

Abu Fadak Tries to Split the Shrine Units

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

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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)

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Recent moves by the senior PMF commander are seemingly aimed at sowing divisions among four key militias that do not answer to the so-called "resistance."

On January 10, [Sabereen News \(/node/16673\)](#) and a few other *muqawama* (resistance) social media accounts posted a clip showing fighters gathering in an empty space in the city of Karbala and lining up to receive a few items. The footage identified the fighters as members of [al-Abbas Combat Division \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/al-abbas-combat-division-model-reducing-iranian-influence-iraqs-security-forces\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/al-abbas-combat-division-model-reducing-iranian-influence-iraqs-security-forces) (Firqat al-Abbas al-Qitaliyah, or FAQ), a unit affiliated with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and forming the 26th Brigade of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Sabereen's post read: "[Members] of group C of the mujahedin join [their] duty, demanding their rights [which were] usurped by Maytham al-Zaidi, Brigade (26) of the [PMF]. They continue their strike until their demand to dismiss al-Zaidi is met" (Figure 1).

The fighters in this breakaway contingent are also shown listening to remarks by Abu Ali al-Ashtar, the brigade's former intelligence chief who mounted a challenge against FAQ leader Zaidi on December 13 (Figure 2). Ashtar accused Zaidi of stealing salaries from fighters; Zaidi has denied the accusations and stated that all the accounts are transparent.

Far from seeking actual financial transparency, however, the Sabereen video seems more like an effort to dismantle the Atabat, the four "shrine units" that have long refused to kowtow to the orders of the Iran-



Yet *muqawama* social media accounts are reporting heavily on the issue as a way of supporting the breakaway contingent and encouraging further dissension.



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