



The pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq: Characteristics of their Activity since the Beginning of Iron Swords War

November 3, 2024

Highlights

- ▶ On November 2, 2023, pro-Iranian militias in Iraq began attacking Israel under the name “Islamic Resistance in Iraq.” The attacks have been intended to support Hamas in the Gaza Strip, based on the concept of “unity of arenas” promoted by Iran through its proxies in the Middle East, including Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen. To that end, a joint operations room of the “axis of resistance” was established, under Iranian supervision.
- ▶ So far (November 3, 2024), the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has issued 242 claims of responsibility for attacks against more than 285 targets in Israel, mostly using drones and several cruise missiles. In addition, 12 attacks were carried out in cooperation with the Houthis in Yemen. More than half of the attacks targeted sites in Eilat, the Golan Heights, and Haifa. Drones launched from Iraq have caused the deaths of two IDF soldiers, injuries to several soldiers and civilians, and property damage. However, the vast majority of the launches did not penetrate Israeli territory.
- ▶ In September and October 2024, following the killing of Hassan Nasrallah and other senior Hezbollah figures, the Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon, and the killing of Yahya Sinwar, there was a sharp increase in the scope of attacks by Iraqi militias against Israel. In addition, senior militia figures expressed willingness to join the fighting against Israel alongside Hezbollah and made it clear that they would not stop the attacks until a ceasefire was reached in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon.
- ▶ **In the ITIC’s assessment, as long as the fighting in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon continues, the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq are expected to persist in their attacks against Israel as part of the “support front” of the “axis of resistance,” in an attempt to achieve a psychological victory with a significant strike on Israeli territory and to solidify their standing among the pro-Iranian proxies in the Middle East. In the ITIC’s assessment, if there is further escalation in the direct conflict between Iran and Israel, Tehran may instruct the militias to intensify their attacks against Israel and against American targets in the Middle East and may even provide them with more advanced weapons. In**

addition, if Iran directly attacks Israel again, the Iraqi militias may take part in the attack under Iran's guidance and coordination.

Organization, structure, and deployment¹

- ▶ **The Islamic Resistance in Iraq is a cover name for an organization of several pro-Iranian Iraqi militias that began operating against Israel on November 2, 2023, as a support arm for Hamas in the Gaza Strip.** This support comes alongside the assistance of the Houthis and Hezbollah for the Gaza Strip, as part of the implementation of the “unity of fronts” concept of the “axis of resistance.”
- ▶ The first attack to claim responsibility under the name “Islamic Resistance in Iraq” was not directed against Israel but was a drone launch against Harir Air Base in northern Iraq, where US forces are deployed, on October 17, 2023. Responsibility was initially assumed by the Tashkil al-Waritheen militia, which was behind previous attacks on American bases before the outbreak of the Sords of Iron War and was considered a cover name for pro-Iranian militias in Iraq. However, within a short time, the first claim of responsibility of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq was published, and Tashkil al-Waritheen's statement was deleted (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 21, 2023).

Structure and organization

- ▶ There are several versions regarding the composition of the militias within the “Islamic Resistance in Iraq:”
 - ◆ Kata'ib Hezbollah secretary-general Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi noted that the militias included in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq were the Nujaba Movement², Kata'ib Hezbollah³, Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, and Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (Kaf Telegram channel, November 25, 2023). Al-Hamidawi did not mention the Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq militia, which was apparently excluded due to rivalry with the other militias.
 - ◆ According to another version, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq includes additional pro-Iranian militias, including the Badr Organization and al-Imam Ali Brigades (Al-Jazeera, April 2, 2024; Amwaj, July 2, 2024).

¹ For further information, see the ITIC's study from December 10, 2023, “[Islamic Resistance in Iraq attacks on American and Israeli targets since the beginning of Operation Iron Swords](#)”

² For further information, see the ITIC's study from May 14, 2023, “[The Nujaba Movement – the Movement of the Noble Ones: One of the dominant pro-Iranian militias in Iraq](#),” See also the ITIC's study from December 31, 2017, “[The Movement of the Noble Ones \(harakat al-nujaba\)](#)”

³ For further information, see the ITIC's study from January 2, 2023, “[Kata'ib Hezbollah: A Dominant Iraqi Pro-Iranian Militia](#)”

- ◆ According to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the network includes Kata'ib Hezbollah, the Nujaba Movement, and smaller networks (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 15, 2024).
 - ◆ The US State Department noted that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq is a front of four militias affiliated with Iran: Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (HAAA), Kata'ib Hezbollah, the Nujaba Movement, and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (US Department of State website, June 17, 2024).
 - ◆ Hussein al-Mousawi, spokesman for the Nujaba Movement, said the current “resistance” in Iraq is a “monopoly” of the Nujaba Movement and Kata'ib Hezbollah only (1News-Iq.com, June 26, 2024).
- ▶According to the existing information, the militias are apparently collaborating through the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Headquarters (*al-Hay'a al-Tansiqiya lil-Muqawama al-Iraqiya*). The headquarters was first publicly exposed on October 10, 2020, when it issued a ceasefire announcement intended to advance negotiations on a timetable for the departure of foreign forces from Iraq. According to reports, the headquarters included Kata'ib Hezbollah, the Nujaba Movement, and at one time also Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq (Al-Jazeera, October 11, 2020; The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 24, 2021).
- ▶The number of militia fighters belonging to the Islamic Resistance in Iraq is not officially known, but it is estimated that there are tens of thousands of operatives, thousands of whom are in Syria, mainly in the Albukamal area, on the Syria-Iraq border (IranWire, May 8, 2020; BBC in Arabic, October 28, 2023; Al-Jazeera, February 3 and 22, 2024; Sky News in Arabic, February 22, 2024). According to unofficial figures, Kata'ib Hezbollah numbers between 20,000 and 30,000 operatives. The Nujaba Movement numbers between 10,000 and 20,000 operatives, and this is also the estimated number of Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada operatives (Council for Foreign Relations, April 15, 2024).

