

# **Human Rights & Culture of Citizenship**

## **Critical View**

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### **Introduction**

It is often mistaken that the human rights are honored, and the same illusion is thought by those optimists believing in the important role of such flashy mottos invading all media channels regarding freedom, equality and democracy, in promoting human rights culture. Those are the ones who keep echoing these mottos suffer fragile human awareness for believing that such slogans are capable of changing the world, of supporting culture of human rights, and establishing an ideal world detaching itself from all discriminatory practices. History shows that human rights are not merely uttered words for fulfilling humans' daily needs, however, such practices and situations require an objective support for establishing the humanitarian cultural foundations to regain its natural right of human dignity.

The universal declaration of human rights is a torch light guiding the international community in formulating the international conventions announced on the tenth of December 1948<sup>(1)</sup>; as an international event celebrated annually. This date has become a turning point for enhancing humanitarian dignity and awareness all over the globe hence, human awareness has leaped from its limited national borders towards an international space according to the established criteria; eventually the human rights practices are no longer internal affairs but became an internationally watched and trended subject matter. The principles are set for determining the level of human respect as well support human rights through international rules for all the world to accept that such principles representing an elevated ethical and moral basis throughout the evolution of freedom across generations.

Despite the lapse of half a century since the issuance of the universal declaration of human rights followed by several conventions yet, humans are still suffering dual oppression whether internally or externally; besides to the continuous external assaults committed by big countries that claim sticking to freedom values and spread of human rights culture (as in both cases of Iraq and Palestine)<sup>(2)</sup> whilst suffering internally from the tyranny of rule; leading to the burial of freedom, annulation of democratic principles and human values, and deepening of the dictatorship culture, crushed the belongingness culture<sup>(3)</sup>, also contributed in losing hope in the future leading to widening the backwardness gap and the loss of ability in facing the development

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challenges moreover, such dependency culture affected these countries in obeying the central powers which, throughout its exploitation history, were able to possess the elements of power that eventually facilitated the control over the decisions of these marginal countries; such countries surrendered to the overwhelming powers serving the aims and interests of external countries. Some historians questioned the usefulness of the announced international declarations however, they are wasted in this world whilst being claimed as made for the sake of achieving equality between all the globe. Most of the “Third World” researchers and some of the “First World” intellectuals have proposed deep remarks and significant criticism in reflecting their critical views of the international conventions; hence they stated that the announced principles vanish in reality as the spirit of the universal declaration of human rights has lost its importance “spiritual loss” due to that “oppressive tendency that often afflicts the “powerful”; the powerful usually empower themselves as the owner of authority and reign.

It is apparent, through the historical experiences, that the political systems fail for marginalizing social rights such as: social justice and human equality.

The actual incidents have reflected the declaration of flashy mottos (such as: political freedom, governance, people’s rule, neighbors in the one world, democracy, equality, eradication of discrimination and other terminologies in the era of “**globalization**” or the so-called “**chaotic era**” without practicing any actual activities in reality or freedom culture or public awareness of its practical methods that eventually fail on real grounds, also leads to the evacuation of such mottos of its positive contents creating a shaken trust between the country and its people from one side and the social institutions from the other side.

Immature practices of some countries lacking the effective cultural support for establishing the democratic concept apart from an overwhelming past heritage repelling any development and backwardness; all combine to negate the human right notion; such a concept that has, for a long period of time, attracted the attention of intellectuals and philosophers to realize its importance where the philosophers of ethics have affiliated it with their own field of study likewise the religious men have attached it with all the religious legislations <sup>(4)</sup> as well the legal science completely realizes that the rights are closely related to the humanitarian justice hence, it shall not be astonishing to find law men exert efforts for defining the nature of right for highlighting its significance within the law field. Despite the trials of the philosophers of ethics and law men for setting general regulations for an integrated theory regarding the value of rights as well to its principles in humans’ lives in general and law in specific; they are still unable to determine the nature of right that is governed by new overwhelming economic, cultural and political mechanisms through which the strong side

has the upper hand whether economically or culturally in addition to the other altering conditions that contradicts with the right criteria; in a way that guarantees the dependency of the weak side that eventually strengthen its power ignited from the fragility of other weaker ones.

