

Profile: Directorate of Education, Hashd al-Shaabi (DEHS)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Militia Spotlight: Profiles \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight-profiles\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight-profiles)

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The Directorate of Education, Hashd al-Shaabi (DEHS) has grown into a major state-funded educational foundation that arranges university education for students related to the PMF and sends some to Iran on scholarships paid by Tehran.

Name: Directorate of Education, Hashd al-Shaabi (DEHS)

Type of Movement: Non-kinetic, social, and political organization. Propaganda and counter-narrative operations. Educational program under the Iraqi PMF security service, designed to increase the general knowledge of a PMF fighter in all areas like science, medicine, math, and social science through educational courses and social events. Military and intelligence-related training is also offered by the program, as well as opportunities for competitive applicants to study in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Objectives:

- DEHS was created in honor of people who abandoned their jobs (doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc) and joined the PMF to fight ISIS. It is also for former students who dropped out of school to fight for the PMF, and existing Hashd fighters who do not have any education. The program later evolved to include family members of PMF martyrs. The project was called for by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in coordination with the Director General of DEHS, Dr. Hussein al-Bukhati, to increase the intellectual knowledge of an average PMF fighter in all areas like science, medicine, math, social science, and military tactics.
- Enrollment in DEHS happens in four stages:
 1. Stage One: PMF members will either be referred to this educational opportunity via their brigade supervisor/commander, or members will ask permission to abandon their post to enroll. After approval, DEHS will coordinate with the particular brigade to facilitate the successful departure of the fighter to one of DEHS's facilities.
 2. Stage Two: PMF members arrive at one of DEHS's facilities, sign their name, fill out applications, then wait for their name to be called.
 3. Stage Three: After their name is called, Hashd members, soon-to-be students, will undergo a background check to verify their identities and achievements, interviews to assess their general knowledge and capacity to learn, psychological evaluations to assess their underlying motivation behind seeking this educational opportunity, and a religious assessment to test for loyalty to what DEHS calls "intellectual jihad". Often, within DEHS's facilities, the term "student" is used interchangeably with "Mujahid", which **means**



(<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100214876#:text=Quick%20Reference,armed%20defense%20of%20Muslim%20lands.>)
“the one who struggles on behalf of Islam”.

4. Stage Four: After successful enrollment, the Hashd member will be given a start date for beginning of classes. Generally, Hashd students will be assigned a degree program based on their evaluations during stage one-three, and according to their areas of expertise and interests. Lastly, upon finishing all the required classes, PMF members can earn an associate, bachelors, masters, or doctorate degree. Graduation ceremonies are often hosted by PMF-affiliated universities, like **Al-Mustafa International University-Iraq** (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-al-mustafa-international-university-iraq>).
- Benefits: Other than obtaining a degree, Hashid members will be exempt from military service while taking courses with DEHS. Additionally, upon graduation, recent graduates will get a pay increase based on their degree levels and GPAs.



Figure 1: DEHS background check

History:

