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AL-BŪṬĪ'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE SYRIAN REVOLUTION OF 2011: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

BY

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ABSTRACT

The Syrian Revolution of 2011, influenced by the wave of 'Arab Spring,' created a deep schism among Sunni Muslim *'ulama* who played a prominent role in encouraging /discouraging protests and, later on, the rebellion. This research seeks to explore the perspective of Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Būṭī (1929–2013) on the Revolution. Al-Būṭī, a highly esteemed religious scholar, who contributed substantially to the contemporary Muslim scholarship, refused to be one of those who recognized and gave a hand to protestors. Rather, he viewed the Revolution as religiously illegitimate and politically oriented thereby creating an ongoing debate not only in Syria but also in the Arab as well as the Muslim world. A great number of scholars, Syrian and non-Syrian, have interpreted al-Būṭī's stance as a full support of the regime. They cite his earlier similar position against the Muslim Brotherhood Movement in Syria in the 1980s. Others, however, argue that al-Būṭī's opinion, from a purely religious point of view, does not necessarily espouse the government's appalling crimes. The research employs textual and contextual analysis. Both methods of study work hand in hand to create a better understanding of al-Būṭī's case. Therefore, the research, after providing a detailed account of al-Būṭī's discourse on the Revolution, critically examines *ṭā'at al-ḥākim* (the ruler's obedience), along with the concept of *fitna*, (both lying at the heart of al-Būṭī's discussion) re-situating 'obedience' in its rightful context in the contemporary Islamic political thought within the rights/duties of both the ruler and the ruled. On the other hand, the research evaluates al-Būṭī's critical view on contemporary Islamists who, according to him, have misapplied the Islamic law and sacrificed *da'wah* in favour of political gains. The central aim is to discover whether al-Būṭī's hardline against those Islamists is a product of pro-regime stance or of religiously justified reasons. The research discovered there are seven issues disapproved by al-Būṭī which appear to be shared by all extreme Islamist groups of today. To judge or evaluate an Islamist movement/ party as moderate or extreme, these issues are the best yardstick. The research concludes that al-Būṭī is more of an independent scholar than a sycophant or an ally of autocratic and secularist regime. There are particular points of view, nevertheless, in al-Būṭī's discourse, which have been found lacking in balanced treatment and convincing argumentation. Further, the research concludes that, instead of armed rebellion which has been much worse for the community than tyranny could ever be, modern peaceful means and mechanisms need to be followed.

