

= Nasib al @-@ Bakri =

Nasib al @-@ Bakri (1888 ? 1966) was a Syrian politician and nationalist leader in the first half of the 20th century . He played a major role in establishing al @-@ Fatat , an underground organization which sought the independence and unity of the Ottoman Empire 's Arab territories . As the chief envoy between al @-@ Fatat and the Hejaz @-@ based Hashemites , al @-@ Bakri became a close aide to Emir Faisal when the latter became King of Syria following the success of the 1916 Arab Revolt . Al @-@ Bakri opposed the establishment of the French Mandate of Syria and became one of the chief commanders of the Great Syrian Revolt , leading the rebels ' brief capture of Damascus . He escaped a death warrant in Syria in 1927 , but returned the following year after being amnestied .

Al @-@ Bakri served as a representative of Damascus in the Syrian Parliament between 1932 and 1946 . He was one of the main coordinators of the 1936 general strike and became Vice President of the National Bloc . He defected to join Abd al @-@ Rahman Shahbandar 's party in 1938 . During the post @-@ independence period , al @-@ Bakri was appointed Syria 's ambassador to Jordan but resigned in 1953 in protest against Adib al @-@ Shishakli 's seizure of power . The following year , he became President of the People 's Party , but retired in 1957 .

= = Early life = =

Nasib was born in Damascus in 1888 to father ' Ata al @-@ Bakri . Nasib was the second oldest of five sons . ' Ata was an influential official in the city and district councils of Damascus between the 1890s and 1914 , and was one of the most prominent Arabs to serve in the imperial Ottoman court of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in Constantinople . The al @-@ Bakri family were Sunni Muslims and claimed descent from the Islamic prophet Muhammad . They were landowners , possessing lands , homes and commercial venues in their native al @-@ Shaghour quarter and in al @-@ Qabun , a village in the Ghouta countryside of Damascus . They also owned land in Jaramana , a Druze village outside of Damascus and maintained good relations with the local Druze chiefs .

When Abdul Hamid II was overthrown during the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 , ' Ata lost his favor from the central authorities because of his closeness with the deposed sultan and criticized the revolutionary officers . Consequently , the al @-@ Bakri family realigned itself with Arab nationalists in Syria who opposed the increased Turkish nationalist efforts in the Arabic @-@ speaking territories of the empire . ' Ata had also developed close ties with the Hashemites of the Hejaz . In 1909 he hosted the Sharif of Mecca , Hussein bin Ali , his brother Nasir , and Abdullah , Sharif Hussein 's son , in his Damascus home .

Nasib attended Maktab Anbar , a preparatory school in Damascus that attracted the children of the elite and produced several future Arab nationalists . In 1912 , Nasib graduated from the al @-@ Sultaniya School of Beirut . When Sharif Hussein 's son , Faisal , visited Syria in early 1916 , he lodged in the al @-@ Bakris ' summer house in al @-@ Qabun , outside of Damascus . Prior to this , Nasib and his brothers Fawzi and Sami had joined the budding al @-@ Fatat movement , an underground society advocating Arab independence from the Ottomans . Nasib had become the movement 's secretary .

= = Leader in Syrian independence movement = =

= = = Ally of the Hashemites = = =

In 1915 , Nasib hosted Faisal at his Ghouta country house and invited him join al @-@ Fatat , which he reportedly agreed to . At the same time , al @-@ Bakri organized a meeting between him , some members of al @-@ Fatat , and the Druze chiefs of the Hauran , Hussein and Sultan al @-@ Atrash with the intention of gaining Druze support for the planned Arab rebellion against the Ottomans (the Druze had launched several uprisings against the Ottomans prior) . The meeting

concluded with the Druze offering Faisal and the nationalists their backing , though short of any military support . The meeting was the first of its kind between the Hashemites and the Druze , and afterward Faisal appointed al @-@ Bakri to be his personal secretary and his envoy to the Druze , a post he would serve until 1920 .

In the summer of 1916 , amid World War I , Sharif Hussein launched the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottomans from Mecca with the backing of the British military . Al @-@ Bakri joined the revolt and moved to the Hejaz where he served as a channel between al @-@ Fatah based in Damascus and the Hashemite forces leading the uprising . When the Ottomans were defeated in 1918 and Arab and British forces reached Damascus , Faisal would soon become the King of Syria and al @-@ Bakri served as one of his advisers . The next year al @-@ Bakri co @-@ founded the first legal political party in Faisal 's Syria , the pan @-@ Arabist al @-@ Istiqlal (" Independence ") which sought to unify all the former Ottoman @-@ held Arab territories under the leadership of the Hashemites . During this period until 1920 , al @-@ Bakri was a member of the Syrian National Congress as a representative of Damascus .

