

Muqawama Signals De-Escalation with the U.S., Return to Cosmetic Israel Strikes

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Brief Analysis

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

or see Part 1: [How to Use Militia Spotlight \(/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight\)](#)

The self-styled Iraqi muqawama (resistance) has sent messages hinting at a desire to end the tit-for-tat sequence of retaliatory strikes involving the U.S. and a preference to return to cost-free counter-Israel operations.

On August 12, the [Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/their-own-words-senior-leaders-admit-membership-tansiqiya\)](#) (al-Haya al-Tansiqiya lil-Muqawama al-Iraqiya, or Tansiqiya for short) issued a short statement. The statement read “The Iraqi Resistance Coordination is not bound by any restrictions, if the American occupation forces get involved again in targeting our sons in Iraq or exploit its airspace to carry out attacks against the Islamic Republic of Iran. In that event our response will not be stopped by restrictions...” (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Tansiqiya statement, August 12, 2024.

De-escalation sought by militias?

[https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/1.jpeg](#)

This message followed the last U.S. retaliation against militias of the self-styled *muqawama* (resistance), which occurred immediately beforehand, on August 11. (Figure 2). The Tansiqiya seems to be trying to draw a line under the tit-for-tat sequence that has unfolded since July 25, 2024. The militias seem to be signalling that if the US army keeps attacking their assets, they will not adhere to their agreement with the Iraqi government which was reached in February in the aftermath of the Tower 22 attack in Jordan which resulted in the death of three US servicepersons and the subsequent US attacks against the militias.

This is an indication that the Iraqi militias seek to end this (probably unintended) cycle of violence to be able to focus on their attacks on Israel and turn attention to any possible escalation between the so-called axis of resistance and Israel.

[The Islamic Resistance in Iraq \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-islamic-resistance-iraq\)](#) (IRI), which has taken responsibility for tens of drone and cruise missile attacks against Israeli targets, stopped making such claims from July 24 to August 19. This timeframe correlates with latest cycle of violence between the Iraqi militias and the U.S. military in Iraq and Syria, perhaps extended by the post-July 31 tensions surrounding a possible Iran-led retaliation on Israel.

The second message is related to the possible retaliatory attack by Iran against Israel in the aftermath of [the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh \(https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/what-we-know-so-far-about-assassination-hamas-leader-2024-07-31/\)](#), the former political leader of Hamas, for which Iran blames Israel. The Tansiqiya seems to be sending a warning to the United States to not use Iraqi airspace to attack Iran if/when Iran launches its retaliatory attack against Israel.

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Looking ahead

This apparent *muqawama* effort to deter U.S. action in Iraq (and to a lesser extent Syria) sits uncomfortably alongside a reported new August 14 rocket attack on the U.S. Conoco base in Syria. (See our [tracker \(/node/18428\)](#) of attacks in Iraq and Syria.) Yet the August 14 incident remains completely unclaimed and might have instead been aimed at Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) collocated with U.S. troops.

In our view, the Iraqi *muqawama*:

1. became unintentionally embroiled in a tit-for-tat with the U.S. in July 24-July 31 that may have seen the U.S. retaliate against an anti-Israel drone strike in the making; and
2. also had to consider the broader Axis of Resistance's "drawing breath" period ahead of a possible retaliation on Israel after July 31.

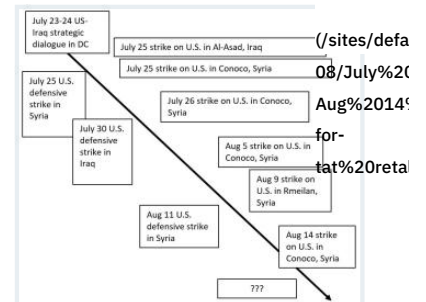


Figure 2: July 23-Aug 14, 2024 tit-for-tat retaliatory strikes in Iraq and Syria

With the August 18 claimed IRI strike on Israel (a claimed drone strike on Golan, the first anti-Israel strike since July 24), the Iraqi *muqawama* may be flexing back into its previous pattern of largely cosmetic "resistance" strikes claimed against Israel, with little evidence of actual effects reaching Israeli soil.

For most Iraqi militia factions, all they really care about is preventing U.S. retaliation in Iraq itself and particularly against senior Iraq-based militia leaders. The Iraqi *muqawama* – increasingly money-focused militia oligarchs who like living an open and opulent lifestyle in Baghdad – do not want to be fearful of death by an American drone strike. The April 14 strike, if undertaken by Iran-backed Iraqis from Kataib Hezbollah or [Harakat al-Nujaba \(/node/16716\)](#) – could indicate there is a deviant view on this issue – which will cause greater discordance within the *muqawama* scene. ❖

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