



## The Nujaba Movement, an Iraqi Shiite militia handled by Iran, also operates in the Gaza Strip

May 21, 2020

### Overview

► **The Nujaba Movement<sup>1</sup> is an Iraqi Shiite militia handled by the Iranian Qods Force.** It was established in 2013 by **Sheikh Akram al-Ka'abi**, who has had a close connection with Iran since the time he was fighting against the American forces in Iraq. **The support received from Iran and Hezbollah has turned the movement into one of the most powerful and most important Shiite militias in Iraq.** In return for the massive support that it receives, the Nujaba Movement carries out important missions for Iran. These missions include fighting for the Syrian regime, fighting against ISIS, and suppressing Iraqi internal protests.<sup>2</sup> Sheikh Akram al-Ka'abi once declared that **the Nujaba Movement would be ready to join the Syrian army in its campaign to liberate the Golan Heights.**

► Recently (May 4, 2020), there has been evidence that **the Nujaba Movement maintains a presence in the Gaza Strip.** The movement's information and public relations center in Iran reported that **the Nujaba Movement had recently distributed aid to Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip.** According to the report, the aid was distributed by members of the Nujaba Movement's office in the Gaza Strip. It included food packages, personal hygiene products, and presents for the month of Ramadan. **The aid was distributed to families of shaheeds and prisoners living in the Shejaiyah neighborhood and in the northern Gaza Strip.** It was reportedly distributed during the night in order "to preserve the families' honor" (website of the Nujaba Movement's information and public relations center in Iran, May 4, 2020).

---

<sup>1</sup> In Arabic, Harakat al-Nujaba, i.e., "the Movement of the Noble Ones".

<sup>2</sup> For further details, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from December 2017, "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""



**The aid distributed by the office of the Nujaba Movement in the Gaza Strip. The aid package was accompanied by a leaflet with the emblem of the movement and a text reading, “A present for the month of Ramadan from the Nujaba Movement to the families of shaheeds and prisoners in Palestine” (website of the Nujaba Movement’s information and public relations center in Iran, May 4, 2020)**

►The Nujaba Movement is not the only Iranian-affiliated institution operating in the Gaza Strip. In addition to the military support extended by Iran to the Palestinian terrorist organizations, **there are other institutions operating in the Gaza Strip, such as the Martyrs Foundation – Palestinian Branch**, affiliated with Iran and Hezbollah (hereinafter: the Palestinian Martyrs Foundation). Another institution is the **Al-Ansar Charity Association** (affiliated with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Palestinian Martyrs Foundation). **In the ITIC's assessment, these institutions receive their funding from Iran**, mainly for supporting families of shaheeds. Most of them maintain **close relations with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)**, the second largest organization in the Gaza Strip, which is the closest to Iran among the organizations operating there.

**Traditionally, Iran provides assistance to the social networks supporting the Palestinian shaheeds and prisoners.** The Iranians consider them as an important means to encourage Iranian-backed terrorism. The distribution of funds by the Nujaba Movement is designed **to increase the Iranian political influence in the Gaza Strip** and demonstrate to the Palestinians and the Arab world that **Iran also assists the Palestinians in areas not directly related to the military-terrorist activity.**

## The Nujaba Movement and its operation in the Gaza Strip

►The Nujaba Movement is an **Iraqi Shiite militia** operating under Iranian sponsorship. It was established in 2013 by Sheikh Akram al-Ka'abi, who has been very closely related to Iran since the time of his military activity against the American forces fighting in Iraq. The movement,

which is also active in Syria, **is actually handled by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Qods Force and is also supported by the Lebanese Hezbollah**, with which Sheikh Al-Ka'abi has maintained close relations for many years.

► **The generous support received from Iran and Hezbollah has turned the Nujaba Movement into one of Iraq's most powerful and most important Shiite militias.** In return for its preferential treatment, in the future, the Nujaba Movement **is due to carry out strategic missions for Iran**, for example, securing the Iraqi-Syrian border; securing the Iraqi section of the logistics route from Baghdad to Damascus; fighting against the enemies of Iran in Iraq and Syria; and fighting against ISIS. The organization also has close ties with the Lebanese Hezbollah. In February 2018, Sheikh Akram al-Ka'abi visited Lebanon. During his visit, he met with senior Hezbollah figures and also visited Imad Mughniyeh's tomb.



