

# Militias Welcome Killing of LGBTQ Celebrity: Coordination Framework Pushes to Make Homosexuality Illegal

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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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## Iran-backed militias within the Coordination Framework are leading the call to criminalize alternative lifestyles and celebrating the murder of a queer Iraqi through their social media platforms.

On September 25, popular Iraqi TikToker Mohammed Noor al-Saffar, known as Noor BM, was **shot dead** (<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/09/27/middleeast/iraq-lgbtq-shot-intl/index.html>) in broad daylight in Baghdad's al-Mansour neighborhood. **Described** (<https://twitter.com/IraQueer/status/1706378733152575522>) by the Iraqi LGBTQ+ organization IraQueer as a "queer Iraqi vlogger," Noor BM was just twenty-three years old.

Although it is not clear if the killer is affiliated with Iraq's *muqawama* (resistance) militias, their social media channels celebrated the news. For example, the Telegram channel al-Hashd al-Electroni posted CCTV footage of the murder and added the hashtag **سَلَمَتْ يَمِينِكَ** (bless your hand) in reference to the killer (Figure 1). The same sentiment was expressed by other *muqawama* channels such as Shaajab News.

### Iran-Backed Militias Attack LGBTQ+

The brazen murder happened after months of *muqawama* pressure on the government to pass a law punishing



Figure 1: The Telegram group al-Hashd al-Electroni thanks the killer of Noor BM, September 25, 2023.

homosexuality with capital punishment or life imprisonment. In a July 1 tweet, Qais al-Khazali, leader of the *muqawama* group **Asaib Ahl al-Haq (/node/16715)** (AAH)

declared: "After all that we have said about the danger of the malicious American projects, which target the values and traditions of our society, it has become necessary for all honorable members in the parliament to pass a law criminalizing homosexuality...to guarantee immunity and adequate protection for the authentic values, beliefs, and morals of Iraqi society" (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Qais al-Khazali asks for homosexuality to be criminalized, July 1, 2023.



Figure 3: Saud al-Saedi says parliamentarians have submitted a request to amend the penal code to include criminalization of homosexuality, July 3, 2023.

A few days later, Saud al-Saedi, head of **Kataib Hezbollah's (/node/16641)**

Hoquq bloc, told AAH's **al-Ahd TV (/node/17268)** that parliamentarians had submitted a request to speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi to include criminalization of homosexuality in the penal code (Figure 3). (Interestingly, Saedi is the same Hoquq parliamentarian who pushed to nullify the 2013 Iraq-Kuwait agreement

on the Khor Abdullah waterway this May, in a case that the Federal Supreme Court adjudicated on September 4.)

Other *muqawama* militias such as **Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (/node/16716)** (HaN) also strongly supported these efforts. In one lengthy tweet, HaN spokesman Nasr al-Shammari urged parliament to criminalize homosexuality and its promotion. He also launched a stinging attack accusing the West of spreading homosexuality by muddling the concept of gender (Figure 4). Similarly, Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law Alliance has pressured Speaker Halbousi to expedite the process of passing an anti-homosexuality law (Figure 5).

### Coordination Framework Media and Militias Pushing Halbousi

On August 15, Hassan Salim, a member of AAH's parliamentary bloc al-Sadiqoun, submitted a proposal to amend the Combating Prostitution Law of 1988 by adding articles



Figure 5: Maliki's State of Law Alliance asks for the process of passing an anti-homosexuality law to be expedited, July 17, 2023.

criminalizing homosexuality and a wide range of "misdemeanors," including cross-dressing. (Notably, Noor BM described himself as a cross-dresser in past interviews.) The proposed law would punish



Figure 4: Nasr al-Shammari attacks the West on gender issues, July 18, 2023.

(<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2023/8/22/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-28>) anyone engaging in homosexuality with life imprisonment or death, and jail individuals who promote homosexuality for a minimum of seven years. The measure was supported by 106 members of parliament, most of them from the CF.

Although Halbousi reportedly sent (<https://shorturl.at/BNRS6>) the bill to the parliament's legal committee, he is still facing huge pressure from *muqawama* media networks, who accuse him of withdrawing or delaying the measure with administrative steps. Sebyan al-Safara (Lads of the Embassy), an influential group specializing in smear campaigns against those deemed unfriendly to the *muqawama*, ran a story about Halbousi linking his purported obstruction of the bill with his purported efforts to normalize Iraqi relations with Israel (Figure 6). This report was widely reposted on *muqawama* social media, including Sabreen News (</node/16673>).

### Broad Coordination Framework Attack on Human Rights

These trends fit into the broader pattern of persecution that is accelerating under the government installed by the Coordination Framework in October 2022. One pillar of this effort, the Iraqi Communications and Media Commission (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-communications-and-media-commission>) (CMC), is reportedly preparing to remove content related to LGBTQ+ issues from Iraqi social media sites. In the disturbing draft regulations (</node/18118>) under consideration by the CMC, homosexuality-related material is judged slightly less objectionable than human trafficking but worse than radioactive contamination. On August 9, the CMC (<https://ninanews.com/Website/News/Details?key=1069633>) banned public use of the terms (<https://ninanews.com/Website/News/Details?key=1069633>) "homosexuality, homosexual, and gender" as incompatible with Iraqi society. It asked citizens to use the term "sexual deviancy" instead. International NGOs and other organizations condemned (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/08/iraq-authorities-must-immediately-reverse-media-ban-on-the-terms-homosexuality-and-gender/>) the decision, but they are under pressure as well; in February 2023, for example, German media network DW was driven out of Iraq (

Figure 6: Sebyan al-Safara attacks Halbousi for "withdrawing" the anti-homosexuality bill, September 24, 2023.

(/sites/defa  
10/6.%202

[muqawama-government-drives-out-prominent-lgbtq-advocate](#)) for covering LGBTQ+ material.



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