- DEHS was formed in 2020. In July 2020, DEHS called for **applications** (https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=153856672890421&set=a.108157470793675&locale=ar_AR) to nominate PMF fighters for this educational opportunity.
- In August 2020, DEHS launched a COVID-response campaign called **Education_Awareness** (https://www.facebook.com/100136004929155/videos/343762413337278/?locale=ar_AR). The campaign involved DEHS members, under the authority of Hussein Al-Bukhati, sanitizing hallways and classrooms for various schools. DEHS also supplied personal hygiene products, gloves, and masks so that students can take their exams “safely”.
- In November 2020, DEHS **announced** (https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0UjTKNvPk4bXYNdpjLxRinWYJfUNBu6ibPuu9eRgAXnEPpXht1nSo7EAGaa5ynl&id=100136004929155) the availability of 500 scholarships for families of dead PMF fighters. The scholarships help family members obtain a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctorate degree in the field of humanities and science. All the scholarships are fully sponsored by the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Beginning in November 2020, DEHS started to allocate funds to **reduce** (<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19M77oJY29/>) tuition cost for the families of PMF martyrs in both public and private universities.
- Beginning in December 2020, DEHS started **approving** (<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15QhiwfBuM/>) applications for PMF members who want to study in Iran. According to DEHS’s Facebook group, application threads were banned by Meta, prompting the threads to be posted on Telegram channels instead. Opportunities for full ride scholarships to Iran continued through **2024** (<https://observeriraq.net/%D8%A5%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85-%D9%87/>).
- In February 2021, DEHS began partnering with a prominent youth development organization called the **Public Action Unit** (<https://www.facebook.com/aleamal24/>) (PAU) to **disinfect** (<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15fs5wGZwW/>) testing facilities and later universities, like **Al-Salam University** (<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1EE21m9MAe/>) in Baghdad.
- In March 2021, DEHS **announced** (<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19k1Fvg9fN/>) opportunities for PMF members to study in any of their affiliated universities as long as they meet a certain age, education level, and military service requirements.
- In June 2021, DEHS **partnered** (<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1EVhaqSDMg/>) with Al-Hawra, which is a center for women’s education and development in Iraq. The goal was to enhance women’s skills in administrative work.
- In November 2021, DEHS **partnered** (<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1AZFzsbFWR/>) with the scientific and education department of the Martyrs Foundation- an organization dedicated to providing assistance to families of martyred PMF members. The Martyrs Foundation is a governmental institution under the **Iraqi Council of Ministers** (<https://cabinet.iq/en>).
- In November 2021, Hussein Al-Bukhati established **Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis Cultural Center** (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100047378931656&locale=hy_AM) in Baghdad. It became common practice for DEHS students, faculty, and PMF leaders to participate annually.



Figure 2: Abu Muntadhar al-Husseini (left), Naeem al-Aboudi (center), and Hussein al-Bukhati (right).

Chain of command:

- **Hussein Al-Bukhati (Hussein Haider Jassem al-Bukhati):** Hussein al-Bukhati is the founder, spokesman, and director general of the Directorate of Education: Hashd al-Shaabi. He has significant religious and social influence within PMF and Shiite religious circles. Hussein's PhD [dissertation \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldBhzsMe5rc\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldBhzsMe5rc) examines the intersection of religion and politics and the important role Islam plays in keeping political freedoms in-check.
- **Tahseen Matar al-Abboudi (Abu Muntadhar al-Husseini):** A [Lieutenant General in the PMF \(https://iranpress.com/iraq-s-pmf-assigns-former-head-of-operations-as-secretary-general/\)](https://iranpress.com/iraq-s-pmf-assigns-former-head-of-operations-as-secretary-general/), and former secretary-general and head of operations of the Hashd. He graduated from the Iraqi War College in 1981, and worked as a security advisor at the Ministry of the Interior in 2005. Tahseen served as a member of the Security and Defense Committee in the House of Representatives, and an assistant to the Accountability and Justice Committee until 2010. Tahseen al-Abboudi and Hussein al-Bukhati [attend \(https://al-hashed.gov.iq/?p=518119\)](https://al-hashed.gov.iq/?p=518119) almost all DEHS's high-level [meetings \(https://cois.uobaghdad.edu.iq/?p=40582\)](https://cois.uobaghdad.edu.iq/?p=40582) together, which presumably ensures that the education wing of the PMF is on the same page ideologically and militarily with its military wing. [Abu Muntadher served on the Crisis Cell \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/exposing-and-sanctioning-human-rights-violations-iraqi-militias\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/exposing-and-sanctioning-human-rights-violations-iraqi-militias) that arranged the killing of unarmed protestors in 2019.

