

Anti-Israel Attacks by Iraq-Based Group with Implied Saudi Membership

by [Hamdi Malik \(/experts/hamdi-malik\)](/experts/hamdi-malik), [Michael Knights \(/experts/michael-knights\)](/experts/michael-knights), [Crispin Smith \(/experts/crispin-smith\)](/experts/crispin-smith)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Hamdi Malik \(/experts/hamdi-malik\)](/experts/hamdi-malik)

Hamdi Malik is an associate fellow with The Washington Institute and cofounder of its Militia Spotlight platform.



[Michael Knights \(/experts/michael-knights\)](/experts/michael-knights)

Michael Knights is the Jill and Jay Bernstein Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute and cofounder of the Militia Spotlight platform, which offers in-depth analysis of developments related to Iran-backed militias.



[Crispin Smith \(/experts/crispin-smith\)](/experts/crispin-smith)

Crispin Smith is an associate at a Washington-based national security law group, focusing on Iraqi security, human rights, and law of armed conflict issues. He is a cofounder of the Militia Spotlight platform.



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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A group with a Saudi-linked name has claimed six attacks on Israel, but they were probably launched from Iraq using Kataib Hezbollah and/or Houthi drone teams.

In recent weeks, a new facade group called al-Muqawama al-Islamiya fi Bilad al-Haramain (the Islamic Resistance in the Land of the Two Mosques, or MIBH) has claimed responsibility for drone attacks against Israel. The group's name seems intended to suggest an affiliation with pro-Iran militants from Saudi Arabia, since the kingdom hosts two of the holiest mosques in Islam—al-Masjid al-Haram in Mecca and al-Masjid al-Nabawi in Medina—and is often referred to as the "Land of the Two Holy Mosques" or similar variations.

MIBH first claimed responsibility for a strike on October 25, declaring that it was launched from Saudi territory: "With pride and honor, the Islamic Resistance in the Land of the Two Mosques announces the launch of its first jihadist operation, targeting a vital site in occupied Palestine...via drone. This operation, carried out by the Islamic Resistance from the Land of the Two Mosques, is a manifestation of the living will of the people of the Arabian Peninsula [to fight Israel]" (Figure 1).

In all, MIBH has claimed responsibility for six drone attacks so far:

- October 25 attack on a "vital site" in Israel (unspecified location)
- October 31 attack on a target in Jordan Valley

- November 9 attack on a target in Jordan Valley
- November 10 attack on a target in Jordan Valley
- November 12 attack on a target in Eilat
- November 17 attack on a target in Jaffa

The group has published three short videos of these purported attacks—two recorded during daytime and one at night. As usual, a significant portion of the scenes in these videos is blurred to prevent geolocation. Yet the visible terrain appears to differ from locations typically shown in videos published by [the Islamic Resistance in Iraq \(IRI\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-islamic-resistance-iraq) for drone launches, which most likely occur in Syria. The landscape seen in the MIBH videos is pristine dune desert seemingly intended to look like northern Saudi Arabia, indicating the possibility that these groups either crossed the border to launch attacks from Saudi territory or wanted to give that impression (Figure 2).



Figure 1: MIBH's first statement, October 25, 2024.

Despite its name, all evidence suggests that MIBH is a facade group established by the Iraqi *muqawama* (resistance). The language used in the group's statements closely mirrors that of IRI, while the style of the videos showcasing the purported attacks further indicates that this is a front for the *muqawama*. Although Iraqi militias are rumored to have a limited number of Saudi and other Gulf Arab guest fighters and trainees, any Saudi citizens involved in these attacks are probably led by Iraqi militants. The situation recalls the April 27 [drone attack on Israel](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-behind-saraya-al-ashtars-claimed-attack-israel) claimed in the name of the Bahraini group Saraya al-Ashtar, which was also probably an Iraqi-orchestrated affair.

The emergence of an apparent Saudi "wing" of IRI reminds one of the January statements by Kataib Hezbollah (KH) pledging support for future operations in Saudi Arabia. On January 9, KH military spokesman Jafar al-Husseini [noted](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-reveals-plans-expanded-regional-attacks) “We also have the resistance in Bahrain and Hejaz [Saudi Arabia]. Even though their presence is not clear now, it will be more visible in the coming years and the coming confrontations.” Using its facade group [Alwiyat al-Waad al-Haq](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-alwiyat-al-waad-al-haq), KH remains [Iran's main southward-facing proxy in Iraq](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/node/18424), with responsibility for operations against the Gulf states.

Also relevant is the recent boost in Houthi hosting of Saudi oppositionists in Sanaa, Yemen. In addition to welcoming Saudi Ismailis from Najran—a Saudi province that the Houthis consider to be occupied Yemeni territory—the Iran-backed group has also trained citizens from the kingdom's Shia minority, particularly from Qatif. On October 31, the Houthis announced the gathering of a “military council” of Saudi oppositionists [in Sanaa](https://x.com/faresalhemiyari/status/1852025251280134423?s=43&t=s6LO-CbrZG-NB9uI9frng). And earlier this month, the Houthi-controlled [Saba TV broadcast](https://x.com/nasr_amer1/status/1852395417301880834?s=46&t=oPMbr7zUgPB180aISsgRNw) segments with oppositionists. These moves reflect the Houthis’ longstanding desire to position themselves as a revolutionary vanguard among Iran's "axis of resistance" groups, including within the Arabian Peninsula. When combined with KH and Houthi joint operations against Israel—as evidenced by the [killing of a senior Houthi drone specialist](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/houthi-missile-forces-colonel-killed-iraqi-government-base-jurf-al-sakhar) at a KH site in Jurf al-Sakhar on June 30—such efforts suggest the growing encirclement of Saudi Arabia by Iranian partner forces. ❖

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