خلاصة البحث

اندلعت المظاهرات في سورية 2011 متأثرة بالربيع العربي، وبعد عدة أشهر من القمع و التنكيل تحولت إلى ثورة عارمة تطالب بإسقاط النظام. كشفت الثورة السورية انقساماً بين علماء السنة حول شرعية المظاهرات و من بعدها الخروج المسلح. يسعى البحث إلى دراسة وتفحص موقف الدكتور محمد سعيد رمضان البوطي (1929- 2013) من الأحداث في سورية. البوطي (عالم ومفكر ذائع الصيت، ترك الكثيرَ من الأعمال في مجال الدراسات الإسلامية) يرى حرمة المظاهرات مآلاً لا ابتداءً. ويعتبر الثورةَ غير شرعية و أنها استغلت لأهداف سياسية. طبعاً، أثار موقف البوطي هذا جدلاً واسعاً في العالمين العربي و الإسلامي. كثير من العلماء في سورية وغيرها فسروا موقف البوطي على أنه تأييد للنظام، واستشهدوا بما سبق منه في الثمانينيات حيث عارض خروج جماعة الإخوان المسلمين على حافظ الأسد. لكن آخرين يرون أن موقف البوطي نابع من اجتهاد شخصي وقناعة داخلية، ولا يعني ذلك بالضرورة تسويغا للجرائم التي يرتكبها النظام. ومن أجل فهم أعمق وأشمل لموقف البوطي، يستخدم البحثُ التحليلَ النصي والسياقي. فبعد أن تم عرض حجج البوطي وأدلته بالتفصيل، بإزاء موقف المعارضين له والمؤيدين وإجراء مقابلات معمقة، يدرس البحثُ قضيةَ طاعة الحاكم (أحاديث الطاعة، الخروج، الفتنة) حيث يضعها في سياقها الصحيح شرعياً وتاريخياً في الفكر السياسي الإسلامي ضمن حقوق وواجبات الحاكم/ المحكوم. ومن ناحية أخرى، قام البحث بدراسة تقييمية لخطاب البوطي المتشنج من الإسلاميين المعاصرين، لمعرفة هل هذا الخطاب نتيجة لموقف مؤيد للأنظمة الحاكمة أو لأن بعض الإسلاميين أساؤوا –في آرائهم وتجاربهم– تطبيق الشريعة الإسلامية وسخروا الدعوة لأهداف سياسية. يخلص البحث إلى أن نقد البوطي يتكىء على سبع قضايا وممارسات خاطئة تلبست بها جماعات إسلامية متشددة. ويرى البحث أن نقد البوطي هذا يصلح معياراً للتمييز بين الإسلاميين المتشددين والمعتدلين. يخلص البحث في النهاية إلى أن البوطي تبنى موقفه ضد المظاهرات والخروج المسلح لظروف وأسباب وصل إليها باجتهاد شخصي، ولم يكن يسعى من وراء ذلك إلى إرضاء النظام السوري. ومع أن موقف البوطي صحيح من حيث العموم، نبه البحث على وجود أخطاء فكرية ونقاط ضعف اشتمل عليها خطابه. ويرى البحث أن الشريعة الإسلامية المبنية على جلب المصالح ودرء المفاسد أمرت –ضمن أطر محددة ولظروف موضوعية وضرورات تاريخية– بطاعة الحاكم الجائر من باب الواقعية السياسية، حذراً من الوقوع في أسوأ الشرين. فقد ثبت تاريخياً أن الخروج المسلح أدى إلى شرور ومفاسد أسوأ مما جرته السلطة المستبدة. لذا يجب تبني وتطوير وسائل سلمية معاصرة للقضاء على الحاكم الجائر، مثل: المظاهرات السلمية، والعصيان المدني، وجماعة الضغط، ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي...إلخ

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

Muslim countries, during the colonial period, underwent major changes in many areas: social, political, educational, cultural, ethical, and more critically, religious. In the 1940s and 1950s, Syria was subjected to an enormous political and economic change as it achieved its independence from France in 1946. The post-colonial Syria witnessed many military coups, and the Ba'th Party has been in power in the country since 1963. Syria was governed by Hafez al-Assad, who ruled from 1970 until his death in the year 2000. Ever since, it has been under the rule of his son, Bashar.

With the adoption of the post-colonial nation-state in Syria, Islam ceased to be the general framework for the state, even though enjoying some authority for the society. Sunni *'ulama* who previously were an integral part of decision-making process became now tractable officials who wait for orders from on high.[1] Some of them, appropriately called 'state jurists',[2] were expected to issue fatwas fitting to the demands of the state or the ruler and on the basis of the pragmatic nature of politics.

Other *'ulama*, nevertheless, refused to be a tool in the hand of politicians and tried to distance themselves from formal religious ceremonies organized by the Ministry of Awqaf, the bureaucratic apparatus of the state.[3]

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[1] Thomas Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Thomas Pierret, "The Syrian Baath Party and Sunni Islam: Conflicts and Connivance," *Middle East Brief*, no. 77 (2014).

[2] On the nation state and its jurists see Mu'taz al-Khaṭīb, "*Al-faqīh wa al-dawlah fī al-thawrāt al-'arabiyyah*," *Tabayyun* Magazine. N0. 3/9, (Summer 2014): 72-73.

[3] Pierret, *Religion*…; Pierret, "The Syrian Baath…

In the twentieth century, Syrian *'ulama* faced different challenges of secularist system which are meant to undermine their religious authority and power bases. These challenges included 'the secularization of law, the expansion of state control over religious institutions, and the modernization-democratization of education.'[4]

In spite of the state constraining procedures, *'ulama* remained a major player in the social-religious scene. The conflation (or conflict) of religion and state in Syria appears vividly in the 2011 Syrian Revolution. While many religious scholars rose up against the regime of Bashar al-Assad, others chose to discredit demonstrations, and later on, the rebellion.