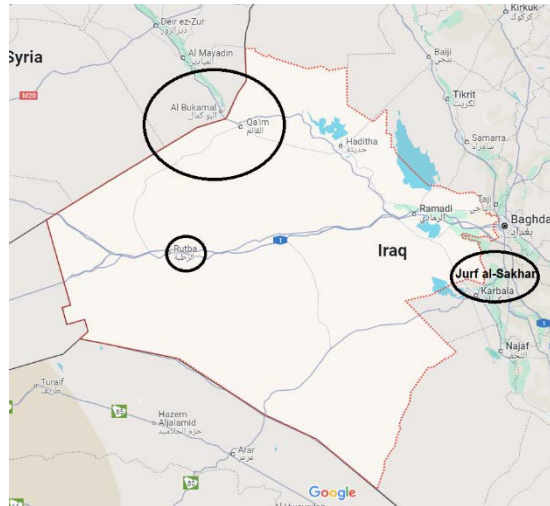


**Badge of an Islamic Resistance operative above the badge of the Iraqi flag
(Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, January 2, 2024)**

- ▶The main area of activity of Kata'ib Hezbollah is Jurf al-Sakhar, southwest of Baghdad (Sentinel magazine, August 2019); Nujaba Movement fighters are deployed in the governorates of Salah al-Din, Nineveh, Baghdad, Najaf, Karbala and Diyala (Manara magazine website, July 9, 2024). Fighters of the Ansar Allah al-Awfiya and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada militias are active mainly in the al-Anbar area (al-Araby al-Jadeed, June 22, 2024).
- ▶The four militias have a presence in the Deir ez-Zor Governorate in eastern Syria, mainly in the city of Albukamal. The control of the militias, especially that of Kata'ib Hezbollah, over the Qaim border crossing, which connects Iraq's al-Anbar Governorate to Albukamal, enables them to transfer fighters and weapons from their strongholds in Iraq into Syria for attacks against Israel and American bases in Syria and in preparation for deployment in the Syrian border areas with Lebanon and the Golan Heights (Sentinel Magazine, August 2019; al-Araby al-Jadeed, June 22, 2024; Al-Jazeera, February 3, 2024; French Center for Iraq Studies, March 20, 2024).
- ▶A Popular Mobilization⁴ source noted that in the Jurf al-Sakhar area, which is controlled by the militias, there are non-Iraqis functioning as “advisors,” including Iranians, Houthis, and Lebanese. The source reported that Jurf al-Sakhar has become an area of workshops and factories for the manufacture of missiles and drones, with the Popular Mobilization having an open unit for military production, and each militia in the area having its unique workshop for the manufacture of weapons. Another source said that the “axis of resistance” had turned Jurf al-Sakhar into a center for training, instruction, command and control, and possibly also for

⁴ An umbrella organization established in 2014 to help the Iraqi Army fight ISIS, but in practice serves as an Iranian proxy in Iraq. The organization consists of more than 50 militias and organizations, most of them Shiites affiliated with Iran. Kata'ib Hezbollah is the most dominant militia in the Popular Mobilization, and its members play key roles in the organization's leadership.

the production of medium-sized weapons and the assembly of Iranian drones. The source also noted that the area is a place for training commanders and fighters of the pro-Iranian militias in Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and Lebanon (al-Araby al-Jadeed, August 12, 2024).



Known areas of deployment of the militias in Iraq and Syria (Google Maps)

Weapons

►The Islamic Resistance in Iraq relies in its attacks on Iranian-made explosive drones and cruise missiles. However, the militias have also developed independent production capacity under the sponsorship of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards (IRGC). In this context, Qais al-Khazali, secretary-general of Asa’ib Ahl al-Haqq, noted that his organization is capable of manufacturing weapons for the militia, especially drones, in case it is not supplied with weapons from Iran. Alaa al-Nashua, a strategic affairs expert, noted that the pro-Iranian militias receive weapons from Iran and assistance from Iranian advisors for the production of weapons. He added that the militias store drones in factories in the al-Waziriya area of Baghdad and in Jurf al-Sakhar, south of Baghdad (Diyarna, January 31, 2022). A “source close to the militias” admitted that American airstrikes had damaged the drone production facilities of the pro-Iranian militias, causing significant losses (Asharq Al-Awsat, April 1, 2024). However, it can be assumed that the militias have fully or partially repaired the damage.

Drones

►**Murad 5 (Shahed-101):** This is the most commonly used suicide drone in the attacks by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, and it was also employed by militias in attacks against American bases in 2022. The drone is based on the Iranian-made Shahed-101, and similar versions are used by other organizations of the “axis of resistance.” It is about 1.6 meters long and has a wingspan of 2.2 meters. It carries a warhead weighing about 10 kg, has a range of 700-900

kilometers, and relies on a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) for guidance. The drone is powered by a gasoline engine but there is also a version based on a silent electric motor which enhances its ability to penetrate targets. Additionally, the drone is designed for easy assembly and disassembly to facilitate the operational capabilities of the launching teams (Army Recognition, October 19, 2023; Calcalist, August 3, 2024; Fenix Insight).



Right: Murad 5 drone launched at Ovda Israeli Air Force Base (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, April 15, 2024) Left: Murad 5 drone being launched at a “vital target” in Eilat (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 9, 2024)

► **Shahed-131:** An Iranian-made drone also used by Russia in its attacks against Ukraine. It is 2.6 meters long and has a wingspan of 2.2 meters. It has a range of 900 kilometers and can carry a warhead weighing 10-15 kg of explosives. The drone, which is based on a satellite guidance system (GPS), is powered by a gasoline engine and reaches a cruising speed of 170 km/h (Defense Express, September 24, 2022; RUSI, January 13, 2023).