**Right: Qassem Soleimani, former Qods Force commander, with one of the fighters of the Nujaba Movement during the takeover of Albukamal (Enab Baladi, November 17, 2017). Left: Sheikh Akram al-Ka'abi visiting Imad Mughniyeh's tomb in Lebanon (alkawthartv, February 15, 2018)**

## Further evidence of Nujaba Movement's presence in the Gaza Strip

► In addition to the distribution of funds in the Gaza Strip, the ITIC encountered another report on the presence of the Nujaba in the Gaza Strip. **The Gaza office of the movement was mentioned** on the Internet by the U-news website, which apparently operates from Lebanon, **mainly covering the Iranian-led Axis of Resistance.** According to a report by the website, on December 21, 2019, **the International Relations Department of the office of the Nujaba Movement in "Palestine"** held a **conference entitled "America the Great Satan – the American role vis-à-vis the Axis of Resistance and Israel's policy of expansion"** (a topic and terminology which are characteristic of Iran). The conference was held in **the offices of**

the Atlas Center for Israeli Studies in Gaza<sup>3</sup>. It was attended by **senior PIJ representatives, including Ahmad al-Mudallal and Hassan Abdu**, a political commentator **closely related to the PIJ** (U-news website, December 21, 2019).



**The conference of the Nujaba Movement entitled “America the Big Satan” (PalToday, December 21, 2019)**

## Relations between the Nujaba Movement and the Palestinian terrorist organizations

►Another evidence of the relations between the Nujaba Movement and the Palestinian organizations is **an interview granted by Nasr al-Shammari, deputy chief of the Nujaba Movement and the official spokesman for the movement**, to the Russian freelance journalist Damir Nazarov (October 2019). During the interview, Al-Shammari was asked why there was no representation of Gaza’s major Palestinian organizations in Iraq, and whether the Nujaba Movement had personal connections with the Palestinian “resistance” organizations.

►**Al-Shammari replied that they maintained relations with senior figures of the Palestinian “resistance” and were holding meetings with them.** He noted that they were proud of those relations and considered themselves their supporters. As to the lack of representation of the Palestinian organizations in Iraq, he noted that it was related to the “brothers in the Palestinian resistance,” and in the event that they decided to establish a presence or offices in Iraq, this would be considered an honor for the movement in Iraq.

►Al-Shammari was also requested to comment on the claim that in recent years, Israel allegedly considered the Nujaba Movement more and more as one of its main enemies (sic!)

<sup>3</sup> **The Atlas Center for Israeli Studies is a research institute established in the Gaza Strip in 2012 by former Palestinian prisoners.** The center researches the political system in Israel, Israel’s foreign relations and its decision making processes on issues of foreign policy and security. It translates into Arabic articles from the Israeli press and publications of research institutes (INSS, April 13, 2015).

and that Israel believed that the Nujaba Movement would assist in any confrontation. In his reply, he noted that based on their legitimate, national duty and the ideological principles of their movement, **they would confront Israel (“the robbing entity”) with all their means, alongside the “resistance movements” confronting Israel, and especially Hezbollah** (The Levant News website, October 25, 2019).



**Nasr al-Shammari, deputy chief of the Nujaba Movement and its official spokesman  
(official Facebook page of Al-Shammari, April 22, 2020)**

►On November 23, 2018, Hamas’s representative in Lebanon Ali Baraka<sup>4</sup> granted an interview to the Iraqi Al-Nujaba Satellite TV Channel, which is used by the Nujaba Movement<sup>5</sup>. In his statement, he focused mainly on the close relations between Hamas and Iran and Hezbollah and the support received by Hamas from Iran and Hezbollah. Ali Baraka may serve as the contact to the Nujaba Movement and maybe also to other Shiite militias handled by Iran.

---

<sup>4</sup> **Ali Baraka**, 52, is the Hamas representative in Lebanon. He was born in the Burj al-Shemali refugee camp in Lebanon and lives in Beirut. In 2015, he was the first Hamas senior figure arriving in Iran to meet with senior Iranian officials in order to restore relations between Iran and Hamas, which deteriorated since the outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2011. In this capacity, he maintains close relations with Hezbollah.

<sup>5</sup> The Nujaba Movement has an extensive media network (TV channel, website, social media) serving the Iranian propaganda. It is larger and of higher quality than the media networks of the other Iraqi Shiite militias.

