

Terrorist Wing of the Iraqi Government Opposes Sharaa Visit

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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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Two of Prime Minister Sudani's partners in government—the terrorist groups Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq—have stepped up their efforts to bar Syria's new president from a Baghdad summit.

A^s
Iraq's
campaign
season
begins
ahead of the
November

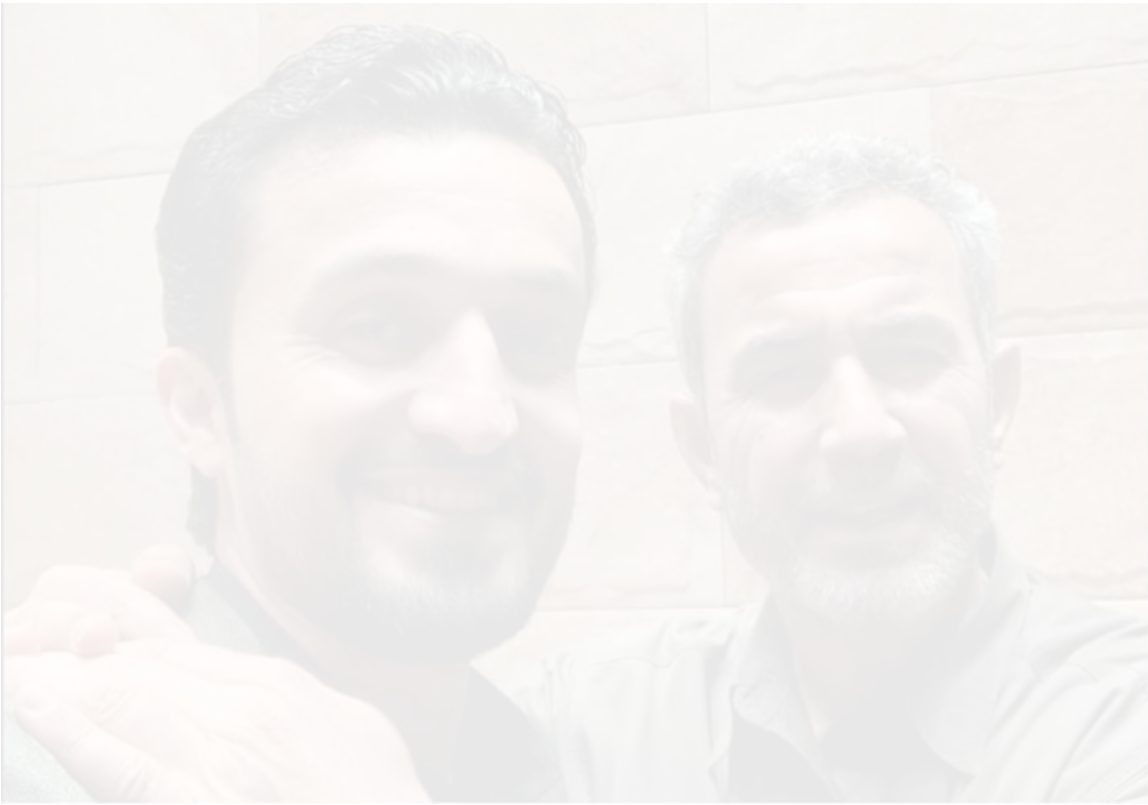


Figure 1. Iraqi MP Mustafa Sanad with designated KH terrorist Abu Fadak.

parliamentary election, several self-styled *muqawama* (resistance) media outlets have intensified their challenges to the government for inviting new Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa (aka Abu Muhammad al-Jolani) to attend the May 17 Arab League summit in Baghdad. (For a previous look at this trend, see [this Militia Spotlight piece \(/node/19301\)](#).)

KH, Sanad, and Kilabi Lead the Charge

بيان

منذ اللحظة الأولى لإعلان موعد انعقاد القمة العربية في بغداد، شرعت القوات الأمنية العراقية بخطواتها لتأمين هذا الحدث المهم، الذي سيعكس الصورة الحقيقية لهذا البلد الكريم في كل شيء، وبالترامن مع قرب انعقاد القمة العربية زاد انشغال القوات الأمنية بالاستعداد لإنجاح هذه المناسبة، وسخرت جميع إمكاناتها لاستقبال ضيوف العراق. وبناء على ما تقدم فإن وزارة الداخلية العراقية تؤكد على عدم تنظيم أي تظاهرة مهما كانت الأسباب خدمية أو غيرها، ولن تكون هناك أي رخصة للتظاهر، وأي محاولة ستكون خلافا للقانون، وهناك تعليمات صدرت بإلقاء القبض على كل من يحاول التظاهر اعتبارا من يوم 11 أيار الحالي ولغاية 20 من الشهر ذاته . كما تؤكد أن القوات الأمنية ستتخذ الإجراءات القانونية اللازمة بحق أي متظاهر يحاول إشغال القوات الأمنية عن واجباتها المكلفة بها خلال هذه الفترة .

وزارة الداخلية العراقية
10 - أيار - 2025



Figure 2: Interior Ministry bans protests before and during the Arab Summit.