Right: Shahed-131 drone being launched at a “military target” in the Golan Heights (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, May 23, 2024). Left: Three Shahed-131 drones launched at “military targets” in Eilat (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, May 27, 2024)

► **Al-Arfad:** On May 13, 2024, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq announced its first attack using a drone called al-Arfad. It is based on the Iranian-made KAS-04 drone (also known as Samad), such as the one launched from Iraq and shot down in the Israeli regional council of Emek HaMaayanot on May 18, 2021, during Operation Guardian of the Walls. The drone carries an

explosive charge weighing 18 kg and can reach a range of 1,700 kilometers at a speed of 250 km/h. It is named after the codename of Abu Karar al-Hamidawi, killed in Syria in 2013, who was the brother of Kata'ib Hezbollah secretary-general Ahmad al-Hamidawi (IDF Spokesperson, March 7, 2022; Janes, November 22, 2021; The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 15, 2024).



Al-Arfad drone launched against a “military target” in Eilat, the first launch at Israel (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, May 13, 2024)

► On October 3, 2024, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed to have carried out its first attack using a “drone with advanced capabilities.” Similar claims were made in the attacks on October 14 and 15, 2024, but no details about the drone were provided, and no footage of the launches was released (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, October 3, 14, and 16, 2024). In this context, “Iraqi security sources” reported that the drone that targeted Israeli soldiers in the Golan Heights on the night of October 3-4, 2024, is a new model with an initial speed of 370 km/h that is capable of evading air defense systems and remaining in the air for close to 27 hours (Mehr and 1news-iq.com, October 5, 2024).

► According to a “source close to Kata'ib Hezbollah,” the militia will begin operating a squadron of “advanced drones” as part of its military operations against the “Israeli enemy.” The source added that the militia has reconnaissance drones “that operate in various ways to track targets and gather intelligence,” and claimed that the new technologies in the field of UAVs held by the militia “are probably equivalent to those of Lebanese Hezbollah” (al-Akhbar, October 13, 2024).

Al-Arqab cruise missile

► Although the drones, with their various models, are used by the militias in the vast majority of attacks against Israel, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has also claimed responsibility for attacks using an “advanced” cruise missile called al-Arqab, the first of which was an attack against a “vital target” in Haifa in January 2024 (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel,

January 7, 2024). The militias did not provide details about the cruise missile, but it is estimated that al-Arqaq is based on the Iranian Soumar cruise missile, which in turn is based on the Soviet/Russian Kh-55 cruise missile and has a range of more than 2,000 kilometers (Tal Inbar's X account, June 15, 2024; The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), September 2021). According to other reports, including by the Intelligence Agency of the US Department of Defense and Iranian media, al-Arqaq is a parallel version of the Houthis' Quds cruise missiles, which are similar in characteristics to the Iranian Paveh 351 cruise missile and have a range of at least 700 kilometers (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 11, 2024; Iranian Broadcasting Authority, April 21, 2024; The International Institute for Strategic Studies (ISIS), September 2021; Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), June 2020).



Right: Iranian Soumar cruise missile launched in Iran in 2015 (Mehr News Agency, March 8, 2015). Left: Houthi Quds-1 cruise missile (al-Masirah, September 28, 2019)



Right: A cruise missile being launched at the oil port in Ashkelon (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, April 9, 2024). Left: Poster issued by the militias with an illustration of the al-Arqaq cruise missile (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, February 3, 2024)

Activity during the Swords of Iron War

► On October 9, 2023, two days after the Hamas attack on Israel and the beginning of the war, Akram al-Kaabi, secretary-general of the Nujaba Movement, announced that any effort by the “Zionists” and supporters of Israel in the United States and the West to expand the conflict front would be met with a decisive response from the “resistance” from various arenas. He

added that he was proud of the Palestinian people and the “resistance” groups, which, he claimed, had proven to the world that the equation of deterrence had changed. He stressed that the “axis of resistance” is united (official website of the Nujaba Movement, October 9, 2023). However, the militias in Iraq only activated their “support front” against Israel on November 2, 2023, claiming responsibility for attacking a “vital target” in Israel, compared to Hezbollah, which began the attacks on October 8, 2023, and the Houthis in Yemen, who first launched drones and cruise missiles at Israel on October 19, 2023.

►The concept of “unity of fronts” is expressed, among other things, in the operation of a joint operations room under Iranian supervision, in which the Islamic Resistance in Iraq participates alongside Hamas and the pro-Iranian militias and “resistance” organizations in Syria and Lebanon. It was also reported that senior militia commanders had gone to Lebanon and Syria to collect intelligence and coordinate with the local militias in preparation for a possible attack on Israel (Asharq Al-Awsat, October 16, 2023). In this context, photos were published of Iraqi militiamen in Lebanon, including Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada secretary-general Abu Alaa al-Wala’i, documented on the Lebanon-Israel border (Ahmad Slman’s X account, October 15, 2023).



**Abu Alaa al-Wala’i on the Lebanon-Israel border
(Ahmad Slman’s X account, October 15, 2023)**

►According to the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, it works for two goals: “liberating Iraq from the American occupation” and “assisting Palestine in its holy campaign.” Regarding assistance to the Palestinians, it was noted that “our actions against the settlements of the Zionist entity on the occupied Palestinian lands will continue until a hudna in Gaza, and as long as the oppressive Zionist entity is committed to it. The heroes of the Islamic resistance will continue to be fully prepared at the same time [of the ceasefire], and if the Zionist enemy continues its crimes, we will continue [our actions]” (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, March 6, 2024).

