Asaib Ahl al-Haq (League of the Righteous)

Logo: Victory sign over silhouette of Iraq; image of AK-47 was removed from logo in 2017
Flag Text: On book: “They were youths who believed in their Lord” (Quran 18:13); below book: “Asaib Ahl al-Haq”

FOUNDOING
- 2006

SIZE
- Estimated at 1,000 – 5,000 in 2014
- Allegedly grown to 10,000 by 2015

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Asaib Ahl al-Haq is an Iranian proxy force in Iraq with military, political, religious, and charitable components. The group began to receive training and support from the IRGC-Quds Force and Lebanese Hezbollah in 2006, when it splintered off from another Tehran-backed insurgent group. The group would go on to claim more than 6,000 attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq, including many with explosively formed penetrators (EFPs).

Shortly after the departure of U.S. forces from Iraq in 2011, Asaib Ahl al-Haq opened political offices in major cities, launched a network of religious schools, and began to provide social services to poor Shiites. Since its founding, the group’s leader has been Qais al-Khazali, who spent three years in prison for his role in an attack that killed five American soldiers in 2007.

After the outbreak of war in Syria, the group played an important role in recruiting Iraqis to fight in Syria. Following the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq, Asaib Ahl al-Haq became a leading element within the newly organized Popular Mobilization Forces.

The group’s political wing, al-Sadiqun (“the honest ones”) captured a single seat in the Iraqi parliament in the 2014 elections as part of Nuri al-Maliki’s Iraqi National Alliance. In 2017, Khazali visited the Israeli border in Lebanon accompanied by Hezbollah fighters, highlighting his group’s ties to Tehran’s “axis of resistance,” despite efforts to present a more moderate face.

In early 2018, Asaib Ahl al-Haq joined the Fatah al-Mubin (Manifest Victory) electoral coalition comprised of Iranian-backed militia groups.