

To Resist or Not to Resist: That Is the Muqawama's Question

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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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After Kataib Hezbollah announced it was suspending attacks on U.S. forces, the self-styled "resistance" became a hot mess of recriminations.

It is now four days since Ahmad Mohsen Faraj al-Hamidawi (aka Abu Hussein), secretary-general of the Iran-backed Iraqi militia [Kataib Hezbollah \(KH\) \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/node/16641\)](#), declared a [suspension of attacks \(node/18603\)](#) on U.S. forces. His apparent aim was to spare Iran and KH from U.S. counterstrikes [after the killing \(node/18599\)](#) of three American soldiers in Jordan on January 28. As might be expected from the fractious *muqawama* (resistance) factions, the intervening days have exposed their rivalries and mutual ill will.

Nujaba Exploits KH's "Suspension"

On January 29, the day before KH's suspension announcement, the militia [Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba \(node/18558\)](#) declared that it would keep attacking U.S. bases, stating, "What we say, we do...They [the United States] have to learn the lesson and leave today, before tomorrow. Every day that passes, they will pay a heavy price" (see figure 1).

By January 31, Nujaba Telegram platforms such as the Jihad Brothers Team were throwing jabs at KH's announcement by claiming continued attacks on U.S. facilities, including a four-drone strike against Harir, an air base in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq that formerly housed U.S. soldiers. Yet the Harir base has long been vacated, and there is no evidence any such attack took place. [Sabereen News \(node/16673\)](#) quickly pointed out this phantom strike, calling the Jihad Brothers Team "childish" for making such a claim.



This pushback drew heavy criticism from other Nujaba-affiliated platforms, especially [Mujtahid](#), a platform on Facebook that uses the comments section to spread its propaganda to more than 152,000 followers. Without naming Sabereen explicitly, Mujtahid warned the platform, "If they tell you not to report the news of attacks, it's up to you, and you're free. But it's not your duty to deny them" (figure 2).



Figure 1. [Islamic Resistance in Iraq \(IRI\) \(node/18416\)](#) War Media claimed responsibility for attacking Israel's Haifa port with drones. Sabereen did not celebrate the claim as it habitually did with IRI claims before KH's suspension statement. Instead, the channel announced that it would cease publishing until further notice. For its part, IRI deleted the claim on its main account but maintained it on a new IRI Telegram account with a new production team.

Sabereen Suspends Itself; IRI's Telegram Account Changes Hands?

On February 1, the [Islamic Resistance in Iraq \(IRI\) \(node/18416\)](#) War Media claimed responsibility for attacking Israel's Haifa port with drones. Sabereen did not celebrate the claim as it habitually did with IRI claims before KH's suspension statement. Instead, the channel announced that it would cease publishing until further notice. For its part, IRI deleted the claim on its main account but maintained it on a new IRI Telegram account with a new production team.

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Figure 2. The Jihad Brothers Team chides KH.

Nujaba Followers Hide KH, Then Try to Reduce Tensions

Also on February 1, Nujaba (via the Jihad Brothers) posted a sanctimonious statement that read, "Resistance is not a privilege or a temporary pleasure; it is a solid doctrine that changes, and threats don't scare it" (figure 3). This was a clear criticism of KH, which is one of Nujaba's top rival claimants for the mantle of "[truest" \(node/18501\) muqawama \(node/18501\)](#)."

On February 2, the Nujaba facade group [Ashab al-Kahf \(node/16638\)](#) tried to raise the tone and soften the criticism: "The Islamic Resistance operations continue...targeting the American and Zionist occupiers. On this matter, we want to clarify the following. First: We

thank *mujahid* Akram Kaabi [referring to Nujaba's leader] for his position and support of our stance in continuing our military operations against the occupier. Second: The brothers of Kataib Hezbollah know better of their duty and their benefit, and so on the other factions. May God bless them for what they have done and will do. Third: Any threat by the brutal occupier...will be faced with an earth-shattering response in their bases and fortresses. Fourth: All the resistant factions are independent in their decisions, and every faction has its own path and opinion, but they are aligned in their approach and cause. Some sick and weak souls should not enter the swamp of intruders to create a division between the crowd of the resistance, because their path is closed in God's will" (figure 4).

The same day, Kaabi released a statement confirming Nujaba's determination to not join KH's suspension of attacks: "Our decision is Iraqi, and we will not stop until we accomplish two things, which are...stopping operations on Gaza and the withdrawal of the U.S. occupying forces from Iraq. About the temporary suspension of operations of our brothers in the victorious Kataib Hezbollah, the brothers in jihad, blood, weapon, and fate: after my conversation with our dear brother the *mujahid* brother (Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi, may God support him) clarified the reasons, we saw the truth and the wisdom in his decision. We respect and appreciate that and value his sacrifices in these circumstances. It will be proven in the future that his decision was taken bravely and selflessly. We will wait for the near blessed return of the victorious KH and cancel their suspension when the embarrassment and causes are lifted. Whatever is coming out from the U.S. psychological operations war machines...will not bend us. Any attack will be faced with a suitable response. We assure that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the other factions will continue with their decision until we achieve our demands" (figure 5).



Analysis

There is a lot to unpack in this sequence of communications, and Militia Spotlight will do so comprehensively in due course. For now, it is clear that Nujaba is trying to put KH in the shade, and also perhaps to draw some heat (and U.S. targeting) off KH. This is probably due to the risk that KH elements inside the Iraqi government—especially the Popular Mobilization Forces—could be affected. ❖

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