Number of attacks and their targets

► From November 2, 2023, until now (as of November 3, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.), the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has issued 242 claims of responsibility for attacks against at least 286 targets in Israel (some of the targets were attacked more than once, in some cases “targets” were reportedly attacked without specifying their number), mainly using drones of various types (208 of the announcements) and cruise missiles (21 of the announcements). Eleven of the announcements stated that the attacks were carried out with “appropriate weapons,” which were not disclosed. In addition, 12 attacks were carried out in cooperation with the Houthis in Yemen, starting June 6, 2024.⁵

► Based on the Islamic Resistance in Iraq’s claims of responsibility, 57 of the attacks were directed against Eilat (um Rashrash, as stated in the announcements). Most of the claims of responsibility stated that these were “essential” or “military” targets in Eilat, while some explicitly referred to the port of Eilat, Eilat Airport, or the Israeli naval base in Eilat. A total of 49 of the attacks targeted sites in the Golan Heights, while 32 of the attacks were directed against Haifa (“essential” targets, Haifa Port, Refineries, or Airport). The rest of the announcements referred in general to “essential” or “military” targets in southern Israel, northern or central (deep) Israel, and to more focused targets, such as IDF bases (such as Ramat David, Tel Nof, and Nevatim air bases, or Elifelet and Jordan bases), “essential” targets in various localities (such as Tel Aviv and Beer Sheva), and energy facilities (such as the Alon Tavor power station, the Tel Aviv power station, and the Leviathan gas platform).

Text of claims of responsibility

► On November 2, 2023, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq issued its first claim of responsibility for attacking a “vital target” on the shores of the Dead Sea, without specifying the weapons used. The statement noted that the attack came “in support of our people in Gaza and in response to the massacres perpetrated by the oppressive Zionist entity against Palestinian civilians: children, women, and the elderly.” In addition, it was noted that “the Islamic Resistance [in Iraq] stresses that it will continue to attack enemy strongholds.” This wording became generic in all subsequent announcements of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq’s claim of responsibility for attacks against “essential” or “military” targets.

⁵ See further details in the ITIC’s study from August 5, 2024, “[Cooperation between the Shi’ite militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen](#)”

►As of September 22, 2024, amid the escalation of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, the announcements noted that the attacks were carried out in response to “massacres carried out by the entity against civilians, including children, women, and the elderly,” without focusing on “Palestinian civilians.” Starting September 25, 2024, the announcements stated the attacks were carried out “in support of our people in Palestine and Lebanon.” The announcements do not mention Israel’s name, and the term used is “our occupied territories.” The videos accompanying the announcements that documented the launches began to include the flags of Iraq, “Palestine,” and Lebanon on the drones, alongside pictures of senior “resistance” operatives who were killed, including Hassan Nasrallah and Yahya Sinwar.



Right: The first claim of responsibility of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, November 2, 2023). Left: Photo of Yahya Sinwar on a drone launched at the Jordan Valley (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, October 24, 2024)

Sites from which launches to Israel take place

►The launches are reportedly carried out from the desert area of Rutba, in the western al-Anbar Governorate, near the borders with Syria and Jordan. According to the report, although the militias have a military presence in Syria, they do not launch rockets from Syrian territory, apparently due to President Bashar Assad’s attempt to prevent his country from entering the circle of confrontation with Israel (al-Araby al-Jadeed, November 3, 2024).

►The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has not disclosed the locations from which it launches attacks towards Israel. However, on August 25, 2024, in a video claiming responsibility for launching a drone at Haifa, a map appeared showing that the drone was allegedly launched from al-Anbar Governorate in western Iraq (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, August 25, 2024).

Damage caused by attacks

►The vast majority of drones and cruise missiles did not penetrate Israeli airspace. In some cases, the IDF Spokesperson confirmed that interceptions were carried out outside Israeli territory, while other launches apparently fell on their way to Israel or were intercepted by Israel or other countries in the region before reaching Israeli territory. However, there have been cases in which militia drones have penetrated Israeli territory. In most cases, they were intercepted or fell in open areas, but there were several cases in which there were casualties or damage. The following are notable examples:

- ◆ On December 27, 2023, an explosive drone crashed in the community of Eliad in the southern Golan Heights, causing damage, with no casualties (Israeli media, December 27, 2023). The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for an attack against “a vital target south of the settlement of Eliad using appropriate weapons” (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, December 27, 2023).
- ◆ On April 1, 2024, a drone hit a hangar at the Israeli naval base in Eilat. There were no casualties but a building sustained minor damage (IDF Spokesperson and Israeli media, April 1, 2024). Subsequently, it was reported that the drone hit near an Israeli navy missile ship anchored there (Walla, June 10, 2024).
- ◆ On September 25, 2024, two people were injured in a drone explosion in the port of Eilat, while another drone was intercepted by an Israeli navy ship (IDF Spokesperson and Israeli media, September 25, 2024).
- ◆ On the night of October 2-3, 2024, two IDF soldiers were killed and several others were wounded at a base in the Golan Heights when hit by a drone launched from Iraq. These were the first Israeli fatalities as a result of an attack by the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq since the beginning of their attacks against Israel (IDF Spokesperson and Israeli media, October 3, 2024).

Saraya Awliya al-Dam attacks⁶

- ▶The Saraya Awliya al-Dam militia issued its statements claiming responsibility for drone attacks against Israel. Although the statements were signed with the label “Islamic Resistance in Iraq – Saraya Awliya al-Dam,” it was not the official channels of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq that published them.
- ▶The militia’s first claim of responsibility was issued on May 30, 2024, with claims of an attack on two “vital” targets in Haifa Port. So far (as of November 3, 2024), the militia has issued 21 claims of responsibility for attacks against 26 targets in Israel (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel, May 30 – November 3, 2024).



Right: Militia operatives before the first launch against Israel (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel, May 30, 2024). Left: A threat by the militia to hit the Dimona reactor in Israel (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel, October 16, 2024)

Trends in militia activity

- ▶An analysis of the activity of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq throughout the Swords of Iron War shows that during the first two months of their activity, the militias’ involvement in the “support front” of the “axis of resistance” was symbolic, including eight attacks. In January 2024, there was an increase in the number of attacks, apparently due to the expansion of the Israeli maneuver in the Gaza Strip upon entering Khan Yunis and the killings of the deputy head of Hamas’ political bureau and the person in charge of Judea and Samaria, Salah al-Arouri, and Wissam Tawil, acting commander of Hezbollah’s Radwan force.

