



The leader of the Movement of the Noble Ones, an Iranian-operated Shi'ite militia in Iraq, said during a memorial ceremony for Imad Mughnieh that the militia would support Hezbollah if Israel attacked it.

February 21, 2018

- ▶ On **February 13, 2018, Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi, the secretary general of the Iraqi Shi'ite Movement of the Noble Ones**, visited the grave of senior Hezbollah terrorist Imad Mughnieh in the southern suburb of Beirut on the anniversary of the deaths of three senior Hezbollah leaders. During the visit he told the local and other Arab media that **his organization was committed to supporting Hezbollah in the event of any Israeli attack (see Appendix).**
- ▶ The Movement of the Noble Ones (*harakat al-nujaba*) is an Iraqi Shi'ite militia **established in 2013 by Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi**. The sheikh has been closely allied with Iran since his extensive guerrilla attacks against the American forces when they were in Iraq. Ostensibly the movement is subordinate to the "popular mobilization," an umbrella organization of Shi'ite militias in Iraq, most of which are sponsored by Iran. However, in reality **the Noble Ones are handled by the Iranian Qods Force, from which, in ITIC assessment, they receive preferential treatment in the allotment of resources.** The movement is **also supported by Hezbollah**, a close ally of Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi for many years. Iranian and Hezbollah support turned the Noble Ones into **one of the most powerful and important Shi'ite militias in Iraq**. The Noble Ones have three formations ("brigades"), one of them apparently **fighting in Syria in support of the forces of the Assad regime.**¹

¹For further information, see the December 21, 2017 bulletin, "The Movement of the Noble Ones (*harakat al-nujaba*), Portrait of an Iraqi Shi'ite militia, operated in Iraq and Syria by Iran and intended for future 'strategic missions.' "



Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi, secretary general of the Noble Ones (right) with Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps' Qods Force (Movement of the Noble Ones website, April 12, 2015).

Al-Kaabi's declaration of the Noble Ones' commitment to support Hezbollah is consistent with a previous statement made by Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, who said that in the next confrontation with Israel, jihad fighters from the entire Arab-Muslim world were likely to join the fighting (June 2017).² In ITIC assessment the two statements express an **Iranian concept that in the next confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel, Shi'ite militias will be brought into play, especially from the Syrian arena.** The Movement of the Noble Ones **is apparently the Shi'ite militia most favored by Iran.** Shi'ite proxies in the Syrian arena may be used **to attack Israel with rocket or mortar fire, or as terrorist squads infiltrated into the Golan Heights, along with the fighting waged by Hezbollah from the main Lebanese arena.**



Right: Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi, secretary general of the Movement of the Noble Ones, interviewed by an Iraqi channel (Alsumaria TV on YouTube, November 6, 2016). Left: Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi shoots a rifle during a visit to Syria (YouTube, February 8, 2018).

²Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah made the remark in a speech given at a ceremony for Global Jerusalem Day (al-Manar, June 23, 2017). He warned that "if the Israeli enemy starts a war against Syria or Lebanon, **it is in no way certain that the confrontation will remain Lebanese-Israeli or Syrian-Israeli**" (ITIC emphasis). He said tens and even hundreds of thousands of "jihad fighters" from around the Arab-Muslim world would join, mentioning **Iraq, Yemen, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.**

Visit of Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi to Lebanon and statements at the grave of Mughnieh

► On February 13, 2018, Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi, secretary general of the Movement of the Noble Ones, visited **the grave of the senior terrorist Imad Mughnieh** in the "Garden of the shaheeds," Hezbollah's cemetery in the southern suburb of Beirut. The visit **marked the anniversary of the deaths of three senior Hezbollah leaders** (Abbas Musawi, Ragheb Harb and Imad Mughnieh, who was killed ten years ago). While in Lebanon al-Kaabi met with senior Hezbollah leaders and participated in a rally organized by Hezbollah to commemorate its three senior leaders. He also met with **Ihsan Ataya, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) representative in Lebanon** (Facebook page of the al-Nujaba movement in Syria, February 19, 2018).



Right: Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi meets in Beirut with Sheikh Hashem Safi al-Din, chairman of Hezbollah's executive assembly. Left: Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi meets with Ihsan Ataya, PIJ representative in Lebanon

(Facebook page of the al-Nujaba movement in Syria, February 19, 2018).



Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi (center) at a Hezbollah rally in Beirut commemorating three senior Hezbollah leaders held on February 16, 2018 (Facebook page of the al-Nujaba movement in Syria, February 17, 2018).

► During his visit to Lebanon Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi was interviewed by Lebanese and Arab TV channels and **exploited the stage to send a message which, in ITIC assessment, originated in Iran and was directed at Israel** (ITIC emphasis throughout):

- ◆ Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi praised Imad Mughnieh, and standing beside his grave said, "...we, the [Islamic] resistance in Iraq, **will stand beside Hezbollah against any attack from Israel, against any Israeli step taken against Hezbollah**. We will act as a **unified front with Hezbollah [in Lebanon] as we fought [with Hezbollah] as one front in Iraq and Syria**, and as we fought against the *takfiri* [infidel] organizations" [i.e., ISIS and other jihadist organizations] (website of the al-Nujaba movement, February 14, 2018).



Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi near the grave of Imad Mughnieh (alkawthartv, February 15, 2018).

- ◆ **Ahmed Zaghbi**, a correspondent for the **Movement of the Noble Ones' TV channel**, said Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi had also **stressed his commitment to stand alongside Syria**, which was part of the "**resistance axis**" [Iran, Syria and Hezbollah], and promised to "**reach Jerusalem** with the blessing of the blood of the shaheeds." Zaghbi added that al-Kaabi's pilgrimage to the grave of Mughnieh showed that **the [Islamic] resistance to the Zionist enemy was one entity that extended from Lebanon to Iraq** (Movement of the Noble Ones TV channel, February 14, 2018).



Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi interviewed near the grave of Hezbollah shaheed Mughnieh in the Hezbollah cemetery (al-Nujaba YouTube channel, February 14, 2018).