Affiliated relationships:

- **Badr Organization:** There is clear and convincing evidence that DEHS is affiliated with the Badr Organization. Secretary General Hadi al-Ameri attends many high-level [meetings \(https://uodiyala.edu.iq/61456/\)](https://uodiyala.edu.iq/61456/) and conferences alongside Hussein al-Bukhati. Both Ameri and Tahseen al-Abboudi are senior commanders in the [Badr Organization \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-badr-organization\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-badr-organization). DEHS also uses Badr's facilities to host large [celebrations \(https://fb.watch/vIZDjdUqMi/\)](https://fb.watch/vIZDjdUqMi/) intended for DEHS graduates who served in Badr's brigades.
- **Other IRGC-QF-linked militias:** DEHS has a clear and convincing record of working with various PMF brigades to facilitate the successful enrollment of PMF fighters to this educational opportunity.
- **Popular Mobilization Forces:** The military aspects present in DEHS's curriculum and the constant involvement of Lieutenant General Tahseen al-Abboudi suggests a strong relationship between this educational arm and the PMF's military wing.
- **Prime Minister's Martyrs Foundation.** DEHS partners with the scientific and education department of the Martyrs Foundation.
- **Ministry of Education:** Since its inception, DEHS [coordinated \(https://al-hashed.gov.iq/?p=517891\)](https://al-hashed.gov.iq/?p=517891) with the Ministry of Education by opening centers for literacy, accelerated education, and life skills. They often hold [meetings \(https://al-hashed.gov.iq/?p=518119\)](https://al-hashed.gov.iq/?p=518119) to discuss the topic of "intellectual terrorism". This became a [regular \(https://cois.uobaghdad.edu.iq/?p=44119\)](https://cois.uobaghdad.edu.iq/?p=44119) occurrence, where Hussein al-Bukhati and Abu Muntadhar al-Husseini are regular attendees.
- **Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.** [\(https://mohehr.gov.iq/en/\)](https://mohehr.gov.iq/en/) Asaib Ahl al-Haq member and Minister of Higher Education Naim al-Abboudi [also interacts with DEHS. \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/embracing-asaib-ahl-al-haq-pragmatism-or-naivete\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/embracing-asaib-ahl-al-haq-pragmatism-or-naivete)
- **Ministry of Finance:** DEHS worked closely with Iraq's Ministry of Finance to allocate and distribute funding for the program.
- **Other ministries.** Delegation from DEHS, led by Hussein al-Bukhati, engage with various government entities, like the [Ministry of Education \(https://epedu.gov.iq/\)](https://epedu.gov.iq/)

, [Ministry of Defense \(https://mod.mil.iq/?topic=59\)](https://mod.mil.iq/?topic=59), [Ministry of Youth and Sports \(https://moys.gov.iq/en\)](https://moys.gov.iq/en), and various other universities to make the educational content for the PMF fighters.

