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Impact of the Iranian Intervention on the Sectarian Map in Syria

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Prior to the outbreak of the Syrian revolution, Iranian influence had been a point of speculation in this country. However, once the Syrian revolution had broken out, Iran played a major role in defending and preserving President Assad's regime via deploying the Iranian Revolution Guards (IRGC) and multinational Shiite militias.

Tehran knows its presence in Syria is a disturbing factor prompting regional, international, and even its current allies' pressure, which makes it plan for a long term strategy, everlasting stay and influence in this country.⁽¹⁾ Following the flare-up of the revolution, Iran experienced some amendments in its strategy, but preserved its ultimate goals in Syria, (1) to establish a strong and everlasting influence that extends to the Mediterranean,⁽²⁾ (2) cut off the Sunni- Saudi-Turkish axis, (3) and turn Iran into influential regional power. Before the Syrian revolution, the Iranian strategy relied on, firstly, a ground passage from Tehran to Beirut via Iraq and Syria by spreading Shiism in these territories to prompt a sectarian demographic change and, secondly, using the Shiite minority in Syria. This minority has avowed allegiance to Iran's Supreme Leader to control state's institutions and the decision making process in this country, mainly, sovereign institutions like the army, and security services. As well as institutions in the economic and education fields. However, a big demographic change and creating a new Shiite community in a short period of time in Syria is virtually impossible. In fact, this project faces two problems: the first is that the Syrian demographic structure completely differs from that in Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and Bahrain. Most Syrian people are Sunnis with a very small Shiite community to the extent that most studies in the last century never mentioned this minority in the racial demographics in Syria.⁽³⁾ The second problem is that there are no Shiite officials in decision-making positions in Syria that can implement and support this project. Nevertheless, the Syrian revolution helped the Iranians to expand their interference in this country and implement their strategy for an influential and long-term stay in Syria. During the Syrian revolution, Iran changed its strategy in Syria from depending on religious missionaries to (1) the establishment of military and security bases, (2) the expulsion of foreign militants, (3) the imposition of the status quo through emerging Shiite pockets and Shiite local militias. In addition, displacement operations and local agreements have facilitated demographic change and redrawing the sectarian map in Syria as planned by Iran.⁽⁴⁾ The new Iranian strategy on Syria depends on direct control of the state's sovereign institutions- to make Syria indebted, financially and politically, to Iran for protecting the Syrian regime. According to the modern state concept, sectarian change means demographic change. The result of Iranian interference in Syria on demographic change despite being, mainly, in the Sunni majority areas, has impacted other religious minorities like the Druze, Ismailia, and Arab Christians. However, this study will focus on demographic change among Sunni majority areas. Demographic change in Syria depends on three factors (1) converting people to Shiism, (2) naturalization of Shiite militants, (3) displacement operations. Before the Syrian revolution, Iran counted on religious missionaries for sectarian change in Syria, but after the revolution, it adopted naturalization and displacement operations.

Iranian Missionaries in Syria

From 2003-2011 Shiism missionaries concentrated on certain areas in Syria. These missionaries relied, mainly, on funding and establishing a network of economic and livelihood issues in local communities by promoting religious tourism, building tombs, Shiite temples, and educational centers. Despite spreading in most Syrian provinces, these missionaries concentrated on certain areas more than others.

» Syrian Badia and Jazeera

In a previous study in 2009 titled, “The Shiite Ba’ath in Syria” we concluded that the highest rate of Shiism and demographic change among Arab Sunnis before the Syrian revolution was concentrated in Syrian Badia near the Iraqi borders- about 30% of Shiism missionary campaigns in Syria. The towns and villages targeted by these missionaries appeared as a chain extending from west to east. Specifically, these towns and villages spread at the banks of the Euphrates River and represent the main passages that connect Iraq to Syria from Rabe’ah city to Bokamal (about 320 kilometer). Geographically, these land passages link the Iraqi and Syrian borders with Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo; in other words, the Lebanese eastern borders and the Syrian coast at the Mediterranean; particularly, Biqa’, Beirut, and Latakia.⁽⁵⁾ Converting tribes in Syrian Badia into Shiism relied on financial inducements and linking this sect to Ahl Al Bait, knowing that many of these tribes like Bakarah, Na’im, and Jboul claim belonging to Ahl Al Bait of the prophet. Some tribes went farther than that like Bakara⁽⁶⁾ who claimed belonging to the Twelve Imams- especially Imam Baqir⁽⁷⁾. They attempted to substantiate this issue by claiming that, historically, Jazeera was Shiite, but had been converted into Sunni by the Ottoman Empire;⁽⁸⁾ a claim that contradicts historical facts.