The purpose of this research is to explore the perspective of Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Būṭī on the Syrian Revolution of 2011, and to discover whether the position he takes reflects regime alliance or independent opinion. Al-Būṭī (1929-2013)[5] is a highly esteemed religious scholar, who contributed substantially to the Muslim scholarship. His books, essays, and treatises, ranging from theology and philosophy to jurisprudence and mysticism, and from Qur'ānic and Ḥadīth studies, to literary themes, as well as a host of contemporary religious, social, and intellectual issues, have gained currency both at home and abroad.

For two decades, al- Būṭī had a weekly Qur'ān and Sunna commentary on the Syrian TV channel. Hundreds of people, many of them are schools teachers and university professors, would attend his Friday sermons in al-Rifā'i Mosque, and later

[4] Pierret, *Religion*…, 4.

[5] Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan Būṭī was born in Turkey. He immigrated with his family to Syria in 1933, where he lived primarily ever since. He studied Islamic theology at al-Azhar University and held academic positions in many different Arab and Muslim countries. He was a Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Damascus and considered the most prominent Muslim thinker in contemporary Syria. Al-Būṭī was horrifically assassinated in a bomb attack while delivering a regular religious lecture in al-Imān Mosque (Damascus), with reportedly more than 42 causalities, in March 21, 2013.

on, in the Omayyad Mosque, as well as his lectures held twice in al-Imān Mosque.[6] Even those who did not actively practice Islam have heard about al-Būṭī and his various activities. As a university professor, a preacher, a *mufti*, a lecturer, and a writer, al-Būṭī continued to attract hundreds of thousands of young Muslims all over the Islamic World.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this research is to explore and analyse Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Būṭī's perspective on the Syrian revolution of 2011 with reference to his criterion for the 'legitimate' revolution and on what grounds he based his opinion of the Syrian revolution as both religiously illegitimate and politically oriented. A great number of scholars, authors, and essayists,[7] Syrian and non-Syrian, have interpreted al-Būṭī's stance as a full support of the regime referring to his earlier similar position against the Muslim Brotherhood Movement in Syria in the 1980s. Others, however, argue that al-Būṭī's opinion, from a purely religious point of view, does not necessarily espouse the government's appalling crimes. Arguments of these two opposing camps will be weighed.

Further, the research goes on exploring al-Būṭī's criticism of revolutionary tactics and the instrumentalization of religion by Islamists who usually seek the ascendancy of Islam via political means and, when necessary, resort to violent methods to create their version of the 'Islamic state.'

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[6] This is based on my personal information, as I used to watch his TV program and attend his lectures in the above-mentioned mosques.

[7] For example, Mu'taz al-Khaṭīb, "*Al-faqīh wa al-dawlah fī al-thawrāt al-'arabiyyah*," *Tabayyun* Magazine. N0. 3/9 (Summer 2014): 63-84; Ghāzī al-Tawbah, "*Ṣifāt al-'ālim: al-Būṭī namūdhajan ma'kūsan*." (2012). Retrieved September 27, 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.net/knowledgegate/opinions>. Further examples are found in chapter six.

In addition, the research shows how religion as a driving force has played a prominent role in shaping the life of the Muslim Syrian society. Thus, it provides a brief account of the large religious groups and institutions in post-independence Syria (Muslim Brotherhood Movement, Sufi orders, *Salafiyyah*, religious institutions) with particular reference to their response to the regime.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

A conflagration can develop rapidly from a spark falling on a dry brush. The catastrophic Syrian Revolution broke out in mid-March 2011 when residents of the small southern town of Dar'a marched to protest the arrest and torture of some teenagers who, influenced by the wave of 'Arab Spring,' painted anti-government slogans on a school wall. The Revolution created a deep schism among Sunni Muslim *'ulama* who played a prominent role in encouraging /discouraging protests.

Al-Būṭī refused to be one of those who recognized and gave a hand to protestors. Rather, he viewed the Revolution as both religiously illegitimate and politically oriented thereby creating an ongoing debate not only in Syria but also in the Arab as well as the Muslim world. To al-Būṭī, this wave of popular uprising would surely create chaos and sedition opening the door to massive collateral damage and bloodshed among innocent Muslims and non-Muslims.

The other opinion holds al-Būṭī, and like-minded sheikhs, responsible for the crimes and atrocities due to his position that bans demonstrations and supports the government's crackdowns. [8] For two years till his assassination in 2013, al-Būṭī had been under the spotlight of TV and radio shows, online articles that depicted him as purely a pro-regime scholar who branded demonstrators as traitors and disbelievers.

