# **Profile: Al-Mustafa International University-Iraq**

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### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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#### Brief Analysi

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# The al-Mustafa International University-Iraq is the Iraqi branch of a U.S.-sanctioned Iranian entity that grooms the next generation of Iraqi clerics, missionaries, pro-Iran political representatives and pro-Iran militia members.

ame: Jameat al-Mustafa al-Alamiyah, Mumathiliyat al-Iraq (al-Mustafa International University-Iraq branch)

Type of movement:

An educational organization adopting an educational, research and training approach to groom the next generation of Iraqi clerics, missionaries, pro-Iran political representatives and pro-Iran militia members.

#### History and objectives:

- In 1979, al-Mustafa International University was <u>established</u>
   (<a href="https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/sites/default/files/pdf/PolicyNote122Malik\_0.pdf">https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/sites/default/files/pdf/PolicyNote122Malik\_0.pdf</a>) as an international academic, Islamic, and hawzawi [seminarian] institute in the Iranian city of Qom. Since then, it has recruited students regionally and globally to be trained as advocates of the Islamic Republic in their home countries.
- It offers higher education courses up to level of PhD in Islamic studies, educational studies, social sciences, political sciences, psychology, communications, law, economic sciences, banking, management studies, Farsi and Arabic languages and foreign languages, such as English, French and Russian. All these courses are taught with an "Islamic approach".
- (/sites/defa 08/Lego.jpg معــة المصطفى (/sites/defa 08/Lego.jpg معــة المصطفى المتعلمــة المراق)
- The university is also well known for instructing and educating militia members (https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/irans-afghan-and-pakistani-proxies-syria-and-beyond) from across the region.
- Al-Mustafa International University is under the Iranian Supreme Leader's Office ( beyt e rahbari). The Supreme Leade

  (https://kayhan.ir/fa/news/147295/%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%85-%D8%AA%DA%A9%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%85-%D9%88
  %D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%81%D9%87-%D8%B1%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%B3%E2%80%8C-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%87%D9%87
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  %D8%A8%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D8%BF). r appoints the head of Al-Mustafa International University.
- It has close ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Qods Force (IRGC-QF). According to United Against Nuclear Iran "Al-Mustafa... serves as a fertile recruiting pool (https://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/ideological-expansion/al-mustafa-international-university) for Iran's Quds Force".
- This relationship prompted the <u>designation (https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm1205)</u> of al-Mustafa University by the U.S. Department of the Treasury in December 2020, describing it as a "recruiting ground for the IRGC-QF".
- According to the Iranian Islamic Culture and Communication Organization, al-Mustafa International University either runs or enjoys

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%D8%AF%DB%8C%D9%86%DB%8C#:::text=%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%87%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B7%D9%81%DB%8C%20%D8%A7%D9%86 a working relationship with affiliated organizations in 60 countries.

- Al-Mustafa International University is not considered a mainstream university in Iran as it only admits foreign students, many of whom are Iraqi. In total, Iran hosts about 70,000 Iraqi students in its universities.
- Since 2017, the Islamic Republic of Iran has operated an Iraqi branch of the Iranian al-Mustafa International University.
- The Iraq branch provides courses and degrees on Islamic knowledge and history, Quranic guidance and other jurisprudence and political Islam related studies.
- The Iraq branch is located in, al-Kadhimiya, Baghdad.
- It holds regular ideological workshops for members of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF).
- Al-Mustafa International University-Iraq has signed agreements and memorandum of understanding to cooperate with a few state and private universities, including the Wasit University, the
  Warith al-Anbiya University (affiliated with Imam Hussein Shrine), Gilgamesh University (private), al-Shaab university (private).
- Al-Mustafa International University-Iraq cooperates closely with offices of Imam Hussain Shrine in Karbala ( al-ataba al-Hussainiya) to hold religious sessions.
- Al-Mustafa International University-Iraq admits non-Iraqi students too.

#### Chain of command:

- The Iranian Supreme Leader Office.
- The Iranian Supreme Leader's Office in Najaf. The head of Al-Mustafa International University-Iraq is also deputy head of the Iranian Supreme Leader's Office in Najaf (see below).
- IRGC-OF
- The head of al-Mustafa International University-Iraq is Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Ali Mohsen-zadeh. He is an Iranian national who is also the deputy head of the Iranian Supreme Leader's Office in Najaf. He leads Education and Research Office. Additionally, Mohsen-zadeh heads Nour al-Basaer Organization for Islamic and Human Sciences in Najaf. According to its website the organization "works in various cultural and religious cognitive fields... throughout Iraq and aims to increase insight in various segments of society, especially among thinkers and intellectuals. This foundation was established under the auspices of the Office of the Representative of Imam Khamenei in Iraq in... Najaf al-Ashraf". Prior to his deployment to Iraq, Mohammad Ali Mohsen-zadeh led the Imam Ali Islamic Center (https://www.bou.ac.ir/portal/home/?news/297215/297650/304353/%D8%AD%D8%AC%D8%AA-%D8%BAMAPB8%A7%D8%BAMAPB8%A7%D9%85-%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86%E2%80%8C%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%86\*D8%AF%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%B3%D9%86\*D9%85\*D8%AF%D9%85\*D8%B1%D9%88%D9%87-%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%B9%D9%84\*D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%88\*D9%88\*D9%88\*D9%88\*D9%88\*MD9%88
- Two of the main officials in al-Mustafa International University-Iraq are high-ranking members of <u>Kataib Hezbollah (https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-kataib-hezbollah)</u> (KH):
  - Sayyed Dr. Jassim al-Jazaeri, a high-ranking member of KH's political bureau.
  - Sheikh Dr. Maytham al-Aboudi, the head of KH's social services department.



Figure 1: KH's Jassim al-Jazzeri,= teaching at the Sayyed Narjis hawza, October 30, 2023.

#### Affiliate elements:

- Based on the senior involvement of KH members Jassim al-Jazaeri and Maytham al-Aboudi, Kataib Hezbollah is closely affiliated with al-Mustafa International University-Iraq and vice versa.
- Al-Mustafa International University-Iraq runs a few seminaries ( hawza) in Iraq. These include:
  - The Sayyeda Narjis seminary (hawza) for women in Baghdad, supervised by KH's Jassim al-Jazaeri (Figure 1)
  - The Baqiyatullah *hawza* in Baghdad, supervised by KH's Jassim al-Jazaeri.
  - Imam Jawad hawza in Baghdad.
  - Imam Ali *hawza* in Baghdad.
  - Imam Hassan al-Asskari hawza in Karbala.
  - Omulbanin *hawza* for women in Karbala.
  - Al-Sadegian *hawza* in Basra.
  - Al-Rasoul al-Adham *hawza* in Basra.
  - Al-Mustafa hawza in Missan.
  - Sayyed al-Awsiya *hawza* in Diwaniyah.
- Publication House of al-Mustafa International University-Iraq.
- Alumni Association of al-Mustafa International University-Iraq.

## Subordinate elements:

Al-Mustafa International University-Iraq website, Facebook page and a Telegram channel.



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