

Hamas Iraq

AT A GLANCE

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SUMMARY

Formed: 2007

Disbanded: Likely inactive.

First Attack: April 10, 2007: Hamas Iraq used two improvised explosive devices (IEDs) against a U.S. military transportation vehicle in Diyala and subsequently posted a video of the attack online (unknown killed, unknown wounded).¹

Last Attack: February 2009: Hamas Iraq orchestrated several grenade attacks against American forces in Baqouba in the Diyala province (unknown killed, unknown wounded).²

OVERVIEW

Hamas Iraq was an Iraqi Sunni Islamist organization that broke away from the 1920s Revolution Brigades in March 2007. The group primarily targeted U.S. forces in Iraq from 2007-2011. In July 2007, Hamas Iraq joined with several of Iraq's largest insurgent groups to form an umbrella organization called the Political Council for Iraqi Resistance (PCIR). There has been no clear activity from the group since 2013. As of February 2019, Hamas Iraq is believed to likely be inactive.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Hamas Iraq (no affiliation to the Palestinian Hamas or Kurdish Hamas) was an Iraqi Sunni Islamist organization that split off from the 1920s Revolution Brigades (1920s RB) in March 2007.³ The split was precipitated by the death of the 1920s RB leader, Harith Dhar Khamis al-Dari, who was allegedly killed in an ambush carried out by Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) operatives. Around the same time, AQI conducted a chlorine gas attack on a town near Fallujah and assassinated many members of the 1920s RB who spoke out against the attack.⁴ Following Dari's death and the chlorine attack, two factions arose within the 1920s RB with different visions for the future of the organization. One faction wanted to directly confront AQI and possibly cooperate with the U.S. backed Sons of Iraq. The other faction preferred to continue armed

opposition to the U.S. and adopt a more passive, rhetorical approach to opposing AQI. This latter faction broke away from the 1920s RB in March 2007 and renamed itself Hamas Iraq (also sometimes known as Hamas in Iraq or Iraqi Hamas).⁵

In July 2007, Hamas Iraq joined with the Islamic Front for Iraqi Resistance and the Reformation and Jihad Front (RJF) – an umbrella organization composed of Ansar-al Sunnah Shariah, the Mujahideen Army, and the Islamic Army in Iraq – to form a new umbrella group called the Political Council for Iraqi Resistance (PCIR).⁶ The PCIR sought to drive foreign forces from Iraq and refused to cooperate with or acknowledge the legitimacy of any political institutions established under U.S. occupation. Furthermore, the PCIR hoped to work with other Shiite and Sunni anti-occupation groups to establish a temporary technocratic government in anticipation of the U.S. withdrawal.⁷ However, there was no indication that the PCIR ever actually entered into negotiations with any other anti-occupation organizations.

Although the PCIR refused to negotiate with the United States, there was some evidence to suggest that Hamas Iraq cooperated with U.S. forces in their Diyala province offensive against AQI. After *The Economist* incorrectly reported that the 1920s Revolution Brigades had fought alongside U.S. forces in operations in Diyala, the 1920s RB issued a statement claiming that it had been Hamas Iraq, and not 1920s RB members, who worked with the United States.⁸ Around the same time, AQI also accused Hamas Iraq of cooperating with U.S. forces in Diyala.⁹ Hamas Iraq denied all allegations of cooperating with “the occupiers” and vowed it would never do so in the future.¹⁰

Hamas Iraq appears to have largely disappeared during the period from 2009 to 2013. In February 2009, the group reportedly orchestrated several grenade attacks against American forces in Baqouba in the Diyala province.¹¹ Hamas Iraq engaged in little observable activity after this 2009 attack. There is some indication that many of Hamas Iraq’s members joined the Sahwa Movement—the U.S. sponsored tribal police forces fighting AQI—starting in 2008.¹²

Although Hamas Iraq supposedly re-emerged during the beginning of the Sunni insurgency in 2013, little is known about the group’s status or activities. Some sources claimed that Hamas Iraq fought alongside the Islamic State (IS) and its allies, while others sources state that the group to cooperated with the Iraqi government in its mission to roll back IS.¹³

There has been no clear activity from the group since 2013. As of February 2019, Hamas Iraq is believed to likely be inactive.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. LEADERSHIP

Very little is known about the leadership of Hamas Iraq, and it is unclear who is currently in charge of the group. More information is available on the leadership of the 1920s RB, the group from which Hamas Iraq broke off in March 2007.

