

## Profile: Communications and Media Commission

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Brief Analysis

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

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

**After falling under the control of “resistance”-linked board members, this key Iraqi media institution began a widespread crackdown on freedom of expression. Its head commissioner is a member of U.S.-designated terrorist group Asaib Ahl al-Haq.**

**N**ame: Hayat al-Ealam wa al-Etesalat (Communications and Media Commission, or CMC).

#### Type of movement:

“Financially and administratively independent institution” tasked with monitoring and regulating media and communications in Iraq. Membership is now controlled by political blocs aligned with the Coordination Framework and *muqawama* (resistance) militias.

**Role** (see Section 5 of [Executive Order 65 of 2004 \(https://cmc.iq/ar/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/order651-1.pdf\)](#)):

1. Manages communications and media licensing processes in Iraq.
2. Establishes the regulatory regime for telecommunications, broadcasting, and information services by:
  - drafting and promulgating rules and regulations
  - “encouraging freedom of expression and press professionalism”
  - creating effective and mandatory codes of practice governing media-related industries, including copyright protections, fraud prevention, advertising, and media activities during election periods.

#### History and objectives:

- The CMC was established according to [Executive Order 65 of 2004 \(https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/cpa-iraq/regulations/20040320\\_CPAORD65.pdf\)](#), issued by Paul Bremer, then head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Section 4 outlines its organization, which consists of the following bodies and positions:
  - Board of Commissioners (includes nine members, one of whom is chair)
  - Director-General
  - Hearings Panel
  - Appeals Board
  - Inspector-General
  - Any advisory boards that the board or director-general deems necessary
- Since 2005, the CMC has implemented requirements set out in Iraq's constitution:



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CMC logo

- Article 38: "The state shall guarantee in a way that does not violate public order and morality: First, freedom of expression using all means. Second, freedom of press, printing, advertisement, media, and publications."
- Article 103: "The Communications and Media Commission...[is a] financially and administratively independent institution, and [its] work...shall be regulated by law."
- Both Executive Order 65 and the Iraqi constitution require the CMC to be independent. The executive order also requires the CMC to be guided by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iraq is a signatory. Article 19 of the ICCPR enshrines the right to freedom of expression, which is also guaranteed under Article 38(1) of the Iraqi constitution.
- When operating under pro-*muqawama* leadership, the CMC tends to restrict freedom of speech:
  - On August 9, 2023, the CMC banned public use of the terms (<https://ninanews.com/Website/News/Details?key=1069633>) "homosexuality, homosexual, and gender" as being incompatible with Iraqi society. The CMC guided that Iraqis should instead use the term "sexual deviancy." International NGOs condemned (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/08/iraqi-authorities-must-immediately-reverse-media-ban-on-the-terms-homosexuality-and-gender/>) the decision.
  - On March 16, 2023, a draft of a new CMC regulation policy on digital content ( Regulation No. 1 of 2023 for Digital Content in Iraq ([https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KXHyU1HGfLbYrRcdtj\\_u3mW23T1kuW0l/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KXHyU1HGfLbYrRcdtj_u3mW23T1kuW0l/view)) ) was leaked. It quickly drew criticism from twelve international organizations (<https://www.accessnow.org/press-release/digital-content-regulation-iraq/>) (see Figure 1) for exceeding its delegated authorities from parliament and violating various constitutional articles, specifically by considering policies to reduce freedom of expression and criminalize investigative journalism. A full English translation of the draft regulation can be found here (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/iraqi-cmc-draft-regulation-digital-content-iraq>) .
  - In February 2023, the German network DW reported that one of its teams had been barred from recording a show in Baghdad by the CMC, which demanded that the crew obtain a special permit from the commission, in contrast to precedent. (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/iraqs-muqawama-government-drives-out-prominent-lgbtq-advocate>) The CMC did not deny this claim. As a result, the DW team was unable to film its program and had to leave the country on short notice.
  - On June 17, 2022, CMC director-general Ali Hussein al-Moayad (see below) barred Iraqi channels from hosting Ismail Musabbah al-Waeli, a prominent political critic of Supreme Judicial Council president Faeq Zaidan and various *muqawama* politicians. Waeli had remarked that Iraq's Federal Supreme Court follows Iranian guidance, a charge that Zaidan is particularly sensitive toward.
  - In April 2020, under Prime Minister Adil Abdulmahdi, the CMC suspended the license of major international media outlet Reuters for three months and fined it 25 million dinars for its reporting on the government's COVID-19 response.
  - On November 12, 2019, in the midst of the Tishreen protests and under Prime Minister Abdulmahdi's tenure, the CMC suspended eight television broadcasters and four radio stations for three months due to their coverage of civil society demonstrations and *muqawama* human rights abuses. Five other channels were given warnings for similar reasons. The U.S. embassy in Baghdad condemned ([https://m.facebook.com/USEmbassyBaghdad/photos/a.377892219303/10157880188209304/?type=3&eid=ARAQADbHTVofjYtMpS0zMuD0D81EY1F8m9UN7zGL012lb930xFr-Iqp1GOPgwxr\\_HfNkMrXRM\\_r02Z-4&locale=es\\_LA](https://m.facebook.com/USEmbassyBaghdad/photos/a.377892219303/10157880188209304/?type=3&eid=ARAQADbHTVofjYtMpS0zMuD0D81EY1F8m9UN7zGL012lb930xFr-Iqp1GOPgwxr_HfNkMrXRM_r02Z-4&locale=es_LA)) the suspensions and warnings.
  - On October 19, 2023, the state-run Iraqi Media Network reported (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/militia-mob-attacks-saudi-mbc-channel-baghdad>) that "the Board of Commissioners of the Communications and Media Commission (CMC) decided to cancel the license of MBC satellite channel and directs the executive body of the commission to stop its operations in Iraq". Although decisions like these are usually published through CMC documents or official statements, no image of such a document has been publicly released or mentioned on CMC's social media accounts. This suggests that the cancellation report was an unofficial move intended to salve militia mob anger at MBC for criticizing Iran-backed militia martyrs that day, albeit without taking MBC off the air in reality.
- In 2024, three Sunni- and Kurdish-appointed members of the CMC and one Shiite-appointed member were removed by the board of governors upon instruction by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani (<https://www.ina.iq/220134--4-.html>) . This left only Shiite militia-appointed members on the board. The four removed members were
  - Bassam Salem Hussein, the most experienced media professional on the board, affiliated with former speaker of parliament Mohammed al-Halbousi.
  - Abdulwahhab al-Saffar, affiliated with Khamis al-Khanjar, head of the Sunni Arab Siyada coalition.
  - Ava Faiq Nadir, affiliated with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).
  - Mujahed Abu al-Hail, affiliated with former prime minister Haidar al-Abadi, a CF member.