The Iraqi members of parliament lining up to oppose the visit are almost identical to the **<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/hassan-nasrallahs-funeral-iraqi-militia-response-and-attendance>** at the formal funeral held for Lebanese Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in February. On May 11, Mustafa Sanad, a parliamentarian linked to **[Kataib Hezbollah \(KH\) \(/node/16641\)](#)** (Figure 1), took his place among the most vocal opponents of the invitation by calling for protests in Basra and Baghdad. This prompted a swift response from the Ministry of Interior, which warned that any protests held between May 11 and May 20 would be illegal (Figure 2). Sanad's post was widely shared across *muqawama* social media, and his follow-up comment directly challenged the ministry: "I will protest. If you have the guts, arrest me." Sanad is a protege of Adil Abdulmahdi and a key figure in the former prime minister's officer when Abdulmahdi presided over Iraq's first *muqawama*-run government in 2018-20—a period that included the 2019 **<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/punishing-irans-triggermen-iraq-opening-moves-long-campaignmassacres-of-civilian-protestors>** during the Tishreen uprising. As Militia Spotlight has previously noted, Abdulmahdi is now a **[political godfather \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/abdulmahdi-yemen-emerging-militia-godfather\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/abdulmahdi-yemen-emerging-militia-godfather)** to many Iran-backed militants in Iraq.



...Yousif Al_Kilabi_ يوسف الكلابي 
@Y_B_Alkilaby

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بعد اطلاعنا على بيان وزارة الداخلية نود ان نبين مايلى:
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واما الحكومة ورئاسة الجمهورية فيكونوا خرقوا
القانون وسنقاضيهم #لحنت_اليمين

Figure 3. Iraqi MP Yousif al-Kilabi's statement on protesting the Arab Summit.

Another pro-*muqawama* parliamentarian, Yousif al-Kilabi, also responded to the ministry's statement with a post on Twitter/X: "In the event of Jolani's presence, we will not hesitate to use all peaceful means to express our unequivocal rejection of his presence. As for the government and the presidency of the republic, if they breach the law, we will hold them accountable" (Figure 3). Additionally, the head of KH's **Hoquq bloc** (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-hoquq-movement>), Saud al-Saadi, sent a parliamentary inquiry to the ministry requesting the legal basis for banning protests during the summit (Figure 3). Saedi **is notorious** ([/node/17048](#)) for his role in undermining Iraq's maritime agreement with Kuwait.

Badr vs. Asaib

In contrast, the **Badr Organization** ([/node/17003](#)) continues to back Sudani and draw criticism away from him. On April 30, Badr member Uday al-Khadran told Shafaq News that the militia political leadership in the Coordination Framework had authorized Prime Minister Sudani to decide whether Sharaa should participate in the summit or not. Notably, Khadran is the former mayor of Khalis, the home district of Badr leader Hadi al-Ameri and a stronghold for the organization. On May 4, Ameri defended Sudani on al-Janoub TV, directing blame toward the unnamed Arab states that "recognized Jolani...as a head of a state," leaving Iraq unable to deny him an invite due to Arab League protocol (Figure 4).

