

Sabereen News Criticizes Iran for Lack of Support

by [Hamdi Malik \(/experts/hamdi-malik\)](/experts/hamdi-malik), [Crispin Smith \(/experts/crispin-smith\)](/experts/crispin-smith), [Michael Knights \(/experts/michael-knights\)](/experts/michael-knights)

Nov 13, 2021

Also available in

[العربية \(/ar/policy-analysis/sabryn-nywz-tntqd-ayran-bsbb-alaftqar-aly-dmha\)](/ar/policy-analysis/sabryn-nywz-tntqd-ayran-bsbb-alaftqar-aly-dmha)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Hamdi Malik \(/experts/hamdi-malik\)](/experts/hamdi-malik)

Hamdi Malik is an Associate Fellow with the Washington Institute, specializing in Shia militias. He earned his doctorate at the school of social, political and global studies, Keele University. He is a co-founder of the Militia Spotlight platform, which offers in-depth analysis of developments related to the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria. He is the coauthor of the Institute's 2020 study "Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces."



[Crispin Smith \(/experts/crispin-smith\)](/experts/crispin-smith)

Crispin Smith is an associate at a Washington-based national security law group. His research focuses on Iraqi security, human rights, and law of armed conflict issues. He is a co-founder of the Militia Spotlight platform, which offers in-depth analysis of developments related to the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria.



[Michael Knights \(/experts/michael-knights\)](/experts/michael-knights)

Michael Knights is the Jill and Jay Bernstein Fellow of The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, and the Persian Gulf states. He is a co-founder of the Militia Spotlight platform, which offers in-depth analysis of developments related to the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria.



Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Militia Spotlight \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight)

or see Part 1: [How to Use Militia Spotlight \(/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight\)](/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight)

Elements of Asaib Ahl al-Haq and Kataib Hezbollah are seemingly trying to extract domestic and Iranian support for more forceful pushback against their recent political isolation.

On November 12, social media accounts close to Qais al-Khazali, the leader of [Asaib Ahl al-Haq \(/node/16715\)](/node/16715) (AAH), posted an apparent call for escalation to the group's followers. The message included video of one of his past speeches wherein he stated: "[I pray] that God either ensures victory over his enemies at our hands...or grants us martyrdom in his cause, in a way



Figure 1: Post from accounts close to Qais al-Khazali about the possibility of his killing , November 12, 2021

that my death satisfies America and Israel. But I want the young men to not allow this satisfaction to last and turn it to hell for them and not allow them to be present in Iraq.” A written message included under the footage was telling: “[Remain] steadfast until the pillar of truth appears to you and you are supreme, and God is with you and will not leave you” (Figure 1). This phrase is attributed to a story in which the Imam Ali encouraged his men to move forward on the battlefield.

Sabereen News (/node/16673) quickly reposted the Imam Ali sentence with a song called “Qais of the Victory” (Figure 2). More interestingly, major accounts affiliated another militia, **Kataib Hezbollah (/node/16641)** (KH), reposted Khazali’s message verbatim.

This normally doesn’t happen, and is an indication that at least parts of KH are on the same page with Khazali on how to deal with the **post-election crisis (/node/17120)**.

Also on November 12, before AAH posted its messaging, KH’s quasi-intelligence cell **Unit 10,000 (/node/16707)** posted a Quranic verse that may likewise represent a call for escalation. The verse is about the prophet Noah asking his followers to board his ship: “Embark therein: in the Name of Allah will be its course and its anchorage” (Figure 3).

This message should be read in light of the schism between the Iraqi *muqawama* (resistance) and Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force, which has reportedly asked the *muqawama* to accept the recent election results and get on with it. This request spurred open criticism of Iraj Masjedi, a senior Qods Force officer who now serves as Iran’s ambassador to Baghdad. On November 12, AAH figure Amir al-Taee tweeted the following in Arabic and Farsi: “Iraj Masjedi forgot his role as an ambassador and started

working as a messenger” (Figure 4). The post was later deleted.

A more stinging rebuke was posted on the same day by Sanad al-Hamdani, the manager of AAH’s al-Ahad TV, who tweeted: “[I have] a very perplexing question. Is Masjedi Iran's ambassador to Iraq or [Iraqi prime minister Mustafa al-] Kadhimi's ambassador to Iran?” (Figure 5).

Information from Iraqi contacts also indicates that the *muqawama* are internally criticizing Qods Force leader Esmail Qaani. For instance, some have said that Qaani's late predecessor Qasem Soleimani was their only commander.

Such messaging indicates that AAH and KH have decided to escalate if their political parties are marginalized in the government formation process. The **November 7 drone attack (/node/17121)** on the prime minister's residence was apparently aimed at getting militias back to the negotiating table, and the incident did in fact secure them at least one meeting with Iraq's highest authorities. Yet if those discussions do not win them shares in the next government, they seem willing to go



Figure 2: Sabereen News reposts Imam Ali's sentence, November 12, 2021



Figure 3: Unit 10,000 posts a Quranic verse about Noah, November 12, 2021

Iran’s apparent directives to de-escalate the crisis. Their brewing schism with Tehran began before Qaani visited Baghdad last week. After recent clashes in front of the International Zone, Sabereen News harshly criticized Iran for not publicizing the clashes sufficiently, issuing an angry Farsi message that read: “Iran’s state media outlets, you should be ashamed! We gave blood today, a shoe of a martyr is more valuable than Kadhimi...This was not

even further, hence, they are asking followers to “embark” on their ship and begin the dangerous journey toward escalation.

If so, AAH and KH will be flouting

a friction, this was a massacre [carried out] by a sniper” (Figure 6).

In Militia Spotlight's view, the drastic escalation seen since November 7 has at least two audiences in mind. In addition to taking back the initiative from Iraqi rivals, AAH and at least part of KH seem intent on showing Iran what happens when the *muqawama* feel insufficiently supported in their moment of ultimate need.



PART OF A SERIES

[Militia Spotlight](#)

[\(/policy-](#)

[analysis/series/militia-spotlight\)](#)

[How to Use Militia Spotlight](#)

[\(/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight\)](#)



[Kataib Hezbollah Behind](#)

["Grassroots" Iraqi Fundraising for](#)

[Yemen](#)

[\(/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-behind-grassroots-iraqi-fundraising-yemen\)](#)



[Militia Lionization of Esmail Qaani:](#)

[Consolidation or Covering](#)

[Embarrassment?](#)

(/policy-analysis/militia-lionization-
esmail-qaani-consolidation-or-
covering-embarrassment)

RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

Iran Takes Next Steps on Rocket Technology

Feb 11, 2022



Farzin Nadimi

(/policy-analysis/iran-takes-next-steps-rocket-technology)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

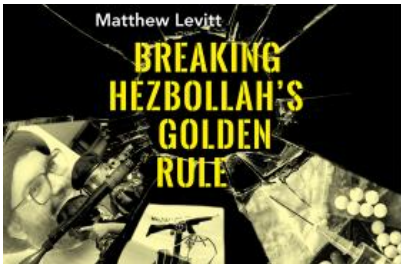
Saudi Arabia Adjusts Its History, Diminishing the Role of Wahhabism

Feb 11, 2022



Simon Henderson

(/policy-analysis/saudi-arabia-adjusts-its-history-diminishing-role-wahhabism)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

Podcast: Breaking Hezbollah's Golden Rule

Feb 9, 2022

TOPICS

Democracy & Reform (/policy-analysis/democracy-reform)

Military & Security (/policy-analysis/military-security)

Terrorism (/policy-analysis/terrorism)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

Iran (/policy-analysis/iran)

Iraq (/policy-analysis/iraq)