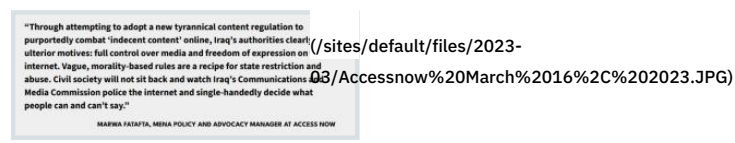


Figure 1: Excerpt from open letter by Accessnow and affiliated groups to the CMC on March 16, 2023.

- On December 8, 2024, the CMC issued "directives" (</node/19111>) (which are technically non-binding) to "all media organizations" guiding them to counter "the media machine of the usurping Zionist entity" and praise the security forces.
- On February 3, 2025, the head of the CMC, Ali Hussein al-Moayad, had his resignation accepted by the Iraqi prime minister's office and was replaced by Mohammed Abdallah Abdalamin al-Ghuraybawi.

#### Chain of command:

- When the CMC was first established, the head of the CPA had the authority to appoint its director-general and board members. The commission still operates under this order, which means the prime minister has assumed the authority previously granted to the CPA head. Since Iraq's constitution was passed in 2005, the prime minister has selected an acting CMC director-general and all commission members; these members then select their chair through a majority vote.
- Beginning in 2022, board appointments made by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani—who was nominated to his post by the Coordination Framework (CF), the main *muqawama* political bloc—helped the CF establish control over the CMC via majority voting power.
- The CMC director-general chosen in 2022—Ali Hussein al-Moayad—is a relative of Ammar al-Hakim, the leader of the Hikma movement and a member of the CF. On August 6, 2023, Sabereen News (</node/16673>) leaked a letter (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/militia-reactions-iraqs-suspension-telegram>) with a CMC letterhead in which Moayad ordered Iraqi telecommunications providers to give free support to Hikma political SMS text messaging.
- Mahmoud al-Rubaie, spokesman for the political office of the U.S.-designated terrorist group Asaib Ahl al-Haq (</node/16715>) before his appointment to the CMC board, was named the acting head of the board commissioners (<https://video-agencyia.iq/Detail/8921>) on November 27, 2024.

- CF members now comprise five of six members of the CMC board.
- On February 3, 2025, Mohammed Abdallah Abdalamin al-Ghuraybawi became the new head of the CMC.

#### Affiliate relationships:

- Along with Director-General Moayad, five of the CMC's six board members are drawn from CF factions:
  - Mahmoud al-Rubaie, who served as spokesman for the political office of the U.S.-designated terrorist group [Asaib Ahl al-Haq \(/node/16715\)](#), before his appointment to the CMC board.
  - Amtar Rahim al-Mayyahi, a former [Badr Organization \(/node/17003\)](#) representative on the Basra provincial council. Her husband is high-ranking Badr member Abu Ahmed al-Rashed.
  - Mohammad al-Hamad, a figure close to State of Law Alliance chief Nouri al-Maliki. Previously, Hamad served as general manager of Afaq TV. He is now deputy head of the [Iraqi Radio and Television Union \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-iraqi-radio-and-television-union\)](#), an offshoot of Iran's [Islamic Radio and Television Union \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/understanding-irans-vast-media-network-arab-countries\)](#) (IRTVU). In October 2020, the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control [designated \(https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm1158\)](#) IRTVU and other Iranian entities for obtaining American voter registration data in order to influence U.S. elections and incite unrest.
  - Moayyad al-Lami, head of the Iraqi Press Syndicate, affiliated with Prime Minister Sudani.
  - The only CMC board member not drawn from CF factions is Abdaladhim Mohammad al-Saleh, affiliated with the Sadrist movement.

#### Subordinate elements:

- Board Hearing
- Appeal Board
- The CMC [controls the .iq domain \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/how-militia-digital-media-avoid-domain-seizure-and-blocking\)](#), giving it responsibility over the hosting of media outlets tied to designated terrorist organizations—for instance [al-Etejah Television \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-al-etejah-satellite-television\)](#), affiliated with [Kataib Hezbollah \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-kataib-hezbollah\)](#), and [Kaf, KH's official platform \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-and-kaf-celebrate-attacks-americans\)](#).
- The CMC controls licensing of telecommunications companies, a highly lucrative business in Iraq with influence over the payment or forgiveness of telecom company debts and the issuance of new licenses.



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