⁶ Saraya Awliya al-Dam (literally meaning Guardians of the Blood Brigades; shortened to SAD) is one of the pro-Iranian cover militias that have appeared in recent years, designed to enable the veteran militias to carry out low-signature operations under cover of their name, usually attacks against American targets. SAD, considered to be affiliated with Asa’ib Ahl al-Haqq, issued its first claim of responsibility in August 2020, with an attack on Iraqi convoys carrying American goods, and later also claimed responsibility for attacks against American convoys in Iraq and against US-led coalition forces (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 29, 2021, November 1, 2023).

► On February 3, 2024, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq announced that it would begin the second phase of the conflict, threatening that it would be “more intense and extensive” (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, February 3, 2024). On March 5, 2024, the first claim of responsibility was issued for an attack in the second phase – targeting the power station at Haifa Airport using drones (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, March 5, 2024). In March and April 2024, there was a sharp increase in militia activity with a cumulative figure of 36 attacks. The transition to the second phase of the struggle against Israel was also made possible by the militias’ decision to halt their activity against American bases in Iraq and Syria, after a series of American attacks against senior officials and bases of the militias, and a willingness to allow the Iraqi government to negotiate the withdrawal of foreign forces from the country.

► In May 2024, the number of claims of responsibility by the Islamic resistance continued to increase. A total of 39 claims of responsibility were issued, the highest figure since the beginning of the militias’ activity against Israel. This can be linked to an escalation by the “axis of resistance,” including Hezbollah and the Houthis, in response to the beginning of IDF activity in Rafah. At the same time, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq began practical cooperation with the Houthis in the attacks against Israel.

► In July and August 2024, there was a significant decline in militia activity against Israel, with only three attacks each month. This decrease coincided with the resumption of militia attacks against American bases in Iraq and Syria, aimed at protesting the failure of the Iraqi government and the US administration to reach an agreement on the withdrawal of American and foreign forces from Iraq.

► In September 2024, there has again been a renewed increase in attacks by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq against Israel, especially after September 22, 2024, amid the escalation of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. On September 28, 2024, after Hezbollah officially announced that secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah had been killed in an Israeli airstrike, the Iraqi resistance issued six statements claiming responsibility for attacks against targets in Israel, the highest daily figure since the beginning of the fighting.

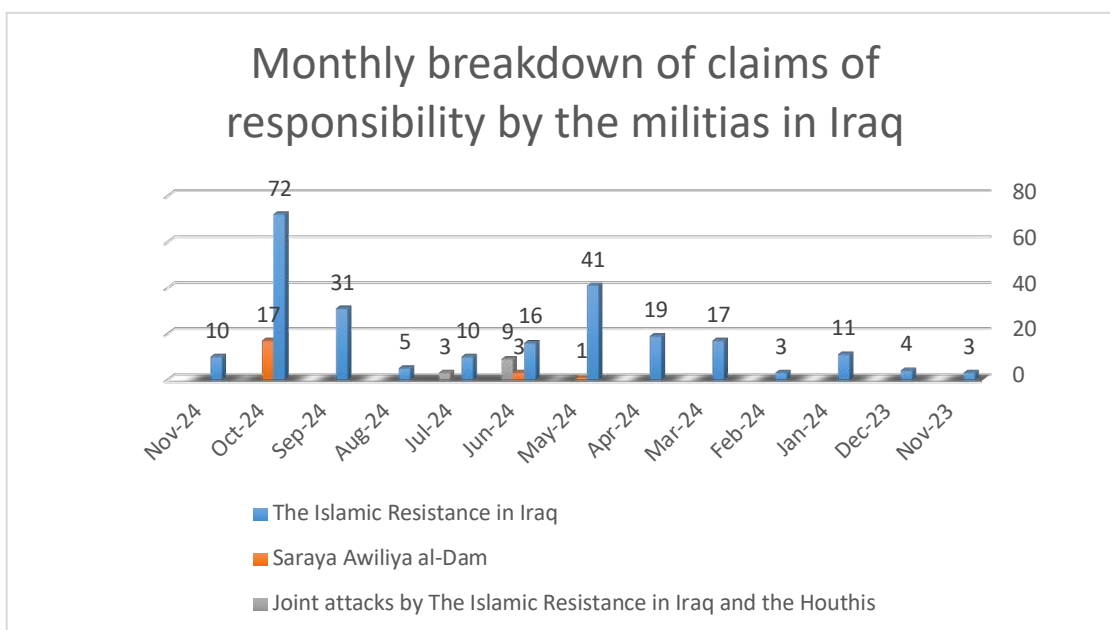
► The trend of escalation continued after the beginning of the Israeli maneuver in southern Lebanon on October 1, 2024, and so far (November 3, 2024), the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has issued 81 claims of responsibility, some of which included claiming responsibility for several separate attacks. For example, on October 8, 2024, a claim of responsibility was issued that

included five separate attacks against targets in central and northern Israel using cruise missiles and drones; On November 2, 2024, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq issued a statement claiming responsibility for four drone attacks against four targets in Eilat.

► Ali al-Fatlawi, a senior figure in Ansar Allah al-Awfiya, said that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq had decided to escalate its attacks against Israel with high-quality drones and missiles. According to him, the decision was made as part of a transition to a plan designed to “increase the fire against the occupation from several fronts.” He noted that the number of attacks was increasing every day, and that soon the “form and nature” of the attacks would also change (al-Araby al-Jadeed, November 3, 2024).

