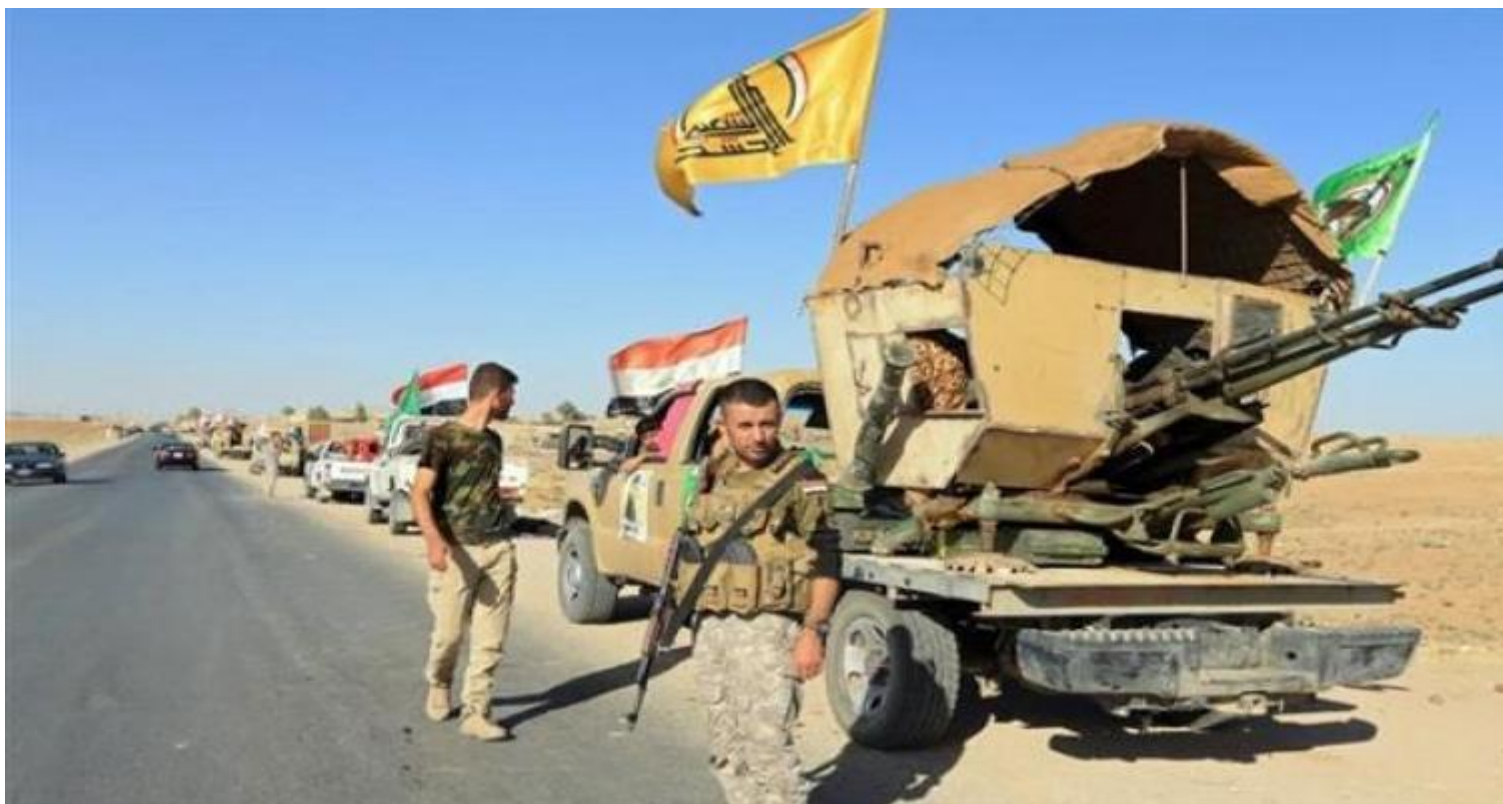


Popular Mobilization Units vow to end U.S. occupation of Iraq



Baghdad, April 5 (RHC)-- Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), better known by their Arabic name Hashd al-Sha'abi, have blasted U.S. forces based in their country as "occupiers" -- pledging to bring the occupation of the Arab country to an end. In a joint statement on Saturday, Hashd al-Sha'abi groups said from now on the U.S. troops in the Arab country will be dealt with as "occupation forces."

The statement cited the U.S. refusal to withdraw its forces from Iraq and its "continued aggression" against the country as the reasons for their decision. "You have proven to everyone that you are occupation forces and that you only respect the language of force; on these bases you will be dealt with as occupiers," the statement reads.

It also said that the Iraqi resistance forces' military operations are a basic response to the US aggression. "Be aware that all operations which have been carried out against you so far were only a minor response to your aggressions as the decision to carry out operations [against U.S. forces] had not been taken back then," it added. They stressed that the recent U.S. threats to target the resistance forces are aimed at covering up their own failures.

The statement was signed by Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Kata'ib al-Imam Ali, Harakat al-Awfiy'a, Saraya Ashura, Harakat Jund al-Imam, and Saraya al-Khurasani.

In late March, the other PMU group Kata'ib Hezbollah blew the lid off a plot by the U.S. military to carry out massive aerial operations — backed by ground troops – against bases of the elite anti-terror force, which is currently busy helping the government in the fight against a new coronavirus pandemic.

The PMU statement concluded with a message to the Iraqi people, in which the resistance groups vowed that they will not let the U.S. occupy the country and rob its resources. The statement comes in line with earlier calls by the Iraqi Parliament and military for all foreign troops to leave the Arab country as soon as possible.

Iraqi lawmakers unanimously approved a bill on January 5, demanding the withdrawal of all foreign military forces led by the United States from the country following the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, along with Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of the PMU, and their companions in a US airstrike authorized by President Donald Trump near Baghdad International Airport two days earlier.

Since then, the U.S.-led coalition has handed over to the Iraqi army a number of bases it had occupied in the Arab country. However, it has also deployed further military equipment, including C-RAM systems and Patriot missile defense systems, to protect its remaining forces in the country.

In their Saturday statement, the PMU also declared their opposition to the designation of Adnan al-Zurfi as Iraq's prime minister, saying that Zurfi is a corrupt politician, a CIA puppet, and a threat to Iraq's domestic peace and security. Iraqi President Barham Salih appointed Zurfi as the new prime minister in mid-March.

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