

## Hezbollah in Iraq

### Economic Influence in the Hotel Sector

#### Method of operating



- Since 2006, with the encouragement of Nouri al-Maliki (on the picture left), Hezbollah has made major investments in Iraq in a number of sectors such as: general trade, transportation, and tourism.
- Hezbollah's economic strategy relies on cooperation with Iraqi business partners who are not suspected of links to foreign entities.
- Hezbollah has been working on major projects through Iraqi businessmen, often transferring ownership and management to them.
- One associate is a Board Member of the Iraqi Economic Council and others have gained political capital from their economic status.
- Investigative report from June 2017, ["The Hezbollah Empire in Iraq"](#) was the starting point for the information collected in this report.

## The Hezbollah Web in the hotel sector

- This report focuses on the hotel sector, charting the linkage between luxury hotels, prominent Iraqi businessmen, and other companies that advance Hezbollah's economic activity in Iraq.
- Many key Al-Muften Group associates and companies such as the Coral Hotel and Babylon Warwick Hotel appear to be operating on behalf of Hezbollah.
- Al-Muften Group, a large Iraqi company with business activity in construction, oil and gas, aviation, trading agencies, shipping and marine services, food and beverage, and security, is central to the activity presented in this report.
- Prominent Iraqi businessmen such as Karim al-Nouri, Talal Ibrahim Rehoomi , Mohamed AbdulHussain Jaafar, and Mohamed Muften Khafif al-Rubaiee, are shown to be promoting Hezbollah economic activity through their work with various Al-Muften Group companies.

## The Coral Boutique Hotel



- The Coral Boutique Hotel in Baghdad regularly hosts meetings of the Popular Mobilization Units, the umbrella organization of (mainly) Shi'i militias also referred to as Hashd al-Shaabi.
- In addition, the Coral Boutique Hotel is known for hosting Assad supporters, Houthi delegations, and Bahraini opposition figures.
- Unnamed Iraqi government officials confirmed that the hotel management staff is Lebanese and Syrian.
- The Coral Boutique Hotel is part of the Al-Muften Group. There is announcement of its 2012 opening on the [Al-Muften Group website](#).

## Babylon Warwick Hotel



- Babylon Hotel is a subsidiary of al-Sadeer Hotel Company, which is a large company that invests in and develops the tourism industry in Iraq.
- In 2013 Al-Muften Group bought Al-Sadeer Hotel Company from well-known Iraqi financier Essam Karim Kazar al-Asadi.
- Babylon Hotel is also a shareholder of Cristal Ishtar Hotel. The Cristal Ishtar Hotel has a partnership with the Australian based, Staywell Hospitality Group.
- According to the aforementioned [investigative report](#), Karim al-Nouri, described as “a member of Hezbollah” is the General Manager at the Babylon Warwick Hotel.

## The Al-Muften Group Web

- Established in 1976, the Al-Muften Group is active in key business sectors in Iraq.
- According to its website: “One of the activities characteristic of Al Muften group is the commercial agencies of major international companies, as Al Muften group is the agent of *Honeywell International Companies*”.
- Al-Muften Group has many companies and projects associated with reconstruction efforts.
- Its other companies and activity outside the hotel industry will be studied thoroughly for further ties to Hezbollah.



## Karim al-Nouri



- Karim al-Nouri, is a prominent leader within the Iraqi PMU, or Hashd al-Shaabi.
- Al-Nouri is on record referring to Lebanese Hezbollah as an ally and is very close to the Badr Organization. Source: [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)
- Hezbollah and Badr have worked closely together even prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Source: [\[1\]](#)
- A Karim al-Nour (not al-Nouri) is listed in business databases for his association with a number of Hezbollah linked hotels and companies in this report. For example he appears as the General Manager of Al-Muften General Trading Company in Dubai.

- It is unclear whether or not Karim al-Nour is in fact Karim al-Nouri, the PMU leader. However, the original investigative report listed Karim Al-Nouri as the Hezbollah member who manages the Babylon Hotel on behalf of the Lebanese terror group.
- Regardless of the potential connection to the PMU, it is clear that a Karim al-Nour, who is known to be a Hezbollah member is active in a number of hotels and other businesses in Iraq.

### **Talal Ibrahim Rehoomi**



- Talal Ibrahim Rehoomi is a major Iraqi businessman who appears to have been coopted by Hezbollah. He holds a number of positions within the Al-Muften Group web.
- He is:
  - a shareholder of al-Sadeer Hotel Company;
  - Director and General Manager of Union Bank of Iraq (which is part of al-Muften Group);
  - Reserve Director of Ishtar Hotels PJSC;
  - Shareholder and director of National Company for Tourism Investment Company.

### **Mohamed Abdul Hussain Jaafar**

- Mohamed Abdul Hussain Jaafar is also a major Iraqi businessman who appears to have been coopted by Hezbollah.



- He holds a number of positions within the Hezbollah web. Among them:
  - Vice Chairman of Union Bank of Iraq;
  - Chairman of Ishtar Hotels;
  - Shareholder and chairman of National Company for Tourism Investment Company;
  - Director of Al-Badia for General Transport PSJC;
  - Shareholder and Chairman of Iraqi Land Transport Company;
  - Shareholder and director of Iraq Baghdad for General Transport and Real Estate Investment Company;
  - Shareholder and Vice Chairman of Iraqi Company for General Transportation.

### **Mohamed Muften Khafif al-Rubaiee**



- Mohamed Muften Khafif al-Rubaiee and a number of relatives with the Muften name are shareholders and part of the corporate structure of the Union Bank of Iraq PJSC, which is part of the al-Muften Group.
- They are also shareholders and part of the corporate structure of al-Sadeer Hotel Company PJSC and Al-Muften Insurance Company.
- These individuals, together with Talal Ibrahim Rehoomi, Mohamed Abdul Hussain Jaafar, and Karim al-Nouri, among others appear repeatedly as shareholders and in management positions of a number of entities, thereby comprising the Hezbollah web in the hotel and related industry sector.

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