► “Sources in the Iraqi resistance” reported that the new phase of activity against Israel would include attacking strategic targets of the “Israeli enemy,” such as airports, economic facilities, and strategic military bases. They added that the “resistance” would increase the level of response to a level that would reach even the “nuclear plant” in Dimona. According to the sources, the weapons in the current stages are different from those that will be used in the next stages, and the quality of the targets will also be different (al-Akhbar, October 18, 2024). In this context, as of October 31, 2024, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has begun claiming to have carried out attacks against a “radar facility in Dimona” (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, October 31 – November 1, 2024). In practice, no such attacks have been identified.

► After the IDF attacked the institutions of the al-Qard al-Hassan association, Hezbollah’s banking network throughout Lebanon, on October 20, 2024, a “source close to the resistance factions” reported that the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq had decided to open the third phase of the confrontation with direct attacks against “important economic sites of the entity.” According to the source, there are 16 sites of economic importance, and damage to each of them would lead to “economic collapse and a blow to its economy” (baghdadtoday.news, October 21, 2024).



Relations with Iran and the “axis of resistance”

Iran

- ▶ Since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the regime in Tehran has worked to “export” the ideas of the revolution throughout the Middle East, with Iraq being one of the main targets. During the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the Iranians trained Iraqi Shiite operatives who belonged to the Badr Corps (Badr organization), and they even took part in the fighting against their own country. Beginning in 2003, against the backdrop of the invasion of Iraq by US forces and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime, the Iranians increased their activity in Iraq and established new pro-Iranian militias that were involved in the fighting against the US-led coalition forces. These include Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq and Kata'ib Hezbollah.⁷
- ▶ The militias operate under the sponsorship of the IRGC’s Qods Force, which provides them with funding, weapons, training, and logistical support. The relationship was strengthened under the previous commander of the Qods Force, Qassem Soleimani, until he was killed in a US airstrike in Baghdad in January 2020, along with Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy chairman of the Popular Mobilization and Kata'ib Hezbollah commander. Under Soleimani’s successor, Esmail Qaani, close coordination with the militias continued as well when Qaani came to Iraq several times to meet with the militia leaders to coordinate positions in the regional arena alongside the internal Iraqi arena (Shafaq News, September 17, 2024).

⁷ For further information, see the ITIC's study from November 15, 2022, “[The Pro-Iranian militias in Iraq – the current situation](#)”

► On May 23, 2024, on the sidelines of the funeral of former Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran, a meeting was held between elements of the Iraqi Shiite militias and senior IRGC and Qods Force officials. This happened concurrently with a meeting held by IRGC commander Hossein Salami and Qods Force commander Qaani with senior representatives of Hamas, Hezbollah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Hezbollah, and the Houthis, in which they discussed the situation in the Gaza Strip and the role of the “axis of resistance” (Tasnim; al-Mayadeen, May 23, 2024).



Qaani (center, dressed in uniform) with Ismail Haniyeh, former head of Hamas’ political bureau (left), PIJ secretary-general Ziad al-Nakhleh (right), and Akram al-Kaabi, secretary-general of the Nujaba Movement (Asharq Al-Awsat, February 4, 2024)

► “Sources” in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq revealed that there are more than ten training camps in various cities in Iraq, with hundreds of fighters belonging to “various armed factions,” headed by Kata’ib Hezbollah, which have undergone training under the supervision of Iranian experts to train them for the operational level of the IRGC and Hezbollah. The sources added that the training sessions are being held for a “scenario of a comprehensive regional war,” especially in light of the escalation in the fighting between Hezbollah and Israel. They noted that since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, greater emphasis has been placed on the issue of training, since advanced weapons, including missiles and drones, arrived in Iraq from Iran and Russia. It was also noted that additional groups of fighters from Kata’ib Hezbollah, the Nujaba Movement, and other militias as part of the Popular Mobilization were undergoing training in Iran before returning to Iraq. It was also reported that the training was not only military but was also intended to prepare the fighters ideologically and “towards jihad” (al-Akhbar, June 28, 2024).

► After the Israeli attack on Iran on the night of October 25-26, 2024, the pro-Iranian militias expressed support for the regime in Tehran and threatened to retaliate against American targets in addition to retaliating against Israel. According to a statement issued by Kata’ib Hezbollah, the use of Iraqi airspace to direct attacks against Iranian facilities, and carry them

out in waves lasting hours, is a dangerous precedent to which Iran has not been exposed in the past. It was also noted that this would not have happened without the existence of an agreement with the Americans, who control Iraqi skies. The militia threatened that the Americans must “pay the price for not respecting Iraq’s airspace” and that the response would be carried out “at the appropriate time and place, and the Zionists will not be excluded” (Kaf Telegram channel, October 27, 2024).

► A senior member of the Nujaba Movement, Haidar al-Lami, said it was Iran’s right to attack Israel from any area inside Iraq, given that he claimed Israel had attacked Iran from Iraqi airspace. He said they were in full coordination with Iran to prepare the response and coordinate the appropriate time and place (al-Akhbar, November 2, 2024).

Palestinian Organizations

► The pro-Iranian militias in Iraq have expressed support for Hamas and the other Palestinian “resistance” organizations since the October 7, 2023, attack against Israel. In addition, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq took an active part in the “support front” of the “axis of resistance” and in coordinating activities within the framework of the joint operations room. Ali al-Assadi, head of the political council of the Nujaba Movement, said the movement would take part in “acts of blood revenge for the shaheeds of Palestine” and was even prepared to send fighters to the Gaza Strip (al-Sumaria, August 13, 2024).

◀ On July 5, 2024, a Hamas delegation led by Khalil al-Hayya, deputy head of Hamas’ political bureau in the Gaza Strip, met in Beirut with a delegation from the leadership of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. Hamas representatives reportedly presented developments in the fighting and negotiations for a ceasefire and praised the militias for their support of the Gaza Strip. It was also agreed to continue contact and support between the sides, at the leadership and on the ground (Hamas Telegram account, July 5, 2024).