France invaded and began occupying Syria in 1919 and following the Battle of Maysalun in July 1920 , Faisal was exiled and the kingdom annulled . Al @-@ Bakri left for Amman in Transjordan , which was under the authority of Faisal 's brother King Abdullah . Al @-@ Bakri would later serve as Abdullah 's aide in 1921 , a position he held for about two years before returning to Syria after the French issued amnesty for political exiles . On his return , he became a member of al @-@ Shahbandar 's People 's Party and actively sought to topple the French authorities in Syria and align the country with the ruling Hashemites in Iraq , Transjordan and the Hejaz . The Hashemites were driven out of the latter in 1925 by the Saudis .

= = = Role in Great Syrian Revolt = = =

The summer of 1925 also saw the beginning of the Great Syrian Revolt , launched by Sultan Pasha al @-@ Atrash in the Jabal al @-@ Arab region in southern Syria . After Atrash 's men destroyed a French column at al @-@ Kafr , al @-@ Bakri received a letter from al @-@ Atrash on 23 July calling on the nationalists in Damascus to join the revolt ; al @-@ Bakri subsequently joined . Following the French defeat at the Battle of Mazraa on 3 August , al @-@ Bakri began working with Abd al @-@ Ghaffar al @-@ Atrash , the Druze chief of al @-@ Suwayda , to advance the revolt to other parts of the country outside of Hauran . Al @-@ Bakri set up a meeting between the Damascus @-@ based nationalists and Sultan al @-@ Atrash at his home in al @-@ Qabun , after which the two sides agreed to work together to uproot the French from Syria .

Following the meeting , al @-@ Bakri conferred with al @-@ Shahbandar , who agreed to bring Damascus into the revolt , although this initial attempt did not materialize . As al @-@ Atrash 's men headed towards Damascus to launch their attack against French forces there , al @-@ Bakri assembled some 260 armed volunteers from various neighborhoods and villages in and around Damascus , including al @-@ Shaghour , Bab Musalla , al @-@ Midan , and Jaramana . Al @-@ Bakri maintained particularly close ties to Hasan al @-@ Kharrat , the local boss (qabaday) of al @-@ Shaghur and a friend of the al @-@ Bakri family . In early August , upon al @-@ Bakri 's urging , al @-@ Kharrat formed a militia , which would become one of the most effective rebel bands in the country . When the French authorities were informed of nationalist rebel plans , they began a wide @-@ scale arrest campaign in the city on 27 August , detaining nearly all of Damascus 's nationalist leaders and spokesmen , although al @-@ Bakri , his brothers , and al @-@ Shahbandar managed to evade arrest .

He participated in attacks alongside Druze warriors against French positions and offices in the Hauran , and of all the rebel commanders from Damascus , al @-@ Bakri was the most respected among the Druze . As fighting between rebels and French forces in the Ghouta escalated , al @-@ Bakri devised an operation to wrest control of Damascus from the French by capturing the citadel and the Azm Palace . The former housed the city 's French garrison , while the latter housed the French Mandate High Commissioner Maurice Sarrail . Al @-@ Bakri requested reinforcements from al @-@ Atrash and his men , but they were occupied by fighting in the Hauran and notified al @-@

Bakri that any help would be delayed . Al @-@ Bakri decided to move ahead nonetheless . On 17 October , he assembled al @-@ Kharrat 's group and another group of rebels from al @-@ Midan and Jaramana inside Damascus . The next day al @-@ Kharrat launched the operation .

While al @-@ Kharrat 's men managed to capture the Azm Palace and the police station in Bab Saghir , al @-@ Bakri led a band of 200 fighters from their base in al @-@ Midan to raid an Armenian refugee camp in al @-@ Qadam , killing several Armenian refugees . The rebels accused the Armenians ? who along with the Circassians were typically allied with the French authorities ? of participating in the French military assaults against several Ghouta villages in the preceding weeks . After attacking al @-@ Qadam , al @-@ Bakri 's forces swept through the city , capturing the police stations at Bab al @-@ Jabiyah , Bab Musalla and Qanawat . With each captured neighborhood , their forces increased in size as enthusiastic bystanders joined in the attacks .

Sarrail , who was not in Damascus at the time of the rebel assault , ordered aerial bombardment of the city , leading to the destruction of whole neighborhoods and the deaths of hundreds of Damascus residents . By 24 October , the rebels were routed , and al @-@ Bakri escaped . He became the target of criticism among other rebel leaders , namely Said al- ' As . Al- ' As stated that al @-@ Bakri sought personal glory when he decided to prematurely launch a mostly uncoordinated attack with small numbers of armed volunteers , instead of waiting for the arrival of al @-@ Atrash 's reinforcements , who numbered around 1 @,@ 000 . Al @-@ Bakri was the only member of the Damascus nationalist elite to directly participate in the fighting on the ground .