Hatlah,⁽⁹⁾ in the Deir Ez-Zor province near the Iraqi border at the crossroad of two major land passages at the Euphrates River, was the center of converting Syrian Badia into Shiism.⁽¹⁰⁾ While the strategic town of Shdadi⁽¹¹⁾ that lies at the crossroad of the most important urban centers of Badia- Deir Ez-Zor, Raqqa, and Hasakah- that has the largest oil fields in Syria- was turned into an center for Shiite newcomers to Badia from Homs and Alawi Shiites in general. In the first decade of President Assad’s rule Shiism spread in Syria relying on the power of money and security incentives in thirty-nine towns and villages in Syrian Badia including Raqqa, Hasakah, and Deir Ez-Zor. Shiism declined somewhat in these territories with support of a strong Salafi movement, but it continued to spread. Those who newly embraced Shiism were deployed in Iranian proxy militias to support the Syrian regime after the outbreak of the Syrian revolution, which made these Shiism centers and missionaries target the Syrian Free Army with the beginning of the Badia and Jazeera liberating operations in 2013. All these centers were destroyed starting from the principal one in Hatlah⁽¹²⁾ up to the tomb of Ammar Ibn

Yassir in the province of Raqqa, which provoked people to establish Shiite militias in these territories.⁽¹³⁾

The Syrian revolution played a major role in breaking down most Shiism centers in Badia and Jazeera, but the Iranian role in protecting Assad's regime and the sectarian massacres carried out by Iranian proxy militias have deepened hatred towards Iranian Shiism. It can be said that the Syrian revolution has frozen the activities of sectarian change in this strategic territory, but, at the same time, has given ground for deployment in Shiite militias in the eastern countryside of Deir Ez-Zor, mainly, in the towns of Hatlah and Murat and the city of Bokamal and its surrounding on the Syrian-Iraqi borders.⁽¹⁴⁾ According to statistics, the number of those who have embraced Shiism is no more than 7000 people in 2011;⁽¹⁵⁾ a number that does not represent sectarian change in this country. In addition, we must take other factors into consideration, but not just the number. In fact, demographic change in Syria was supported by money before the revolution and by arms after it and resulted from a growing, but not a consistent, missionary movement looking for expansion.

» **Alawi Territories**

Syrian Alawis belong to the Nusayri sect and is considered an unwanted division of Shiism. Nevertheless, this did not prevent the spread of Alawi Shiites in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first mosque was built in the Alawi Mountains in 1869,⁽¹⁶⁾ but the exertions of the Lebanese and Iraqi Shiite missionaries over four decades- since the coup of Hafiz Assad in 1970- resulted in it finding a home in the city of Qardaha (birthplace of Hafiz Assad). However, this is an elite sect, adopted mainly, by religious, educated people and those looking to break Shiite isolationism. Traditionalists believed this sect was a threat to their identity on the one hand. While the nature of the Alawi community did not accept many of its religious duties and rituals as they were viewed as being unnecessary burdens upon them on the other.⁽¹⁷⁾ In fact, the Alawi's took over the state's departments and became an important pillar of Assad's regime.

Alawi Mountains overlook about 40% of the Syrian coastline. Latakia is the center of Sunni Muslims while Tartus is center for Alawis. Geographically, there is a big mountain chain separating the Syrian coast from plains and all land passages toward the Mediterranean pass via Aleppo, Idlib, Jisr Ashoghour, up to Latakia and the whole Syrian coastline. The other passage goes via Homs to Tartus and the whole coastline. In fact, this geographic fact is one of the reasons prompting Iran to turn Alawis into Shiism and strengthen the current of "Bringing the branch back to its Shiite origin." Most importantly, Alawis rule Syria and taking control of this country requires taking control of Alawis and making them dependent on Iran, which makes sectarian change in Syria of great importance. The percentage of those embracing Shiism among Alawis is higher than Sunnis due to the long