[8] See 6.4 Arguments Challenging al-Būṭī's Perspective.

Nevertheless, according to some authors and analysts, al-Būṭī is an independent scholar who was purely following his *ijtihad*, be it for the benefit of the regime or against it.[9] It is noted that most of the writings about al-Būṭī, from both sides, lack a clear and full picture of his discourse on the Revolution due to either misinterpretations or widespread rumors. And this resulted in partial or inaccurate judgment. Therefore, the research offers the first sustained treatment of this ongoing religio-political issue by exploring its multiple dimensions and various ramifications. This complex intersection of religion and politics can be seen in the following discussed topics: the prominent role Islam plays in public Syrian life and how Ba'th Party leaders attempted to cloak themselves in the mantle of Islam to ensure legitimacy and widen the ground for their rule; al-Būṭī's critical view on contemporary Islamists who, according to him, have misapplied the Islamic law and sacrificed *da'wah* in favour of political gains; the varied responses of Syrian religious scholars towards initial protests that ushered in a full-scale revolution; evaluation of al-Būṭī-regime relationship, exploring the motivating factors behind al-Būṭī's opinion about the Revolution.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research consists of several questions:

1. What impact did religion have in public and political life of Syria?
2. Why did al-Būṭī oppose and criticize a number of contemporary Islamist movements? Is there evidence that lends credence to al-Būṭī's anti-Islamist discourse?
3. How and why did al-Būṭī create a relationship with the regime?

[9] See 6.5 Arguments Clarifying al-Būṭī's Perspective.

4. Did al-Būṭī confer religious legitimacy upon the Assad dynasty for decades? In other words, was he a 'state jurist' or an independent scholar?
5. Did the regime exploit al-Būṭī's discourse on the Revolution?
6. What is the rationale behind al-Būṭī's attitude towards the Syrian Revolution?
7. Is al-Būṭī's adopted position towards the revolution legally sanctioned?
8. Does the obedience-verse (4: 59) apply to contemporary Arab rulers?
9. Is there a viable alternative to 'armed rebellion'?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1- To critically examine the determining factors (religious, social and political) in addition to the historical context driving al-Būṭī to adopt his position towards the Revolution.

2- To offer a sustained treatment of the ruler's obedience in order to re-situate it in its rightful context in the contemporary Islamic political thought within the rights/duties of both the ruler and the ruled.

3- To develop a methodology of how to weigh and assess similar matters.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Being a distinguished professor, a prolific writer, an accomplished orator, a popular figure, combined with a literary excellence, al-Būṭī for more than four decades had a considerable influence at home and abroad. His several dozen books seemed to be well-received having a powerful grip on the life and thought of an untold number of readers. His books with polemical orientations (*al-jihad* and *Salafiyyah*) have

generated much discussion and comment. Further, al-Būṭī's 'unexpected' opinion on the 2011 Syrian uprising has created an ongoing debate not only in Syria but also in the Arab as well as the Muslim world.

A variety of writings on al-Būṭī are divided into five categories:

1.6.1 *Salafiyyah*

Salafiyyah is a reform movement founded by Muhammad Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792) at the heart of Arabian Peninsula. The name has its roots in the Arabic word *salaf*, meaning 'ancestors' (comprising the first three generations of Muslims), whom Muslims consider to have practiced the early Islam. Reformers who call themselves *salaf* promote a return to a society based on the Muslim values of the early community.[10]

Expressing a critical appraisal of *Salafiyyah*, al-Būṭī wrote a seminal work named *al-Salafiyyah: marḥalah zamaniyyah mubārakah lā madhhab Islāmī.*[11] (*Salafiyyah* is a Blessed Historical Phase rather than an Islamic Legal School). He carefully evaluates *Salafiyyah* through its general trends and adopted doctrines.

Khouloud Al-Nounou, a Syrian researcher, wrote an MA thesis, "*Salafism: Its Meaning, Mainly in the thought of Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Buti,* "[12] a critical analysis of al-Būṭī's view on *Salafiyyah* via his book mentioned above.

