

Kataib Hezbollah Publicly Mocks Asaib Ahl al-Haq for Cowardice

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Brief Analysis

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

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

After AAH officials sought a halt to the verbal attacks, KH doubled down with a cutting public insult.

As Militia Spotlight [previously detailed \(/node/18501\)](#), Iraqi militia [Kataib Hezbollah \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/node/16641\)](#) (KH) used the post-November 23 ceasefire in Gaza and other Iranian proxy theaters to chide [Asaib Ahl al-Haq \(/node/16715\)](#) (AAH) for failing to join recent “resistance” attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria. After U.S. counter-strikes killed around nine KH operatives on November 21, [Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba \(/node/16716\)](#) (HaN) leader Akram Kaabi hinted at disappointment with AAH two days later, suggesting that the group had used “excuses” to not mount anti-U.S. attacks. Following weeks of minimal AAH public commentary against U.S. interests and subsequent teasing from the wider *muqawama* (resistance), AAH security chief Jawad al-Talibawi finally responded on November 26, criticizing (without naming) KH secretary-general Ahmad Mohsen Faraj al-Hamidawi (aka Abu Hussein) for excluding AAH from a list of *muqawama* groups.

KH Shoots Back at Talibawi, Khazali, and AAH

KH responded to Talibawi through spokesman Jafar al-Husseini, [who was sanctioned by the U.S. government on November 17 \(/node/18488\)](#) for “coordinating with KH fighters planning attacks against U.S. military commanders in Iraq.” Husseini was [previously identified \(/node/16187\)](#) as KH’s military spokesman and part of its Abu Hussein wing. He first highlighted the apparent veracity of attack claims by the [Islamic Resistance in Iraq \(/node/18416\)](#) brand, which he proudly noted were a match for base attacks that U.S. authorities had publicly announced. He also noted that the number of attacks might have been even higher “if other jihadist factions came along to the battle,” a rather clear dig at AAH.

Husseini concluded with an extraordinarily snarky put-down: “This is the field, Hamidan” (Figure 2). His last sentence is an Iraqi idiom used for challenge and sarcasm—Hamidan is a fictional figure who brags about how tough he is until one day, a bigger man with bigger muscles comes to wrestle him, whereupon Hamidan starts making excuses so he doesn’t have to fight the bigger man. KH’s challenge is clear: AAH should either put up (i.e., attack U.S. forces) or shut up.



Figure 1: Jawad al-Talibawi complains about KH’s verbal attacks on AAH and notes the group’s hurt feelings, November 26, 2023.



Figure 2: KH’s Jafar al-Husseini publicly humiliates AAH by implicitly questioning the bravery of leaders like Qais al-Khazali, Laith al-Khazali, and Jawad al-Talibawi.

Militia Social Media Reaction to the Squabble

Overall, *muqawama* social media channels have been uncharitable toward AAH. For example, Tura News—a HaN-affiliated outlet with more than 16,000 followers—apologized for giving publicity to Talibawi’s comments:

“We apologize for publishing the tweet that we received for the military spokesman of one of the resistance factions. Tura News stands on mutual ground from all the honorable resistance factions and is not part of the organized downfall attacks and the attacks that find division. We ask all dear brothers to take stability and rationality as fundamental behavior in handling and not escalate in such important circumstances” (Figure 7).

Two of the most prominent *muqawama* commentators—[Sabereen News \(/node/16673\)](#) (365,000 followers on Telegram) and Ahmad al-Thawwaq (166,000 on Telegram and 884,000 on Twitter)—sided with KH by only reporting its statements and adopting its point of view.

Sabereen has taken an especially negative tone toward AAH since [the government’s short-lived Telegram ban \(/node/18260\)](#) in August,

which the channel viewed as a selfish move enabled by AAH’s man in Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani’s office, communications chief [Rabee Nader \(/node/17736\)](#). (Nader was previously a journalist for the AAH-run channel [Al-Ahd TV \(/node/17268\)](#).)

Findings From the Spat

This is hardly the first time KH and AAH have verbally sparred—they have [done so regularly \(/node/17022\)](#) throughout Militia Spotlight’s extensive coverage of *muqawama* statements. Historically, KH almost always starts these fights, and they usually don’t end until Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force slaps KH on the wrist. In this case, it will be interesting to see how long other *muqawama* actors are allowed to shame AAH for its apparent weak performance as a member of Iran’s “axis of resistance” during the Gaza war. Even the [Badr Organization \(/node/17003\)](#), the most politically and economically focused *muqawama* actor, has taken on more risk than AAH [by openly threatening the United States \(/node/18454\)](#). Another finding is that Abu Hussein’s paramilitary wing of KH is getting more and more visible and vocal—in this case doubling down on its listing of active *muqawama* militant groups by speaking on behalf of the “Islamic Resistance in Iraq” brand (and, in the process, undermining the point of a brand/facade strategy). ❖

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