In early December , al @-@ Bakri chaired a meeting of rebel leaders in the Ghouta village of Saqba . During the meeting , he launched scathing criticism of Ramadan al @-@ Shallash , the rebel commander from Deir ez @-@ Zor , condemning him for levying heavy fines and other fees against the residents of the villages of Douma , al @-@ Qisa , Harran al @-@ Awamid and al @-@ Midaa which had been captured by the rebels . However , these taxes were almost entirely directed at the major landowners and city elites , rather than the commoners or peasants . ' As defended al @-@ Shallash as a skilled commander , criticized al @-@ Bakri 's leadership and accused him of holding " secret hatreds and ambitions " . Nonetheless , al @-@ Bakri and his ally al @-@ Kharrat managed to have al @-@ Shallash " expelled from the rebellion " during the meeting , and stripped of his arms and insignia . However , subsequent French bombardment of Saqba allowed al @-@ Shallash to escape punishment . Al @-@ Kharrat was killed in a French raid two weeks later , while al @-@ Shallash defected to the French following his expulsion . Al @-@ Bakri 's younger brother As 'ad was killed in action in 1926 .

= = = Politician during French Mandatory rule = = =

The revolt dissipated by June 1927 . Al @-@ Bakri was sentenced to death in absentia by French military tribunal . Consequently , he fled to Amman in Transjordan . In March 1928 , al @-@ Bakri , his brother Fawzi , and Fares al @-@ Khoury were amnestied by the French authorities and the al @-@ Bakri family 's properties , which had been bombed by the French during the revolt , were restored to them . According to historian Peter A. Shambrook , al @-@ Bakri 's inclusion on the amnesty list was surprising for two reasons : he maintained a strong relationship with France 's chief rivals in the region , the Hashemites and their British patrons , and he held " unrivaled " influence among the bosses of " the popular quarters of Damascus " . The French sought to divide the ranks of the rebels and the nationalist politicians by pardoning some leaders and blacklisting others like al @-@ Atrash , al @-@ Shahbandar , and Shukri al @-@ Quwatli . Al @-@ Bakri 's relations with the latter two subsequently grew tense as he accused them of diverting funds for the revolt to their personal ventures .

He and Hashim al @-@ Atassi founded the National Bloc political party . It sought to use diplomatic means to end French rule . He was a part of the 1928 Constitutional Assembly , helping draft a constitution for the Syrian Republic . Al @-@ Atassi appointed him Vice President of the National Bloc in 1930 . Al @-@ Bakri successfully ran for parliament as a representative of Damascus on the National Bloc 's ticket in 1932 , after winning a run @-@ off vote by a large margin .

In January 1936 , Syrian nationalist sentiments became incensed as the French authorities

suspended parliament and appointed the pro @-@ French president Taj al @-@ Din al @-@ Hasani . Following the arrest of some nationalist leaders , a general strike was declared against the French Mandate and President al @-@ Hasani . Speeches denouncing the arrests and colonialism were made at the Umayyad Mosque , after which demonstrators , including students and local youths , gathered at al @-@ Bakri 's home where they coordinated a march to the Serail (French government headquarters) . The protests were led by al @-@ Bakri , al @-@ Quwatli and Jamil Mardam Bey , but they were confronted by the security forces before leaving al @-@ Bakri 's street .

On 24 January , al @-@ Bakri led a sermon at the mosque calling for calm among the 3 @, @ 000 demonstrators in attendance . Nonetheless , some 300 left to attack French roadblocks and the police station at Souq al @-@ Hamidiyya , before withdrawing back into the mosque . One protester was killed and the following day , al @-@ Bakri led the funeral procession , which was attended by thousands of mourners . By mid @-@ February , unrest spread throughout Syria and the authorities clashed with Syrian protesters in several cities . The commander of the French Army of the Levant declared martial law and forbade public assemblies . Al @-@ Bakri was arrested and deported on 11 February .

He went on to win the election for his seat in 1936 , 1943 and 1947 . When al @-@ Atassi became president in 1936 , al @-@ Bakri became the chief leader of the National Bloc . The following year , he was appointed by al @-@ Atassi to serve as Governor of Jabal al @-@ Arab . In 1938 , he defected from the National Bloc to join the rival People 's Party led by his former colleague al @-@ Shahbandar . In the short @-@ lived 1939 cabinet of Prime Minister Lutfi al @-@ Haffar , Bakri was made justice minister , while in Prime Minister Khalid al @-@ Azm 's cabinet he served as national economy and agriculture minister .

= = Post @-@ independence career = =

After Syria became independent in 1946 , al @-@ Bakri joined the pro @-@ Western and Arab nationalist People 's Party . President al @-@ Atassi assigned him ambassador to Jordan , ruled by the Hashemites , after al @-@ Bakri refused the ambassadorial post to Saudi Arabia , a government that he opposed ideologically . Following Adib al @-@ Shishakli 's seizure of the presidency in 1953 , al @-@ Bakri resigned . After al @-@ Shishakli stepped down in 1954 , al @-@ Bakri became president of the People 's Party . He was unsuccessful in establishing a significant support base in Damascus and resigned from political life in April 1957 . He died in 1966 .