- **Al-Mustafa International University-Iraq:** The PMF has been in close [coordination \(http://miuiraq.net/?p=2630\)](http://miuiraq.net/?p=2630) with [Al-Mustafa International University-Iraq \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-al-mustafa-international-university-iraq\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-al-mustafa-international-university-iraq) to devise educational content for various departments of the PMF. Al-Mustafa University hosts many religious [conferences \(http://miuiraq.net/?p=1726\)](http://miuiraq.net/?p=1726) that involve religious leaders from various schools and universities to discuss the importance of religion within these institutions. Hussein al-Bukhati is a regular attendee of these conferences, as well as other events hosted by Al-Mustafa University such as [graduation ceremonies \(https://en.hawzahnews.com/photo/366430/Photo-Al-Mustafa-Higher-Education-Institute-of-Islamic-Sciences\)](https://en.hawzahnews.com/photo/366430/Photo-Al-Mustafa-Higher-Education-Institute-of-Islamic-Sciences), including summer [graduations \(http://miuiraq.net/?p=2624\)](http://miuiraq.net/?p=2624).
- **University of Technology:** DEHS [works \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYrnjURfSa4\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYrnjURfSa4) very closely with the [University of Technology \(https://uotechnology.edu.iq/index.php/ar/\)](https://uotechnology.edu.iq/index.php/ar/) in Iraq to educate and train the administrators who will manage the various DEHS locations around the governorates.
- **University of Tehran:** DEHS collaborates with [University of Tehran \(https://ut.ac.ir/en\)](https://ut.ac.ir/en) in Iran. In July 2023, DEHS reached an [agreement \(https://www.radiofarda.com/a/32495380.html\)](https://www.radiofarda.com/a/32495380.html) with the university to send 95 of its PMF students to study in Tehran University. The president of Tehran University [meets \(https://www.iranintl.news/ar/202307093038\)](https://www.iranintl.news/ar/202307093038) regularly with Hussein al-Bukhati to ensure that DEHS members are being held to the highest standards of science.
- **University of Diyala and Baghdad University:** [University of Diyala \(https://uodiyala.edu.iq/en/home-2/\)](https://uodiyala.edu.iq/en/home-2/) enjoys hosting scientific [conferences \(https://uodiyala.edu.iq/61456/\)](https://uodiyala.edu.iq/61456/) on strategies to improve intellectual security, confront extremism, and achieve community peace. DEHS director general, Hussein al-Bukhati, attends such conferences along with secretary general of Badr Organization, Hadi al-Ameri. [Baghdad University \(https://en.uobaghdad.edu.iq/\)](https://en.uobaghdad.edu.iq/) holds similar [conferences \(https://cois.uobaghdad.edu.iq/?p=40582\)](https://cois.uobaghdad.edu.iq/?p=40582) at the College of Islamic Sciences department, where they discuss topics of fighting against “intellectual terrorism”. Hussein al-Bukhati and Abu Muntadhar al-Husseini are regular attendees.
- **National Defense University for Military Studies:** DEHS [worked closely \(https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15AZFtxex3/\)](https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15AZFtxex3/) with Iraq’s [Defense University \(https://mod.mil.iq/?topic=59\)](https://mod.mil.iq/?topic=59) for Higher Military Studies to devise a curriculum for the military training part of the program. They [partnered \(https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14h9UXa4foM/\)](https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14h9UXa4foM/) with [Baghdad Operations Command \(https://aoav.org.uk/2016/baghdad-operations-command/\)](https://aoav.org.uk/2016/baghdad-operations-command/) and Rafidain Operations Command to generate development courses for their PMF students who are interested in studying military tactics.
- **Al-Hawra Center** for women’s education and development in Iraq.
- **Al-Jawadain Seminary:** [Al-Jawadain \(https://alshirazi.org/news-item/34461?lang=EN\)](https://alshirazi.org/news-item/34461?lang=EN) religious school hosts religious events, talks, and [ceremonies \(http://miuiraq.net/?p=2624\)](http://miuiraq.net/?p=2624) where senior DEHS members are present.
- **News Channels:** [Al-Etejah Satellite Television \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-al-etejah-satellite-television\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-al-etejah-satellite-television) features [Hussein al-Bukhati as the official spokesman for DEHS. The International Quran News Agency \(https://iqna.ir/ar\) features Al-Bukhati’s religious speeches \(https://iqna.ir/ar/news/3489327/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%8A-%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A3%D8%AC%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%88\).](https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1ATcDbSYeL/)

Subordinate Relationships:

- DEHS’s main educational facility is in Baghdad. However, DEHS goal is to have a facility in each of Iraq’s 18 governorates to make this opportunity more accessible to PMF members and their families.
- **Facebook:** DEHS has two official Facebook groups. The oldest one that has been around since DEHS’ inception has 3K followers. The recently active one has 1.6K followers.
- **Telegram:** DEHS has one official Telegram channel with 1.4K subscribers.
- **Instagram:** DEHS has many Instagram accounts, usually per governorate where their facilities are located.
- **YouTube:** Although DEHS does not have a small dedicated YouTube channel with 216 subscribers. However, the organization has been featured many times under the umbrella PMF YouTube channel that has 220K subscribers.
- **WhatsApp:** DEHS has one official WhatsApp group.
- **TikTok:** DEHS is featured many times on the Al-Hashd TikTok account that has 90.2K followers.
- **Linktree:** DEHS has one Linktree account.



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