history of Shiite missionaries working on this sect. 70% of those who converted into Shiism in Syria were Alawis⁽¹⁸⁾ because of the many organizations and establishments working on this issue. The Bustan Establishment- was established in 1999, headed and financed by Rami Makhlof, Bashar Assad's cousin- who supported these missionaries among Alawis and at the Syrian coast to convert Alawis into Shiism through the Annabi Alazam Association- a mosque, school, and Husseiniah (Shiite temple), dispatching study missions to Iranian universities, and by financing establishments to promote Jafari religious education.⁽¹⁹⁾ After the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, this charitable organization was changed from being missionary into an deployment center for Alawi militants and Shiite volunteers to fight for the Syrian regime within proxy militias and for recruiting other elements in the security service branches.⁽²⁰⁾ In addition, this association supported the regime's dead economically and intensified its missionary activities to mobilize the Alawi sect.⁽²¹⁾ Nevertheless, war drained the Alawi sect and these missionaries cannot compensate for its losses.

» **Damascus**

Damascus and its countryside are completely Sunni territories. The Shiite component has been available in Damascus for a few decades only in certain neighborhoods like Alamin, Aljourah (Jafar Assadiq), Matawlah, and Mount Qasioun. Recently, the Shiite presence has been confined to Ammarat Jwaniah neighborhood in the Damascus Old city when the tomb of Sayyida Ruqaya was built in 1990.

Implementation of the Iranian strategy requires intensifying the Shiite presence around Damascus, the capital. Consequently, the project of Beirut's Southern Suburb was copied in Sayyida Zainab and the southern towns of south Ghouta like the towns of Yalda and Babila near Damascus international airport. Iranians believe the expansion of the Shiite presence around Damascus might be a carbon copy of the Lebanese Hezbollah in case of creating an influential Shiite minority, which might guarantee the establishment of a land passage up to the Shiite-majority, the Lebanese Biqa and protect Damascus in case of any potential uprising to topple the Syrian regime or threaten its existence.⁽²²⁾ Similarly, the establishment of a center for Shiism (tomb and association of Sayyida Nafisah) in west Ghouta, specifically, in the city of Daria in 1999 near the Damascus-Beirut road near the Mezzeh military airport⁽²³⁾ carried clear strategic goals reflecting a systematic plan implemented progressively. Even though Shiism missionaries faced resistance by people who declined conversion into the Shiite ideology; this rejection was compensated by thousands of Iraqi, Gulf, and Afghani Shiite militants coming to these territories. Practically, Shiism missionaries had limited influence. Conversion into Shiism was limited though financial inducements. However, the surrounding of Damascus was turned into centers for encouraging

Shiism in Syria strengthened by the existence of the Sayyida Zainab tomb that became the center for attracting those who converted to Shiism to learn Shiite ideology, perform Shiite practices and rituals publicly in this area.

Naturalization: a tool for sectarian demographic change

Syria is home of the Omayyad Caliphate. Resistance to Shiism and sectarian change is normal in this country- knowing that this demographic change has clear political goals. To face this situation and carry out demographic and sectarian change in Syria, Iran believed this process would be easier and faster through naturalization. This issue was raised in 2006,⁽²⁴⁾ but relied on speculations rather than actions because of mistrust towards the Assad's regime at that time and the fact that Shiism had declined in this country.

According to the diary of General Ahmed Hamazani,⁽²⁵⁾ Iran interfered in Syria officially in March 2013 when the Syrian regime was about to fall. The Iranian strategic military plan was aimed at protecting Assad's regime by establishing local militias under Alawi leadership and IRGC supervision. This was, in addition to foreign militias constituted from mercenaries and the Lebanese Hezbollah. According to the terms of their contracts, mercenaries and their families were granted Syrian citizenship as an advantage after ending their service in this country. Despite the lack of accurate information in the civil registry offices of districts inhabiting newly naturalized citizens, many eyewitnesses confirmed that the naturalization process was concentrated on four districts: Deir Ez-Zor, Homs and its countryside, Damascus, and Latakia and its countryside. The naturalization papers in the city of Palmyra which is administratively attached to Homs are the most clear evidences on the naturalization process in Syria. One classified paper, directed from the Minister of Justice on November 16, 2014 to the Attorney General's office in Palmyra to "Facilitate organizing necessary documents and investigations including those with undeclared nationality (friends) in Badia under the supervision of the Military Security branch in Palmyra and to promptly dispatch these documents to the Palmyra civil registrar." This is based on document no. 13266/11 dated November 9, 2014 that included the letter of the head of the national security office in this concern.⁽²⁶⁾ The term "Friends" in this paper is used in other papers and referred, according to these documents, to foreign militants loyal to the Syrian regime.⁽²⁷⁾ According to the testimony of a judge that wrote some of these documents, most of those granted Syrian citizenship were from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran.