Harith Dhahir Khamis al-Dari (unknown-March 27, 2007): Dari was the leader of the 1920s Revolution Brigades before he was assassinated by Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) operatives on March 27, 2007. After his death, Hamas Iraq split from the 1920s RB to form an independent group.¹⁴

B. NAME CHANGES

There are no recorded name changes for this group.

C. SIZE ESTIMATES

There are no publicly available size estimates for this group.

D. RESOURCES

Hamas Iraq possibly received support through the PCIR. Though Iran offered one or more of the PCIR's constituent groups money and weapons, the insurgents supposedly rejected this support.¹⁵

E. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS

Disclaimer: This is a partial list of where the militant organization has bases and where it operates. This does not include information on where the group conducts major attacks or has external influences. Hamas Iraq operated exclusively within Iraq.

The group's activities were largely concentrated in Diyala, Baghdad, and Anbar.¹⁶

STRATEGY

A. IDEAOLOGY AND GOALS

Hamas Iraq was a nationalist, Sunni Islamist militant organization that sought to expel all foreign troops and influence from Iraq. The group held vehement anti-occupation, anti-American views, which ran counter to rumors that the group cooperated with U.S. forces to counter AQI.¹⁷

Hamas Iraq was relatively inclusive in its ideology and emphasized the need to work with Shiite organizations to exorcize foreign influence from Iraq. The group denounced indiscriminate violence and attacks that targeted civilians because of their ethnic or sectarian allegiances.¹⁸

B. POLITICAL ACTIVITES

Hamas Iraq's relationship with the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), the largest Sunni political party in Iraq, was highly debated. While some sources claimed that Hamas Iraq was the armed branch of the IIP, others claimed that the two were merely associated. Still others asserted that there was no connection between Hamas Iraq and the IIP at all.¹⁹

In July 2007, Hamas Iraq joined with the Islamic Front for Iraqi Resistance and the Reformation and Jihad Front (RJF) – composed of Ansar-al Sunnah Shariah, the Mujahideen Army, and the Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI) – to form a new umbrella group named the Political Council for Iraqi Resistance (PCIR).²⁰ The PCIR sought to drive foreign forces from Iraq and refused to cooperate with or acknowledge the legitimacy of any political institutions established under U.S. occupation.²¹ In line with this rejection of U.S.-backed political institutions, the PCIR never formally participated in the Iraqi electoral system.

C. TARGETS AND TACTICS

From 2007 to 2009 Hamas Iraq primarily targeted U.S. forces in Iraq.²² In 2013, the group shifted to largely target the Iraqi government, although there is some speculation that Hamas Iraq was actually cooperating with the Iraqi Army to confront the Islamic State (IS).²³ Although Hamas Iraq decried sectarian violence on multiple occasions and criticized AQI for targeting Shiite civilians, the group occasionally attacked Shiite militias, claiming that they were legitimate targets because of their cooperation with the U.S.-backed Iraqi government.²⁴

MAJOR ATTACKS

Disclaimer: These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

April 10, 2007: Hamas Iraq used two improvised explosive devices (IEDs) against a U.S. military transportation vehicle in Diyala and subsequently posted a video of the attack online. (unknown killed, unknown wounded)²⁵

2007: Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and the 1920s Revolution Brigades accused Hamas Iraq of fighting alongside the U.S. against AQI in Diyala. Hamas Iraq repudiated these claims. (unknown casualties)²⁶

January 22, 2008: Hamas Iraq claimed responsibility for a rocket attack on a U.S. military vehicle in Anbar. (unknown casualties)²⁷

February 2009: Hamas Iraq orchestrated several grenade attacks against U.S. forces in Baqouba in the Diyala province. (unknown casualties)²⁸

INTERACTIONS

A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

Hamas Iraq has not been designated as a foreign terrorism organization by the United States, European Union, or United Nations.

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The relationship between Hamas Iraq and the communities in which it resides is unknown.

C. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS

Prior to March 2007, Hamas Iraq was part of the 1920s Revolution Brigades (1920s RB). However, following the death of the leader of the 1920s RB and an AQI chlorine attack on a town near Fallujah, disagreement arose within the 1920s RB regarding how the organization should respond to these events.²⁹ While one faction wanted to directly confront AQI and possibly cooperate with the U.S.-backed Sons of Iraq, the other preferred to continue to oppose the U.S. and take a more passive approach to countering AQI. This latter faction broke away from the organization in March 2007 and became Hamas Iraq.³⁰ In late 2007, the 1920s RB accused Hamas Iraq of cooperating with the U.S. in Diyala. Hamas Iraq vehemently refuted this claim.³¹

In July 2007, Hamas Iraq joined with the Islamic Front for Iraqi Resistance and an the Reformation and Jihad Front (RJF) – composed of Ansar-al Sunnah Shariah, the Mujahideen Army, and the Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI) – to form a new umbrella group called the Political Council for Iraqi Resistance (PCIR).³² The PCIR sought to cooperate with other Shiite and Sunni anti-occupation groups in Iraq to establish a temporary technocratic government following the anticipated American withdrawal.³³ However, there was no indication that the PCIR ever actually engaged with other resistance organizations.

Hamas Iraq and AQI were hostile toward each other for much of Hamas Iraq's history. Almost immediately upon its formation, Hamas Iraq denounced AQI's use of indiscriminate violence and targeting of Shiite civilians.³⁴ AQI, in turn, accused Hamas Iraq of cooperating with U.S. efforts

to counter AQI in Diyala in 2007 – an accusation rejected by Hamas Iraq.³⁵ However, Hamas Iraq's relationship with AQI's successor organization, the Islamic State (IS), is unclear. While some sources claim that Hamas Iraq fought alongside the Islamic State and its allies, others believed that Hamas Iraq cooperated with Iraqi government troops.³⁶

D. STATE SPONSORS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

Hamas Iraq was profoundly influenced by the presence of foreign forces in Iraq, namely those from the United States. Although these foreign forces were the group's main targets, there were also allegations that Hamas Iraq actually cooperated with the United States in Diyala in 2007.³⁷ Hamas Iraq denied these claims.³⁸

MAPS

- Iraq

¹ "Twentieth Revolution Brigades and Hamas of Iraq Individually Claim Downing American Helicopters in Baghdad, Video of Bombing Troop Transporter." SITE Institute: SITE Publications - Twentieth Revolution Brigades and Hamas of Iraq Individually Claim Downing American Helicopters in Baghdad, Video of Bombing Troop Transporter. April 10, 2007. Accessed April 09, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20070928061304/http://siteinstitute.org/bin/articles.cgi?ID=publications271907&Category=publications&Subcategory=0>.

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⁶ Bakier, Abdul Hameed. "Iraq's Islamic Mujahideen Profiled by Jihadi Websites: Part Two." Jamestown Foundation, Terrorism Focus 5(41), 3 December 2008. Web. 23 July 2015.

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June 2010. Web. 10 Aug 2015.; Ali, Abdallah Suleiman. "ISIS prefers allegiance, not allies, in Iraq." *Al Monitor*, 17 June 2014. Web. 10 Aug.; "Powerful Iraqi Party Claims U.S. Killed Innocent Man." *McClatchy DC*, 25 Oct. 2008. Web. 10 Aug 2015.

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¹⁷ Roggio, Bill, "Al Douri forms nationalist Sunni coalition; 1920s Revolution Brigades denounces al Qaeda," *The Long War Journal*, 4 October 2007. Web. 10 July 2012; Milne, Seumas. "Insurgents form political front to plan for US pullout." *The Guardian*, 19 July, 2007. Web. 10 Aug. 2015; Angell, Ami & Gunaratna, Rohan. "Terrorist Rehabilitation: The U.S. Experience in Iraq." *CRC Press*: 2012.

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²⁵ "Twentieth Revolution Brigades and Hamas of Iraq Individually Claim Downing American Helicopters in Baghdad, Video of Bombing Troop Transporter." *SITE Institute: SITE Publications - Twentieth Revolution Brigades and Hamas of Iraq Individually Claim Downing American Helicopters in Baghdad, Video of Bombing Troop Transporter*. April 10, 2007. Accessed April 09, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20070928061304/http://siteinstitute.org/bin/articles.cgi?ID=publications271907&Category=publications&Subcategory=0>.

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