

or absorb more technical and more complicated reasoning such as is often used by analysts in the mass media. Nor might many women comprehend what are at times convoluted and erudite legal expositions by male religious scholars who address ethical issues related to nuclear weapons.

Arguably, al-Dawsari does provide a bottom-up feminine viewpoint, however limited it might be, one that is independent of the elite women who populate the state-controlled media and government administrative and religious bureaucracy. If nothing else, the views that al-Dawsari propagates converge with official views and would tend to validate the concept of nuclear weapons among women, reinforcing and amplifying the top-down messaging disseminated by the government and state-controlled media. As such, her involvement would help preempt or neutralize any potential skepticism or opposition by women to the government's nuclear-related policies and, in that sense, contributes to the broader national consensus on this issue.



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'Fitna' in the Context of the Syrian Revolution: The Example of al-Būṭī

Bachar Bakour*

Introduction

The popular uprisings in Syria in 2011 have emphasized the centrality of religion in social and political spheres. As Friday sermons would be a fitting opportunity for gathering, numerous mosques served as a platform for anti-regime demonstrations.¹ Measures, mostly repressive, were taken by the security forces to foil or break up any demonstration launching from mosques.² Senior Syrian Sheikhs,³ key figures in understanding the conflict/war dynamics, took different attitudes towards protests. Influential scholars, like Kurayyim Rājiḥ, Sāriyah and Usāmah al-Rifā'ī, Mu'ādh al-Khaṭīb, and Abū al-Hudā al-Ya'qūbī, vocally criticised the government's bloody policy and sided with the protests. Other ulama condemned demonstrations and propagated the official narrative.⁴ A third party, confused or apprehensive, preferred the culture of quiescence and silence. The escalating protests have taken ulama vs. the regime into uncharted territory.

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¹Thomas Pierret "The Role of the Mosque in the Syrian Revolution," *Near East Quarterly* 7, (2012): 1-5.

²Ibid.

³Sheikh is a religious Muslim scholar.

⁴Thomas Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 216-234; Jawad Qureshi, "The Discourses of the Damascene Sunni Ulama During the 2011 Revolution," *St. Andrews Papers on Contemporary Syria* 4, no. 1 (2012): 59-91.