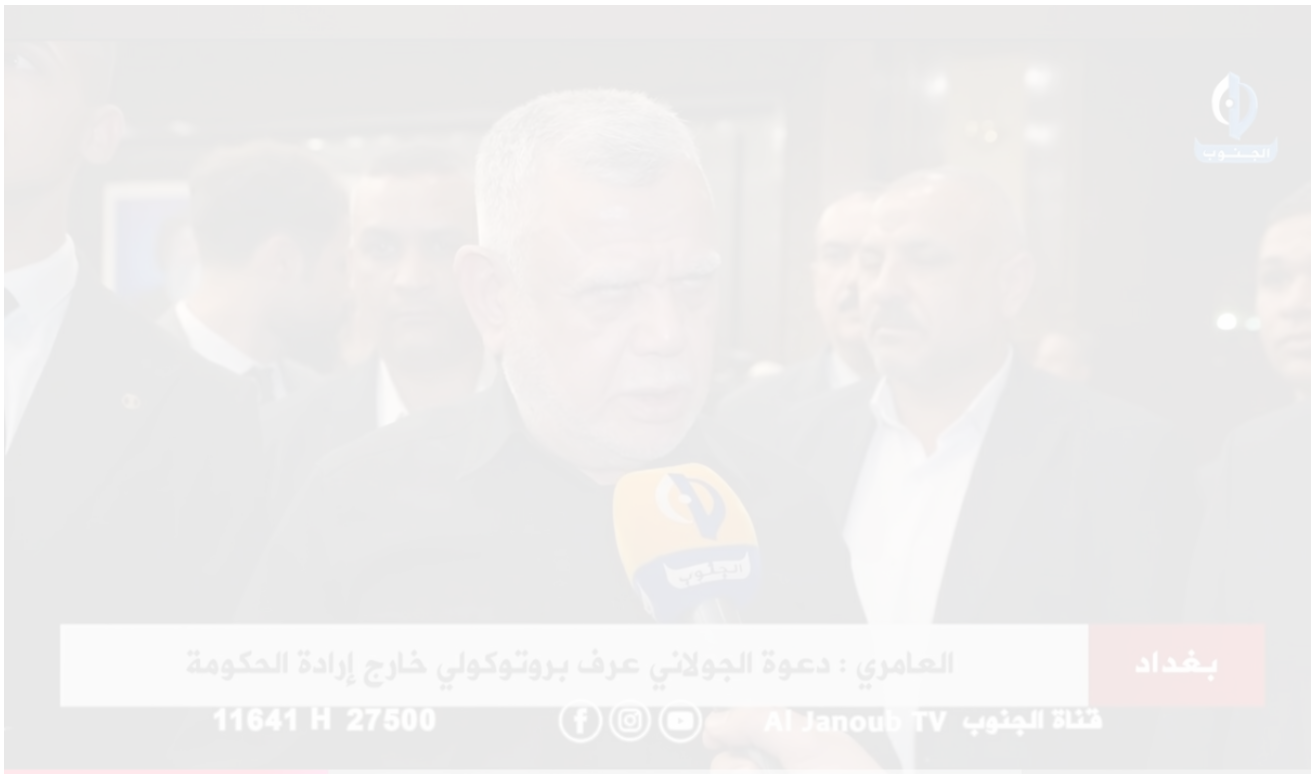


Figure 4. Hadi al-Ameri denies that the Iraqi government can disinvite Sharaa to the Baghdad summit.

Reflecting the poor pre-election relations between Badr and the U.S.-designated terrorist group **Asaib Ahl Al-Haq (/node/16715)**, AAH parliamentarian Uday Awad told al-Rabaa TV on May 7 that Ameri was “singing outside the flock,” denying that the Coordination Framework had authorized Sudani to invite Jolani. This is one of **many attacks (https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/sudanis-invitation-ahmed-al-sharaa-triggers-militia-backlash)** AAH has made against Sudani and the Sharaa visit in the past month.

PMF Downplays Tension Over Poster Removal

The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) likewise seem intent on defusing the war of words over the Arab Summit. On May 11, several social media platforms circulated imagery showing authorities in Baghdad removing posters and billboards depicting slain *muqawama* fighters and other prominent "resistance" figures. One widely shared video included interviews with individuals near the removed posters, with one person accusing the Baghdad municipality of



تنفي مديرية الإعلام في هيئة الحشد الشعبي ما يتم تداوله حول وجود توجيه مزعوم لرفع صور الشهداء، وتؤكد أن هذه الادعاءات عارية عن الصحة تماماً، ولا هدف لها سوى الإساءة والتشويش.

صور الشهداء باقية في أماكنها، وتحظى بعناية خاصة، مع تنفيذ أعمال صيانة وتجديد ضمن خطة رسمية تعكس وفاء الهيئة لتضحياتهم.

ندعو وسائل الإعلام ومواقع التواصل الاجتماعي لتحري الدقة وعدم نشر الشائعات، والاعتماد على المصادر الرسمية فقط.

مديرية الإعلام العامة
هيئة الحشد الشعبي

#هيئة_الحشد_الشعبي
#مديرية_الإعلام_العامة

Figure 5. PMF denies the removal of billboards and posters of "martyrs" before the Arab Summit.

clearing the images in preparation for the Arab Summit. Indeed, Iraq's government is well aware that it will gravely offend and alarm Gulf Arab leaders if they are forced to drive past massive billboards bearing the images of terrorists who have regularly endorsed **and carried out (/node/16640)** attacks on their countries in recent years. On May 12, however, the PMF Media Directorate tweeted a formal denial of the allegations, calling them "misinformation" (Figure 5).

Key Findings

Moments like these always provide useful insight into the fracture lines between *muqawama* factions. The inherent tension between the Iraqi state (led by a putative chief executive, Sudani) and the terrorist-led Coordination Framework (who essentially installed Sudani as their "**general manager (/node/17805)**") is exposed at such times. The November election adds another layer to this tension: Sudani's current backers for a second term (Ameri and

PMF Secretary-General Faleh al-Fayyad) see the need to protect him as a candidate and statesman, while Fayyad's nominal PMF deputy, the U.S.-designated terrorist and KH member Abu Fadak (seen with Sanad in Figure 1), is staying on the sidelines of the Sharaa spat, as is Sudani's election rival Nouri al-Maliki.

Other parts of KH and all of AAH are coming after Sudani for different reasons—the former because they genuinely oppose Sharaa's visit on ideological and personal grounds (/node/19301), and the latter because they want to damage the prime minister. Meanwhile, so-called "independents" like Kilabi are pulling free of their original benefactors (in his case, Badr) and making their own calculations ahead of the election, seemingly distancing themselves from Sudani for now. Interestingly, none of these actors are calling on their political godfather Abdulmahdi or their patrons in Iran to play peacemaker in these dramas, probably because there is still a lot of time to kiss and make up before the election, and because Tehran is not keen to see Sharaa in Baghdad either. ❖

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