► On July 8, 2024, it was reported that Hadi al-Ameri, chairman of the Fatah bloc in the Iraqi parliament and secretary-general of the Badr Organization, met with a delegation of the “Palestinian resistance,” which included members of Hamas, the PIJ, and the PFLP. The participants discussed the latest developments in the Palestinian arena and Operation al-Aqsa Flood and examined the strategy for the future (Iraqi News Agency, July 8, 2024).

►After the killing of Ismail Haniyeh, the former head of Hamas’ political bureau, in Tehran on July 31, 2024, Akram al-Kaabi, secretary-general of the Nujaba Movement, issued a death notice and threatened that “the Zionists and the Americans have opened the gates of hell for themselves” (Akram al-Kaabi’s X account, July 31, 2024). The Nujaba Movement published a letter allegedly sent by the new head of Hamas’ political bureau, Yahya Sinwar, to al-Kaabi, in which Sinwar expressed his appreciation for the condolences over Haniyeh's death (Nun Telegram channel, September 1 and 2, 2024).



Right: Al-Kaabi’s mourning notice for Haniyeh's death (Akram al-Kaabi’s X account, July 31, 2024). Left: The alleged letter from Sinwar to al-Kaabi (Nun Telegram channel, September 12, 2024)

►The militias also mourned Yahya Sinwar after he was killed in a clash with IDF forces in the Gaza Strip on October 16, 2024.⁸ In one statement by the Nujaba Movement, Sinwar was described as a “sacred shaheed” who died fighting at the forefront rather than fleeing for his life. Another message stated that “the pure blood [of Sinwar and the other shaheeds] paves the way for liberation from the oppressive occupation.” The militia also emphasized its commitment to continue standing by Hamas (Nujaba Movement X account, October 18, 2024). In a statement issued by Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi, the secretary-general of Kata'ib Hezbollah, he addressed Hamas, saying, “We will continue with you on the path of the

⁸ For further information, see the ITIC’s study from October 21, 2024, “[The Elimination of Yahya al-Sinwar, Head of Hamas – Reactions and Insights](#)”

shaheed commander Sinwar, to return all of Palestine to its residents” (Kaf Telegram channel, October 18, 2024).



A Kata'ib Hezbollah poster in memory of Sinwar (Kaf Telegram channel, October 18, 2024)

► Akram al-Kaabi, secretary-general of the Nujaba Movement, led the Iraqi militias' support for the Palestinians, especially in light of his ties to Ismail Haniyeh. In a conversation held between the two on October 16, 2023, al-Kaabi congratulated Haniyeh on the “victories” and noted that they were ready to stand with Hamas “with our people and with our weapons all along the way.” He added that Hamas had pleased “the entire Islamic nation and the whole world with this great victory and its surprise blow” (Nujaba Movement website, August 29, 2024).

► An expression of al-Kaabi's commitment to the “support front” was presented on July 17, 2024, when, to mark the Ashura, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq released a video from a previous launch of a drone at Eilat, showing the movement's secretary-general assisting in assembling and launching the drone. Al-Kaabi appears in the video with his face uncovered, unlike the other operatives, whose faces were blurred (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 17, 2024).



Right: Al-Kaabi fastens the propeller to the drone's rotor. Left: Militia operatives set up the drone for launch (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 17, 2024)

Hezbollah

- ▶ The Nujaba Movement leads the close ties between the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the movement even operates a bureau in Lebanon.⁹
- ▶ There were also personal ties between Akram al-Kaabi and Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah (until he was killed in an Israeli airstrike on September 27, 2024). The two also held several meetings in Beirut in recent years and exchanged messages. For example, in May 2024, al-Kaabi expressed his condolences over the death of Nasrallah’s mother (al-Ahed, May 26, 2024); Al-Kaabi also congratulated Nasrallah after the attack carried out by Hezbollah in response to the killing of the organization’s military commander, Fouad Shukr (Nujaba Movement website, August 26, 2024).



Nasrallah with al-Kaabi in July 2019 (Nujaba militia website, August 26, 2024)

- ▶ Amid the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah since October 8, 2023, and the growing threats from Israel to act forcefully against the Lebanese organization, the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq have expressed their willingness to join the fighting against Israel alongside Hezbollah. The threats increased in September 2024, after the series of explosions of Hezbollah’s pagers and communications devices and the escalation of Israeli attacks against Hezbollah in the Dahiyeh and throughout Lebanon, at the peak of which Nasrallah was killed, and after the beginning of the Israeli maneuver in southern Lebanon on October 1, 2024. The following are notable statements:
 - ◆ The Iraqi Resistance Coordination Headquarters announced that if an all-out war broke out between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq would escalate its activities against Israel and consider American interests in the region as

⁹ For further information, see the ITIC's study from May 14, 2023, “The Nujaba Movement – the Movement of the Noble Ones: One of the dominant pro-Iranian militias in Iraq”

legitimate targets for members of the “resistance.” The headquarters added that a firm stance should also be taken against the “normalization states” with Israel (Telegram channel of the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Headquarters, June 30, 2024).

◆ “Iraqi sources” reported that meetings were held in Syria and Lebanon among members and representatives of the Iraqi militias between June 27 and 30, 2024. According to them, it was agreed to act together against American interests in Iraq and Syria and against strategic targets in Israel which have not been attacked so far, if an all-out war breaks out between Israel and Hezbollah (al-Araby al-Jadeed, July 3, 2024).

◆ In a special discussion, the leaders and representatives of the militias in Iraq agreed to support Hezbollah’s war effort in terms of manpower and armaments and to enter directly into the campaign alongside Hezbollah in the event of a possible Israeli ground invasion. It was also agreed that the militias would continue to escalate their operations “from afar” by launching missiles and drones from Iraqi and Syrian territory. They will also expand the scope of the confrontation against any side that supports the “Zionist entity,” especially against the American bases in Syria and Iraq (al-Araby al-Jadeed, September 23, 2024).