In a speech in front of representatives of public organizations on July 26, 2015 President Assad said, "Syria is not for those who live in it or those who carry its citizenship and passport, but for those who defend and protect it,"⁽²⁸⁾ which is the clearest statement on the naturalization process of multinational Shiite militants in Syria. The exact number of naturalized mercenaries in multinational Shiite

militias standing by the Syrian regime is unknown yet. However, in relation to the number of fighters of these militias, this is estimated at more than eighty thousand fighters, taking into consideration that many of these militants are rotated after ending their service and their families have been naturalized, the total number of those granted Syrian citizenship might exceed one million people over the past four years. This naturalization process might not be the only one. No one can tell if there are other naturalization processes and their type, number, and to whom citizenship has been granted. In fact, all documents are still classified and off the record, but they can be exposed through soft copies from civil registry offices that the opposition took from dissidents at the beginning of the Syrian revolution. The Syrian regime had never carried out any statistical campaign during the last seven years that can determine the Syrian population and the number of refugees. However, the head of the Syrian Commission for Family affairs, Mohammed Akram Alqash announced, on December 14, 2017 that the Syrian population was 28 million people, and only 21 million of them were inside Syria.⁽²⁹⁾ On the contrary, according to the governmental statistics center at the end of 2011, the Syrian population before the revolution was only 20.866 million people.⁽³⁰⁾ According to the United Nations statistics, the Syrian refugees are more than 5.5 million people in neighboring and other countries,⁽³¹⁾ about one million people have been killed in war, and an unknown number of babies born outside Syria have not been registered yet. This refers to the possibility of carrying out a broad naturalization process that explains this big number - about four million people more than the real number of the Syrian population announced by the United Nations in July 2017 that was 18.27 million people.⁽³²⁾

Forced displacement and repatriation and their impact on sectarian demographics in Syria

In recent years, most researches focused on demographic change through forced displacement campaigns. Normally, if displacement campaigns are not followed by repatriation and a naturalization process, they might not incur sectarian change in Syria and would only be “elimination of the revolution rather than demographic change.” This means to destroy the public resistance in the revolutionary areas and to give other areas a lesson to stop supporting the opposition forces or else, they would face “destruction, killing, and displacement.”⁽³³⁾ Despite the fact that displacement in Syria was not followed by repatriation because of the need for people to fill up these areas, there were some activities of repatriation in this country. However, naturalization will overcome repatriation by time as war continues. From June 2011 to December 2012, the Syrian regime adopted a policy of inflaming religious enmity and extremism by carrying out sectarian massacres and provoking religious sentiments by,⁽³⁴⁾ for example, forcing people to kneel down before Bashar Assad’s pictures and releasing Jihadist groups from

jails (starting from May 2011) to change the course of the revolution from the call for freedom and rights into a sectarian war (Sunni-Shiite/Alawi). These sectarian massacres succeeded in the displacement of tens of thousands of people from their homes but were not followed by repatriation as there was a lack of people to replace the native people. Nevertheless, the displacement of territories with varied sectarian structures, even without the repatriation of new people, does not prevent changing the demographics of these territories. In fact, displacement operations change the population rates of each of the sectarian and religious enclaves, such as the Sunni coastal territories like Baidha, Baniyas, and Houlah, and, mainly, the city of Homs. These territories were exposed to sectarian massacres and systematic displacement operations that paved the way for change in the sectarian structure in these territories. Most Sunni territories were emptied of their population while the Alawi territories and towns remained untouched.

