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**See also:** ĀDAM; CLIENTS AND CLIENTAGE; COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET; FRIDAY; HIJRA; NIGHT JOURNEY AND ASCENSION; PRAYER; QIBLA; WORSHIP.

CSABA OKVATH AND MUZAFFAR IQBAL

## CALUMNY

BUHTĀN, NAMĪMA, IFK

The article comprises the following sections: i. Definitions; ii. Against Maryam, Allah be well-pleased with her; iii. Against 'Ā'isha, Allah be well-pleased with her; iv. A Grievous Sin; v. Legal Consequences; and vi. Bibliography.

### Definitions

The most common Qur'ānic word for calumny is *buhṭān*, from the verbal root *b-h-t*, conveying the meaning of astonishment (*bahīta wa buhīta idhā taḥayyara*) (Ibn Manẓūr). The verb *buhīta* is used in Q 2:258 to express the meaning of being confounded (Rāghib): *Ibrāhīm said, "Allah causes the sun to rise from the east; cause it, then, to rise from the west!" Thereupon he who denied of the Truth was confounded* (fa-buhīta alladhī kafar). Explaining the meaning of the verbal root *b-h-t* and the various words derived from it, including *buhṭān*, Abū-l-Faḍl Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1312) says:

*Bahat al-rajul yabhatuh bahtan wa bahatan wa buhtānan fa-huwa bahhāt: he ascribed to him what [the latter] did not do; hence, he is confounded (mabhūt). Bahatah bahtan: came upon him unawares (akhadhahum baghtatan), as in the Mighty Revelation: Nay, it will come upon them unawares so that it will confound them (bal ta'tihim baghtatan fa-tabhatuhum)... Buhṭān means fabrication (iftirā').*

The same explanation of the link between calumny and astonishment is found in the exegetical literature. Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-310/839-923) says: “*Buhtān* means fabrication and falsehood (*fīrya wa kadhib*); it is a false statement that astonishes people because of its gravity” (*Tafsīr*, sub Q 4:20). *Buhtān* appears in six verses, five of which allude to allegations of adultery or fornication (Q 4:20, 156; 24:16; 33:58; 60:12) (see ADULTERY AND FORNICATION) and the other to any false allegation: *And he who commits either a fault (khaṭī‘a) or a sin (ithm), and then casts (yarmi) the blame for it upon an innocent person, lays upon himself the burden of calumny (buhtān) and a flagrant sin* (Q 4:112). Most exegetes hold that *khaṭī‘a* denotes a wrong committed unintentionally and *ithm* a wrong committed intentionally (Ṭabarī and Rāzī, *Tafsīrs*; Ālūsī, *Rūh*). In Q 33:58 *buhtān* is described as a “flagrant sin” (*ithm mubīn*): *And those who malign believing men and believing women who have done no wrong surely lay upon themselves the burden of calumny and a flagrant sin; it is the “gravest of lies” (afḥash al-kadhib)* (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*). The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, distinguished calumny from backbiting by saying: “If he is actually as you say, then you have committed backbiting (*q.v.*) against him (*ighṭabṭah*); but if that is not in him, you have calumniated him (*bahattah*)” (Muslim, *Birr wal-ṣila*, *taḥrīm al-ghība*).

False accusation presupposes a fabricated statement (*iftirā‘*, from *f-r-y*), thus in Q 60:12—which refers to falsely ascribing children to those who are not their real fathers, *they will not bring forth a calumny which they have fabricated between their hands and feet*—the phrase *fabricated between their hands and feet* alludes to the birth of the child because at the time of his birth, he is found between the hands and feet of the mother (Ālūsī). It also implies the prohibited nature of making a false statement as if it were true (*namīmā*) (Rāzī). More generally, the Qur’ān uses derivatives of the verbal root *f-r-y* for falsely ascribing a statement to Allah, often used in conjunction with *kadhib* (falsehood) (*cf.* Q 3:94; 6:21; 29:68) or *ifk* (an astonishing, false accusation) (Q 25:4; 34:43) (see FALSEHOOD).

The noun *ifk* (from the root <sup>2</sup>*f-k*, *lit.* turning away; Ibn Manẓūr), is used twice (Q 24:11-12) for the false accusation against ‘Ā’isha, Allah be well-pleased with her (see below and WIVES OF THE PROPHET). “*Ifk* is the gravest type of fabricated and false statement; it is also said that *ifk* is *buhtān* which is something that you do not perceive until it comes upon you unawares” (Rāzī). Q 25:4 uses *ifk* in a quote of the pagan allegation about the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace: *Those who*

*do not believe say: This is nothing but a great lie (ifk) which he has forged (iftarāhu), and Q 34:43 quotes their claim that the Qur’ān is a “forged falsehood” (ifk muftarā).* In the same tone, the Qur’ān calls ascription of a son to Allah Most High an *ifk*: *Indeed it is one of their falsehoods (min ifkihim) that they say: Allah has begotten. And indeed they are liars!* (Q 37:151-152). Q 46:28 applies the same term to the false beliefs of the people of ‘Ād (*q.v.*): *This was their lie (ifkuhum) and what they had fabricated (wa mā kānū yaftarūn).* The Active participle *affāk* (liar) occurs twice in conjunction with *athīm* (sinner) (Q 26:222 and 45:7).

Derivatives of the word *ramy* (from *r-m-y*, *lit.* “throwing,” as in casting stones or arrows) are used when such a fabrication is ascribed to someone (Ibn Manẓūr). Q 24:4, 6, and 23 use such derivatives for leveling false sexual allegations, while Q 4:112 uses the verbal form of both *ramy* and *buhtān*: *And he who commits a fault or a sin and then throws (yarmi) the blame thereof on an innocent person lays upon himself the burden of a false charge (buhtān) and a flagrant sin.*

Another related word is *qadhf*, which also signifies ‘throwing’ as well as ‘accusing’ and ‘ascribing’, but connotes greater force than *ramy* (Ibn Manẓūr). That is why *qadhf* is the preferred juridical term for false allegations of illicit sexual intercourse, the gravest of all allegations because it destroys a person’s integrity (see below) (Ibn ‘Abidīn, *Radd al-muḥṭār* 6:79-80). There are nine Qur’ānic occurrences of words from this root, all conveying the meaning of allegation (Q 20:39x2, 87; 21:18; 33:26; 34:48, 53; 37:8; 59:2).

Closely related to *buhtān* is the term *namm/namīmā*, literally meaning to present a false statement as if it were true. The Qur’ān mentions it among the characteristic features of the pagan leaders: the *fault-finder* (*hammāz*) *who goes around slandering (mashshā‘ bi-namīm)* (Q 68:11). *Nammām* is used for the one who cannot keep secrets to himself, and passes it on to others (*alladhī lā yumsik al-aḥādīth wa lam yaḥfazhā*) (Ibn Manẓūr). The Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, said: “It suffices for someone to be a liar that he talks about everything that he hears” (Muslim, *Muqāddima*, *al-nahy ‘an al-ḥādīth bi-kull mā samī‘a*).

Thus the wider concept of calumny encompasses any fabricated statement, whether in matters of belief or actions, against Allah Most High or any human being. As such, it includes, *inter alia*, ascribing partners to Allah (Q 6:14-24), the claim of having received revelation (Q 6:93), and allowing the prohibited or prohibiting the permissible (Q 16:116). More narrowly,