◆ Akram al-Kaabi threatened that the militia would act against Israeli communities throughout “Palestine,” saying that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq is prepared to use the latest weapons, missiles, and rockets (Taghridat al-Hashd Telegram channel, September 18, 2024).

◆ Abu Alaa al-Wala’i, secretary-general of Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, said in a message to Nasrallah that the “resistance” in Iraq was waiting for an order to send an “Iraqi human flood” to fill and man Lebanon’s borders and positions. He also stressed that “if Hezbollah loses a thousand fighters, we will provide it with a hundred thousand fighters to fight the Israeli occupation” (Abu Alaa al-Wala’i’s Telegram channel, September 20, 2024).

◆ According to a “source close to” the militias in Iraq, they will send fighters to Lebanon in accordance with Hezbollah’s real needs. However, the source noted that Hezbollah “completely controls all the posts and has succeeded in thwarting a series of direct enemy operations despite the fire,” and therefore there is no need to send fighters (baghdadtoday.news, October 12, 2024). In another report, a “source close to the Iraqi militias” threatened that militia fighters were preparing to carry out suicide bombing

attacks in the Lebanese arena as soon as they received the green light to implement them (baghdadtoday.news, October 14, 2024).

► Although the militias noted that they were not yet actively fighting alongside Hezbollah in Lebanese territory, statements were made about the deaths of Iraqi fighters in Lebanon: Iraqi citizen Dhu al-Fiqar al-Jabouri, 22, was killed in Israeli airstrikes in al-Nabatieh on September 23, 2024 (Saberin News Telegram channel, September 24, 2024). Al-Jabouri, a resident of Najaf, reportedly belonged to the Popular Mobilization and was the first Iraqi fatality in the fighting in Lebanon (@DrRadhy3 X account, September 26, 2024); Uday Rezaq al-Lami, a member of Kata'ib Hezbollah (Qalaat Al Mudiq Telegram channel, October 13, 2024); Ali al-Hadi As'ad Atia al-Salami, who belonged to the Popular Mobilization (Haidar al-Qurayshi's X account, October 25, 2024); Abbas Abd al-Hussein Ali al-Khafaji, resident of Karbala (QalaatM X account, October 29, 2024).



Right: The funeral of Dhu al-Fiqar al-Jabouri (Saberin News Telegram channel, September 26, 2024). Left: Poster on the death of Ali al-Hadi As'ad Atia al-Salami (Haidar al-Qurayshi's X account, October 25, 2024)

► Collaboration between Hezbollah and the pro-Iranian Iraqi militias is also ongoing in the Syrian arena. On March 8, 2017, Akram al-Kaabi announced the establishment of the Golan Heights Liberation Brigade as part of Iran and Hezbollah's plan to attack Israel from Syria and take over the Golan Heights. Al-Kaabi noted that the brigade was established to fight the takfiri organizations, i.e., jihadi organizations, which, he claimed, were handled by Israel, but added that the brigade was also prepared to help the Syrian army "liberate the Golan" (UNI News Agency, March 10, 2022).

The Houthis

► Yemen's Houthi movement established its first representation office in Iraq in 2011, and after the Houthis took control of Sanaa in 2014, they were able to operate freely in the country. As

a result, Houthi ties with the pro-Iranian Iraqi militias have strengthened, and Iraq has become a vital source of donations for the movement, encouraged by the militias and IRGC members.¹⁰

► Since the beginning of the war, coordination has increased between the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the Houthis, both within the joint operations room of the “axis of resistance” and in direct relations between the two sides. On May 24, 2024, Kata'ib Hezbollah secretary-general Ahmad al-Hamidawi held a conversation with Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, in which al-Hamidawi noted that the readiness and coordination between the forces of the “axis of resistance,” especially between Iraq and Yemen, must be maintained to support the Palestinian people. Al-Houthi said that coordination between the Axis forces in the region would increase the influence of its actions against the “Zionist enemy” (Kata'ib Hezbollah Telegram channel, May 24, 2024).

► As of June 6, 2024, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the Houthis have claimed responsibility for 12 joint attacks against Israel (as of November 3, 2024). Nine of the attacks were carried out by drones and three by cruise missiles; Seven of the attacks targeted sites in Haifa (four of them targeted the Haifa port and three targeted unspecified “vital targets” in the city; three targeted ships in the Mediterranean; one targeted a “vital target” in Ashdod; one targeted a “vital target” in Eilat.

► Further evidence of collaboration between the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the Houthis was revealed following an attack attributed to the Americans against the Popular Mobilization headquarters in Jurf al-Sakhar, south of Baghdad, on July 30, 2024. In addition to the deaths of a Kata'ib Hezbollah commander and three militia operatives who specialized in the field of drones, the senior Houthi officer Hussein Abdullah Mastour al-Sha'bal was also killed in the attack. He was reportedly a drone expert and responsible for coordinating the joint operations with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq since their beginning (Ahmad al-Shalafi's X account, August 6, 2024).

¹⁰ For further information, see the ITIC's study from August 5, 2024, “[Cooperation between the Shi'ite militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen](#)”



Houthi officer Hussein Abdullah Mastour al-Sha'bal, killed in an airstrike in Iraq (Tasnim, August 4, 2024)

► There were also reports that Houthi fighters, many of them specialized in operating missiles and drones, crossed the Iraqi border into Syria accompanied by pro-Iranian militias, and some were transferred to the militia stronghold in Albukamal in eastern Syria and southern Syria (Ayn al-Furat, October 24, 2024). The reports came amid threats by senior Houthi officials that they were also preparing for a ground attack against Israel.¹¹

¹¹ For further information, see the ITIC's study from September 13, 2024, "[The Houthis in Yemen threaten Israel with ground attacks](#)"