Displacement operations were carried out in a systematic way under the name “Reconciliation Agreements” or “Displacement Agreements” starting from the fall of the city of Quseir on the Lebanese borders in June 2013. In addition, the fall of the city of Daria at the end of August 2016 was a landmark when three hundred Iraqi families who were newly naturalized, were immediately repatriated in this city.⁽⁵⁵⁾ This operation was carried out in other areas, mainly, in Aleppo that fell down in December 2016 in the hands of the Iraqi militias after the displacement of all original citizens in the eastern part of the city. The agreement of the so called, “Agreement of the Four Cities”⁽⁵⁶⁾ Kafriya, Fou’ah, Zabadani, and Madhya in April 2017 between Iranians and some Syrian military factions led to the displacement of 3800 people that were blockaded by Hezbollah in the cities of Zabadani and Madhya near the Lebanese borders in exchange of 1500 people from the Shiite towns of Kafriya and Fou’ah. Nevertheless, the latter were repatriated in the Sunni city of Quseir that had been exposed to a total demographic change after falling in the hands of Hezbollah and the displacement of its native people. The displacement and repatriation map⁽⁵⁷⁾ included the landline extending from Damascus to the Lebanese borders alongside the Syrian-Lebanese borders up to Tartus and Homs and its countryside including Houlah, Zarah, Baniyas, Baidha, and Markab castle at the Syrian coastline. These territories are linked together and represent the Alawi-Shiite triangle that separates these territories from Damascus up to Tartus to guarantee achievement of two goals: the presence of the regime in the line that links Damascus, the center of political weight, with the coast and to permit Hezbollah from establishing an isolated area on the Syrian-Lebanese borders to avert any threat which might result from the Syrian civil war.⁽⁵⁸⁾ All in all, these operations serve the Iranian goals and main strategy of demographic change in cities like Aleppo, Palmyra, and Deir Ez-Zor that represent the three major passages towards the Mediterranean. Demographic change in Syria is being carried out using soft tools like real estate procurement- especially in

Damascus and the presidential palace surroundings, particularly in Mezzeh- or by organizational decisions that require reorganizing all city neighborhoods, mainly, in Damascus and Homs.⁽³⁹⁾ Displacement operations in Syria resulted in about four million refugees, all of them come from Arab Sunni origins. Indeed, this is a significant change in this country, but is bounded by the consequences war and political reconciliation that might be implemented.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Conclusion

Understanding demographic change and its mechanism helps making an effective strategy to face this challenge in Syria. Demographic change in this country should be handled as part of a more comprehensive strategy that includes all the Sunni world represented by all Arab countries. Some observers argue that the Iranian sectarian influence must be contained militarily by supporting and expanding the Russian influence in Syria. This view promotes the idea that Iran does not have a clear strategy in Syria on the one hand, and that its military presence is separated from the demographic change operations in this country on the other. In fact, this is an illogical view, knowing that Iran has taken control of significant parts of Syria and most state's institutions and decision-making positions in a systematic method.

Other observers believe this sectarian change relying on the forced displacement of people would fail due to the big difference in the population number at the national and regional levels between this sectarian axis and other components.⁽⁴¹⁾ However, this belief that relies on current demographic facts did not take into consideration the changes and developments that have taken place and become realities since the eruption of the Syrian civil war. The sectarian religious dimension is the main tool in implementing the Iranian strategy to expand and augment its influence in the region.⁽⁴²⁾ When General Ahmed Hamazani set the IRGC strategic plan for interference in Syria to protect the Assad regime, he focused on four aspects: Military, Economic, Security, and Religious. According to Hamazani, the military and security aspects were carried out on the ground while the other two have been postponed but not neglected.⁽⁴³⁾ In fact, the Iranian plan has succeeded, but the situation on the ground in Syria is inconsistent and changing knowing that Sunni powers might set a plan to face the Iranian strategy, which would prevent this situation from becoming a well-established reality.

Adopting a strategy of confrontation requires the establishment of research observatories in all Arab countries concerned with the Iranian expansion to stand against sectarian change by providing information, following up all developments precisely, and developing and changing strategic plans. It is also important for all Arab countries, accompanied by some major Sunni countries like Turkey, to adopt a strategic plan to face the Iranian sectarian impact on the demography of the region and to set a long, medium, and short-term plan to implement this plan.

