

Profile: The Islamic Resistance in Iraq

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Brief Analysis

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

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The Telegram brand that emerged in October 2023 is not a group per se, but rather a generic name used to denote unity among Iran-backed armed groups and deemphasize their individual identities during attacks spurred by the Gaza war.

Name: Al-Muqawama al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq (the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, or IRI). An umbrella term used to describe operations by all Iran-backed Iraqi militias conducted in solidarity with the 2023-24 war between Hamas and Israel.

Type of movement: Kinetic military operations, both national and transnational, focusing on U.S. targets in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere (stemming from the U.S. role in the Gaza crisis) as well as targets in Israel.

History: During the war that erupted between Hamas and Israel in October 2023, Iraqi *muqawama* (resistance) militias attacked U.S. troops based in Iraq and Syria, then branched out to target various locations in Israel. They have claimed the [following attacks \(/node/18428\)](/node/18428) under the IRI brand:

- October 17, 2023: drone attack on Harir Air Base in Iraqi Kurdistan. This attack was initially claimed by [Tashkil al-](#)

Waritheen (/node/17621); soon thereafter, a superseding claim was issued by the IRI brand and the Waritheen claim was removed in deference. One Qasf-2K drone was used in the strike.

- As of June 20, 2024, over 180 subsequent attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria, and over 115 claimed attacks on Israel.

Objectives:

- To allow various Iraqi *muqawama* militias to launch attacks against U.S. and Israeli targets under one umbrella term.
- The militias may see benefit in obscuring which exact groups are attacking these targets.
- Using a generic, no-logo brand is perhaps the ultimate extension of the “facade strategy” that Iran and its proxies have used since 2019 to avoid accountability for attacks on Americans.
- To show unity behind attacks against U.S. interests during the Gaza war, essentially "reporting for duty" as one force. This strongly suggests that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) is corralling its many Iraqi "resistance" proxies, which otherwise tend to argue over local leadership.

Chain of command:

- The balance of available evidence suggests that the IRGC-QF plays a role in coordinating the IRI brand. Iraqi armed groups tend to jealously guard their individual identities and the credit they derive (directly or via facade groups linked to them) from attacks, so their willingness to submerge these identities and even recant an individual group attack claim suggests that a higher power is coordinating them. Furthermore, co-branding with Tashkil al-Waritheen in the October 17 strike on Harir indicates a direct link to an IRGC-QF direct-operated group with close ties to Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (/node/16716).
- Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba has publicly affiliated itself with the IRI brand, releasing a threatening video on October 30, 2023, that includes footage of drone attacks originally published on IRI's Telegram channel. These videos purported to show the moment of launch for a number of drone attacks on U.S. positions. Nujaba did not actively claim to control IRI, though it is likely some of the attacks claimed by this facade group were carried out by teams controlled by Nujaba.
- The Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee (al-Haya al-Tansiqiya lil-Muqawama al-Iraqiya, or Tansiqiya for short).

Affiliate relationships:

- A Telegram group called al-Elam al-Harbi (The War Media) was created on October 18, 2023, to publish statements and attack claims by various Iraqi militias under the IRI brand.
- In 2024, IRI jointly claimed attacks with regional *muqawama* elements such as the Bahraini group Saraya al-Ashtar (an April 27 claim (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-behind-saraya-al-ashtars-claimed-attack-israel>) involving a Sammad/KAS-04-type V-wing drone) and the Yemeni Houthis (June 6 and 12 claims (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/iraqi-groups-and-yemens-houthis-claim-more-joint-attacks-israel>) involving unspecified drones and an unspecified cruise missile).

Subordinate elements:

- Tashkil al-Waritheen is demonstrably working for and under the IRI brand. Its October 18, 2023, claim referred to "Tashkil al-Waritheen, Operations Support Room for al-Aqsa Flood."
- "The Islamic Resistance in Iraq" is an umbrella brand matching the nomenclature that all Iran-backed Iraqi armed groups have previously used to describe themselves, often as the prefix to their specific group names. Moreover, top groups such as Kataib Hezbollah (KH) (/node/16641) have not made separate or competing claims for attacks in their typical areas of operations (such as al-Asad).

- On June 17, 2024, the U.S. State Department **confirmed** (<https://www.state.gov/terrorist-designation-of-harakat-ansar-allah-al-awfiya/>) that IRI included:
 - Kataib Hezbollah, designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) in July 2009
 - Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, designated as an SDGT in March 2019
 - Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, designated as an SDGT in November 2023
 - Ansar Allah al-Awfiya, designated as an SDGT in June 2024.



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