## Appendix

### Other Iranian-affiliated entities operating in the Gaza Strip

Apart from the Nujaba Movement, **there are other institutions operating in the Gaza Strip, through which Iran transfers financial assistance, mainly to families of shaheeds and prisoners.** These institutions are affiliated with Iran, which also finances them. **Most of them are affiliated with the PIJ,** the second largest terrorist organization in the Gaza Strip and also the closest to Iran of all the other organizations operating there.

### Martyrs Foundation – the Palestinian Branch



**Emblem of the Palestinian Martyrs Foundation (based on the emblem of the Iranian Martyrs Foundation). Underneath the name of the organization, the text reads, “We will carry their deposits [i.e., orphans]... We will serve the ones they left behind” (website of the Palestinian Martyrs Foundation)**

► **The Palestinian Martyrs Foundation** was established in 1993 by Hezbollah’s Martyrs Foundation as a branch of the Iranian Martyrs Foundation<sup>6</sup>. Its purpose is to support the families of Palestinian shaheeds and cater to their needs in the social, educational and medical spheres. Another purpose of the foundation is “to spread the culture of jihad and *shahada* [heroic death for the sake of Allah] among the Palestinian people.” The undeclared purposes of the foundation are to provide a social support network to Palestinian terrorism, support organizations and institutions affiliated with Iran, and demonstrate to the Palestinians and the entire Arab world that Iran supports them.

► **The Palestinian Martyrs Foundation belongs to Hezbollah, is subordinate to its political council,** and operates among the Palestinians (alongside Hezbollah’s Martyrs Foundation<sup>7</sup>,

<sup>6</sup> See the ITIC's Information Bulletin from March 2020, “The Martyrs Foundation – Palestinian Branch: a Hezbollah foundation operating in Lebanon, used as a channel for transferring Iranian financial support to families of Palestinian shaheeds”

<sup>7</sup> See the ITIC's Information Bulletin from April 2019, “Hezbollah’s Martyrs Foundation: purpose, mode of operation and funding methods”

which supports the families of Lebanese shaheeds). The foundation's base of operation is Lebanon, but it also has representative offices in the Gaza Strip, Syria, and possibly elsewhere. The source of the funds transferred to the families of Palestinian shaheeds is Iran. The funds are transferred from Iran to Lebanon and from there to the families of Palestinian shaheeds through a charity association, bank transfers, and moneychangers.

► **The US Department of the Treasury** refers to Hezbollah's Martyrs Foundation in Lebanon and the Palestinian Martyrs Foundation as two branches of the Iranian Martyrs Foundation. **In 2007, the US Department of the Treasury designated both as funds supporting the terror organizations.**

### Al-Ansar Charity Association in the Gaza Strip<sup>8</sup>



**Right: Emblem of the Al-Ansar Charity Association as it appears on its official Facebook page (Facebook page of the Al-Ansar Charity Association, January 18, 2015). Left: Nafez al-A'raj, the chairman of the Al-Ansar Charity Association and representative of the Palestinian Martyrs Foundation in the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of the Al-Ansar Charity Association, February 11, 2015)**

► The main channel for the distribution of funds to the families of Palestinian shaheeds is the Al-Ansar Charity Association in the Gaza Strip, affiliated with the PIJ. The association is headed by **Nafez al-A'raj, who is affiliated with the PIJ**. In addition, Nafez al-A'raj serves as the representative of the Palestinian Martyrs Foundation in the Gaza Strip. Since 2002, the association has funneled Iranian financial support, through the Palestinian Martyrs Foundation, to families of Palestinian shaheeds in the Gaza Strip and in Judea and Samaria, mainly those killed in the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2005). In recent years, the association has also begun to distribute financial support to families of shaheeds from the Gaza Strip killed during Operation Protective Edge. In addition, it provides financial

<sup>8</sup> For details, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from February 2020, "Iranian support for Palestinian terrorism: Distribution of Iranian funds to shaheeds' families in the Gaza Strip by PIJ-affiliated Al-Ansar Charity Association"

support to families of prisoners incarcerated in Israeli prisons, and to families whose homes were destroyed as a result of IDF security activity.



**Photo of Qassem Soleimani, the Iranian flag and the emblem of the Palestinian Martyrs Foundation, which were posted in the offices of the Al-Ansar Charity Association in Gaza when the vouchers were distributed to the representatives of the shaheeds' families (Facebook page of the Al-Ansar Charity Association, January 27, 2020)**