As the Syrian war on, Shiite armed militias will continue fighting, giving Iran a foothold in this country and in the Shiite community. These groups will be turned into a carbon copy of the Lebanese Hezbollah in terms of name, structure, and loyalty, which would be one of Tehran's big achievements and opportunities to enhance its influence and display its power more efficiently in Syria.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Within the same context, the Iranian timeless presence and influence in Syria cannot be removed unless the Syrian national army is rebuilt and all security services are dismantled and reformed. This strategy is the most efficient tool in ending the Iranian presence that should, in case of holding a peace process in Syria, be one term of any political settlement in this country. In fact, a military end game in favor of Iran will strengthen the Iranian presence in Syria, its control of the political and security decision-making process, and continuity of long-term sectarian change of Syrian society. The Iranian interference in Syria relies on weakness of the national identity- a situation the regime has worked on creating for long. In fact, the regime worked on breaking down the social fabric in Syria for about half a century to be able to control this society and remove any potential opposition to its rule. When protests flared against this regime, it couldn't suppress them and relied on the Iranians to survive by adopting the policy of demographic change, which was mutually beneficial for both; Iran and the Syrian regime.

All in all, whatever the current situation is, there is no stability in Syria. The situation is changing and will be determined by consequences of war that does not seem to be coming to an end soon.

Endnotes

- (1) Ahmed Abazid, "The Iranian Strategy for Staying in Syria," a paper prepared for Brookings Institute, 2018, p1.
- (2) Alhaj, Abdurrahman: *The Shiite Baath in Syria: 2007-1919*, Beirut, Bridges for translation and publishing, 1st edition, 2017, p207.
- (3) See: Flyny Leverett: *Syrian Inheritance: Testing Bashar Assad by Fire*, translated by Imad Fawzi Ash'eibi, Beirut, Addar Alarabiah for Sciences- Publishers, 1st edition, 2005, p26.
- (4) See: Abazid, "The Iranian Strategy for Staying in Syria," p1. See also: Mohammed Assaied Assayyad: *Demographic and Identity Change in Syria and Iraq*, *Journal for Iranian Studies*, 1st year, 2nd issue, March 2017, p120 and after.
- (5) See: Alhaj, Shiite Baath, p208.
- (6) Bakarah tribe is divided into: Obeidat, Manasrah, Hulamiah, Bomas'i, Hamad Aabid, Boarab, Bosalih, Bohamdan, Rafee', Boma'ish, Borahmah, Adbulkarim, Boshams, Bakarat Aljabal, and Bakarah family in Aleppo. This tribe extends at the banks of the Euphrates River on the eastern side (Jazeera) to Khabour River east up to Buseirah to the east of Deir Azzour province and Raqa province in the west.
- (7) Hisham Aal Qteit: *Transformers: Facts and Documents*, Beirut: Mahajah Baidha Publishers, 1st edition, 2002, part3, p271.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) The first town in the Syrian Badia Shiism entered in 1977. Most of its people come from the Bobadran branch of Bakarah tribe. The number of those who embraced Shiism in this town before the Syrian revolution was 1500 people.
- (10) Ellen Kinichmeyer, «Syrian Sunnis Joining Shiites,» *Washington Post*, 6 Oct 2006
- (11) History of Shiism in this town is unknown, but related to the clan kinship- Jbour, Bakarah, and Okeidat.
- (12) When Alqadisiyah Brigade (belongs to the Syrian Free Army from the children of Bakarah tribe) entered Hatlah town, the Free Army received information that Shiites of Hatlah were armed. The Free Army asked them to disarm and avoid being exposed to attack on the one hand and to give up Shiism and go back to their original Sunni sect. On June 2013 ,11, civilians fled and about 70 Shiite militants were killed. Husseinias were destroyed and houses of those fled were given to refugees who escaped the regime bombing temporarily. Phone interview with journalist Ibrahim Habash (eyewitness) on February 2018 ,23.
- (13) The first militia to be established in Sayyida Zainab in Damascus countryside was in the name of, "Hatlah, We are Coming Back" in 2013 and comprised of this town's children. After that, the "Striking Force Brigade" was established in 2014 but was broken down in a short period of time. Then Baqir Brigade was established in Aleppo and Commandos Brigade in 2015 in the city of Hasakah, but soon broken down. All these brigades were financed and supervised by Iranians.
- (14) The new Iranian missionary campaigns use the bad economic situation of civilians. It gives them good monthly payments and gives monthly funds to the families that embrace Shiism. In addition, Iran provides food to those people regularly. See: Mohammed Hassan: "Iran Spreads Shiism in Deir Ez-Zor" *Almudun*, February 2018 ,17. See: Alwaslah on February 2018 ,23.
- (15) Phone interview with journalist Ibrahim Habash, February 2018 ,23.
- (16) Abdurrahman Alhaj: *Shiite Baath in Syria 2007-1919*, Beirut: Institute of Future Studies, 2009, p48.
- (17) Ibid, p. 86
- (18) Ibid, p. 230
- (19) See: "Arrasoul Alazam Association and Rami Makhlof's Religious Minorities," *Ain of the city*, November 2016 ,30, on Waslah on February 2018 ,23.
And Abdussalam Haj Bakri: "Where Jamil Assad Failed... Rami Makhlof Spreads Shiism in Latakia Countryside," *Al'an News*, March 2017 ,19 on Waslah on February 2018 ,23.
- (20) See: *Militias Fighting for Assad against the Revolution*, series of *Who do We Fight: 3, Liberation of Hems* Movement Research Center, April 2015 ,24, p10, see: Waslah on February 2018 ,23.
See also: structure and officers of State Security Service, leaked documents, *Zaman Wasl*, March 2014 ,22, see: Waslah on February 2018 ,23.
- (21) See: Abdussalam Haj Bakri, "Rami Makhlof scholarship for university students requires converting into Shiism or joining Assad security forces," *Syrian Economy of finance and business*, May 2017 ,23 on Waslah on February 2018 ,23.
- (22) Abdurrahman Haj: p209 ,122.

