

Policy Analysis /

Distinguishing Kawader Hezbollah al-Qudama and Kataib Hezbollah

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May 6, 2021

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Brief Analysis

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Nouri al-Maliki is gathering various Iraqi resistance figures who fought both Saddam and the coalition, but this marginal "old timer" party is not the same as Kataib Hezbollah, which has yet to show its hand in parliamentary politics.

On April 30, 2021, former prime minister Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law list announced that it will participate in Iraq's planned October general election as a coalition of eight parties. Two of these parties include the term "Hezbollah" in their names: Kawader Hezbollah al-Qudama (Old-Timer Hezbollah Cadres, or KHQ), and Hezbollah al-Iraq (Iraqi Party of God, or HI). Though widely assumed to represent the top Iran-backed militia [Kataib Hezbollah](#) (KH), these parties actually comprise *muqawama* (resistance) elements who battled the forces of Saddam Hussein and the United States even before the formation of KH.

Partnering with these small and not especially popular "old timers" indicates that Maliki has been reduced to grasping whatever militia alliances he can find in order to regrow his political influence. It also underlines the strengthening alignment between Maliki—the institutional godfather of the *muqawama* since around 2012—and today's *muqawama* politicians.

For example, KHQ is headed by Jabbar Jasim Wajid al-Musawi (Figure 2), a militant commander who fought Saddam's forces in the southern al-Ahwar marshes. In 1994, he and Abu Hatim al-Muhammadawi, the so-called "Prince of the Marshes," established Hezbollah al-Iraq. HI's areas of operation were the marshes of Maysan and Dhi Qar. Other militant groups affiliated with parties such as Dawa fought alongside HI, relying on a secure rear area in Iran and supplies from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).



Figure 2: Jabbar al-Musawi in KHQ's office, Dhi Qar.

After Saddam's fall, Musawi and other Ahwar-based HI fighters went back to his hometown in Dhi Qar and established their political movement. Musawi kept his relationship with his old comrades, who included the late KH leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis (Figure 3).

Musawi has been described at various points as the secretary-general of

different movements using the prestigious Hezbollah name. These include:

- Hezbollah al-Iraq, which is now headed by Ahmad Kadhim Mohammad as a political party within the State of Law coalition.
- Saraya Hezbollah (Companies of Hezbollah), the first regiment of the 7th Brigade (Liwa al-Muntadher) in the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF).
- Harakat Mujahedin al-Ahwar li Hezbollah (Movement of Hezbollah's Ahwar Mujahedin, or HMAH).

Some Hezbollah old-timers consider themselves to



Figure 1: Kawader Hezbollah al-Qudama logo.



Figure 3: Jabbar al-Musawi (center, green cap) talks with Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis during operations against the Islamic State, posted April 13, 2015.

opportunity as a way of boosting his profile (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Al-Etejah TV documentary featuring Nouri al-Maliki, posted on the network's YouTube channel on April 13, 2021.

Such praise of Maliki may indicate that the broader Hezbollah movement in Iraq—including KH, which has never run its own list in elections—is moving at least partially away from the Fatah Alliance, which consists of other Iran-backed militias. ❖



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