Al-Būṭī's major point of view about Salafism, Al-Nounou argues, concentrates on Salafism that must not be shaped as a *madhhab* separate from the whole Islamic entity. If the people of Salafism encourage others to have such a *madhhab* that marks

[10] Emad Aldin Shahin, "Salafiyah." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World,* Editor in Chief. John Esposito. (vols. 1-4) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 3:463-469.
[11] M.S.R al-Būṭī, *al-Salafiyyah: marḥalah zamaniyyah mubārakah lā madhhab Islāmī*, (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1988).
[12] Khouloud al-Nounou, "Salafism: Its Meaning, Mainly in the thought of Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Buti, " (Unpublished MA thesis. Hartford Seminary, Connecticut, 2008).

them off from other Muslims, al-Būṭī declares that this action is considered a major *bid'a*, and neither the Quran nor *Sunnah* has supported this situation.[13]

Sāleḥ al-Fawzān, a Salafi Saudi scholar, published a critique of al-Būṭī's book, entitled *Ta'qībāt 'alā kitāb al-Salafiyyah*[14] (Comments on *al-Salafiyyah*). The author made forty comments showing the basic historical as well as legal misconceptions held by al-Būṭī as to his perception of Salafi movement.

1.6.2 *Lā Madhhabiyyah*

Lā Madhhabiyyah is a doctrine which is represented by modern Wahhabis /Salafis, who, while rejecting the notion of fidelity to specific legal schools, insist on the right to return to the primary texts of Islam (The Qur'ān and *Sunnah*), re-interpret the traditions without being bound by the interpretations of classical jurists and mix between the various schools in order to reach the most prudent and useful results. Muhammad Nāser al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1420/ 1999) and Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh (d. 1434/ 2013) are considered the most known scholars, who strongly championed *Lā Madhhabiyyah* as well as other Salafi doctrines in the later part of the twentieth-century Syria.

On the other camp stands al-Būṭī who wrote a book entitled *al-Lā madhhabiyyah akhtar bid'ah tuhaddid al-sharī'a al-Islamiyyah.* [15] (*Lā Madhhabiyyah* is the most Dangerous Innovation Threatening the Islamic Sharī'a). Al-Būṭī argues that it is extremely serious to claim that following one particular *madhhab* is

[13] Ibid., 70.
[14] The critique is available at this link. Retrieved October 24, 2014. http://www.sahab.net/forums/?showtopic=34975>.
[15] Al-Būṭī, *al-lā madhhabiyyah akhtar bid'ah tuhaddid al-sharī'a al-Islamiyyah*, (Damascus: Dār al-Fārābi, 1969).

something forbidden, [16] and thus it is innovation that ought to be rejected. Then, he goes on saying that since those who are unqualified to exercise *ijtihad* and derive rules directly from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* are logically and legally invited to follow, as to legal matters, one of the qualified known *mujtahids*.

Muhammad 'Īd 'Aābbsī, one of al-Albānī's supporters, wrote a refutation of al-Būṭī's work, called *al-Madhhabiyyah al-muta'assibah hiya al-bid'ah*,[17] (The Fanatic *Madhhabiyyah* is the Innovation). In the book, the author tries to show al-Būṭī's inconsistent approach thus marking his work as of mediocre sort.

1.6.3 Jihad and 'Political Islam'

In his 1993 book *al-Jihad fī al-Islam: kayfa nafhamuhu wa-kayfa numārisuh,* [18] (Jihad in Islam: How to Understand it and Practise it) al-Būṭī examines a host of critical issues that fall into the category of jihad: types of jihad; the driving force behind waging 'armed jihad' against non-Muslims; *da'wah* vs. Islamist movements; the abode of war vs. the abode of Islam; the political dimension of dhimmah in Islam; the revolt against the ruler: is it considered as rebellion, aggression or jihad? preparing the appropriate climate for jihad; the fate of democracy under Islamic rule; and the legal ruling for committing apostasy.

Given its vital importance, the book has been the subject of considerable debate.[19] For example, Muhammad Ghiāth Addīn Hāfez wrote "*Mafhūm al-jihad*

[16] Ibid., 16.
[17] Muhammad 'Īd 'Aābbsī, *al-Madhhabiyyah al-muta'assibah hiya al-bid'ah*, (Amman: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1970).
[18] Al-Būṭī, *al-Jihad fī al-Islam: kayfa nafhamuhu wa-kayfa numārisuh*, (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1993). The book was translated into English by Munzer Adel Absi. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2006.
[19] The 1994 edition provides a supplement discussing the feedback on the book.