- (23) Ibid, p117.
- (24) See: Ibrahim Darwish, "What haven't been said: an article: Where does Danger Lie?" Arab East Center, November 2006 ,13, on Waslah on February 2018 ,23.
- (25) See: Kala'la Babai: Bigham Mahi Ha, Tehran: Intisharat Baath 2016 ,27, p435.
- (26) A document published in the "Black Books" program on Jazeera channel on January 2017 ,5 titled, "War of Demographics: Systematic Campaign on the Syrian Majority" on Waslah on February 2018 ,23.
- (27) According to the Syrian Judge Mustafa Qassem, see the previous resource.
- (28) Assad, "Syria is not for those who have its nationality, but to those who defend it" Rozanah Radio, July 2015 ,26 on Waslah on February 2018 ,24.
- (29) The Syrian government counts the Syrian citizens, local grape, December 2017 ,14, see Waslah on February ,24 2018.
- (30) See: The Central Office for Statistics.
- (31) See: summary for numbers and information on the UNHCR website.
- (32) Ibid.
- (33) Ammar Dioub, "Elimination of the Revolution, but not Demographic Change," Arabi Jadid, August 2016 ,31 on Waslah on February 2018 ,22.
- (34) See: "Massacre carried out by Assad regime with blade weapons," report number 39, the national coalition for the revolutionary forces and Syrian opposition, 2013.
- (35) Chulov, Martin, «Iran repopulates Syria with Shia Muslims to help tighten regime's control», The Guardian, 14 Jan 2017.
- (36) See: "Agreement of the four cities," Jazeera net, April 2017 ,13 on Waslah on February 2018 ,23.
- (37) See: Abdulmumin Zain Uddin: Demographic Change in Syria: Forced Displacement in light of the Revolution, Bridges Study Center, Ghazi Aintab, 1st edition, 2016, p4. See: Waslah on February 2018 ,23.
- (38) See: "Demographic Change in Syria," Advice, November 2016 ,28 on Waslah on February 2018 ,22.
- (39) Legislative Order 66 is an ideal example, see: Tom Rollins: "Legislative Order 66: Assad's Plan to Reconstruct Syria," April 2017 ,20. See: Waslah on February 2018 ,22.
- (40) The researcher estimation of the number of displaced people from the different areas in Syria: Homs 500 thousand, Aleppo 1.5 million, Damascus countryside 500 thousand so far, Aleppo countryside 500 thousand, Hama 300 thousand, Damascus 750 thousand, Latakia 250 thousand, Idlib and its countryside 300 thousand, and Raqa 450 thousand.
- (41) Imad Bozo, "Delusions of Demographic Change in Syria," Orient, January 2016 ,13 on Waslah on February ,23 2018.
- (42) Firas Elias, "Iran Military Ideology," The Washington Institute for Middle East Policy, November 2017 ,15 on Waslah on February 2016 ,23.
- (43) Babai: Bigham Mahi Ha, p436.
- (44) Michael Eisenstadt , "Managing Escalation Dynamics with Iran in Syria- and Beyond," The Washington Institute for Middle East Policy, July 2017 ,5 on Waslah on February 2016 ,23.