a balanced and realistic understanding of American interests in the Middle East and to promote the policies that secure them.*

The Institute is a 501(c)3 organization; all donations are tax-deductible.

[About TWI](#) /

[Support the Institute](#)



© 2021 All rights reserved.

[Employment](#) /

[Privacy Policy](#) /

[Rights & Permissions](#)