'inda al-ustādh al-Mawdūdi wa al-ustādh al-Būṭī : dirāsah moqāranah, " [20] (The Concept of Jihad as seen by Mawdūdi and al-Būṭī: A Comparative Study) an MA thesis studying al-jihad as presented by Mawdūdi and al-Būṭī.

On the other hand, *al-Būṭī, al-da'wah wa al-jihad wa al-Islam al-siāysī,* [21] (Al-Būṭī, al-Jihad and the Political Islam), by Hishām 'Ilīwān and Fādī al-Ghūsh, presents and evaluates al-Būṭī's treatment of al-jihad, the Palestinian Cause, normalization with the State of Israel, as well as his declared anxiety about the activities of various political-jihadist Islamic movements of today.

1.6.4 The Syrian Revolution

While many Muslim Sunni Syrian *'ulama* have risen up against the regime of the President Bashar al-Assad, al-Būṭī chose to take a different route provoking a major controversy. A great number of scholars, authors, and essayists, Syrian and non-Syrian, have interpreted this route as a full support of the regime. Others, however, argue that al-Būṭī's opinion, from a purely religious point of view, does not necessarily espouse the brutality of the regime.

anti-al-Būṭī

a. Ghāzī al-Tawbah, a Palestinian journalist published an online article on al-Jazeera website named "*Ṣifāt al-'ālim: al-Būṭī namūdhajan ma'kūsan,* "[22] (Characteristics of religious scholars: al-Būṭī as an opposite example). To the writer, the main features of a genuine Muslim scholar are embodied in two concepts: *al-Rabbāniyyah*, namely a faithful adherence to the Islamic

[20] Muhammad Hāfez, "Mafhūm al-jihad 'inda al-ustādh al-Mawdūdi wa al-ustādh al-Būṭī : dirāsah moqāranah," (International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1997).
[21] Hishām 'Ilīwān and Fādī al-Ghūsh, *al-Būṭī, al-da'wah wa al-jihad wa al-Islam al-siāysī,* (Beirut: Markaz al-Ḥadārah li Tanmiyat al-Fikr al-Islamī, 2012).
[22] Ghāzī al-Tawbah, "*Ṣifāt al-'ālim: al-Būṭī namūdhajan ma'kūsan,* " (2012). Retrieved September 27, 2014. < http://www.aljazeera.net/knowledgegate/opinions>.

principles, total submission to Allah, in addition to maintaining a very poor relation with the ruler; *al-Inḥiyāz Ilā al-ummah wa qadāyāhā* i.e. to be on the side of the Muslim community busying oneself with its main causes and concerns. Al-Būṭī, al-Tawbah argues, had been in a close contact with the president Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar for forty years praising the Syrian regime and endorsing its secular tendency. Further, when the 2011 popular uprising broke out, he publicly stood against it. Therefore, al-Būṭī proved himself to be in an inverted position of true *'ulama*.[23]

b. Similarly, the article "*al-Būṭī ālim asharahu al-dīn wa qatalathu al-siyāsah*, " (al-Būṭī is a scholar made well-known by religion and killed by politics) contends that al-Būṭī while describing the free Syrian army as 'rubbish' he defends the Syrian government claiming that chaos and sedition happening in Syrian are no more than a 'foreign conspiracy' led by Israel. [24]

c. Ḥilmī al-Qā'ūd in his piece "*al-Thawrah fī Sūriyah bayna Būthynah wa al-Būṭī*, " [25] (The Revolution in Syria between Būthynah and al-Būṭī) argues that both Būthynah Sha'bān, the political and media adviser to the President, and al-Būṭī, though belonging to a completely different position, seem to be in line as regards the Syrian revolt. In her conference following Dar'ā massacre, Būthynah spoke of several presidential corrective measures emphasizing on the amicable relation between the

[23] Ibid.
[24] "*Al-Būṭī ālim asharahu al-dīn wa qatalathu al-siyāsah,* " (2013). Retrieved October 17, 2014. <www.aljazeera.net/news/.../السياسة-وقتلته-الدين-أشهره-عالم-البوطي>.
[25] Ḥilmī al-Qā'ūd, "*al-Thawrah fī Sūriyah bayna Būthynah wa al-Būṭī*, " (2014). Retrieved October 21, 2014. <http://islamtoday.net/albasheer/services/saveart-14-148625.htm>.