People who seek to keep or regain their rights are following an elevated humanitarian goal that attributes them to virtues of bravery and whoever resigns them is often described as coward. Human rights statements have been frequently expressed in all the announced and private discussion regarding the legal, political, social and economic human rights. Despite that they tend to bring about the rights subject in every discussion relating to the social topics yet, we barely find any organized endeavor that accurately specifies rights definition, types, indications and criteria.

There is a keen goal towards achieving human rights in all societies to be practiced fairly in the daily lives of individuals which is considered a public call for society, as the intellectual and philosophical views highlight the fact that the human rights are categorized underneath the basic traits of any just political system considering it a fixed and an eternal administration for granting every individual their rights. Freedom and right of choice are considered of the vital rights that determined the relation between human and God as well their attitude with others moreover, determined the guiding path and method adopted by people for the enhancement and prevention of human rights throughout time<sup>(5)</sup>.

The divine religions guide Man with methods of life and regulate the relationship between individuals and each other and the ruler on the basis of justice and compassion, cooperation, equality whilst rejecting any forms of discrimination between humans on the basis of interest or benefit, or sex, color in the sense of allowing dialogue with the other and call for respecting all human values endorsed by heavens<sup>(6)</sup>. The reciprocal relationship between Man and the universe was - is still - forming the core importance of philosophers, political and social intellectuals in which their concepts and principles have contributed to glorify the values and elevated examples followed by humans for achieving practically in his relationship with others and with authority moreover, their ideas have contributed in directing human revolutions and establishing laws and national legislations<sup>(7)</sup>.

Human rights are affiliated to comprehensive connotation of social justice in numerous types. Justice aims at strengthening the coexistence of individuals within a unified society where every member is availed equal opportunities for growth and knowledge to the maximum abilities they can attain. Thus, Human rights are connected with the efforts aiming to avail such opportunities and equal prevention of every individual within political and social systems that guarantee a fair distribution of rights on people on non-discriminatory basis; the social justice is conceptually based on the maturity of "right" and "equality".

The principles of equality and non-discrimination belong to the basic elements of human rights<sup>(8)</sup> that basically target the marginal categories who fall under segregation practices - ethnic or gender - which requires the establishment of active contributions for the poor to eradicate poverty. This is one of the most difficult human right principles due to its link to the democratic process that requires assuring democratic practices in the social system based on a constitutional tendency for conducting fair and free elections however, the participation of the poor doesn't require only a democratic process but also calls for variant preparations to emerge from decision-makers for enabling those poor participate actively.

We find that the application of human rights methodologies is not only related to the internal affairs of the one country however, it became a global matter hence, all the international development aids nowadays are closely linked with the level of compliance of the developing countries to these rights.

### **First: Human Rights & Strategies of Combating Poverty**

The principles of equality and non-discrimination highlight some reality relating to the fact that<sup>(9)</sup> poverty is basically connected to discriminatory practices between humans explicitly or implicitly whilst reconsidering developmental strategies for combating poverty<sup>(10)</sup> that emerge from the right of the poor towards a real contribution in the development process; as citizens' rights in development are substantial rights whilst considering the integration of the political and civil rights from the one side along with the cultural, social and economic rights from the other side aiming to diminish the superior treatment of the upper classes in justifying the marginality of some social categories for lacking the ability of creation or assert that both the political and civil rights require special abilities and individual skills which are not sorted luxurious but needed in achieving the rest of rights<sup>(11)</sup>. Human rights are represented in the rights and demands that cannot be achieved apart from a society who are still getting acquainted to a comprehensive developmental process; the development is deeply related to the actual achievement of human rights that cannot be reached apart from a hierarchal society organized by a comprehensive development process. By applying this equation (comprehensive development & human rights), people shall enjoy the values of rights through the enforcement of equality and social peace which necessitate planning programs made for developing the awareness of civilians with their human rights as well enhancing the cultural values regarding these rights through spreading them widely amongst people in support of freedom, equality and justice.<sup>(12)</sup>

## **Second: Spreading the Culture of Rights & Duties – as a Vital Demand**

Human rights culture is one of the most important cases affecting the awareness of the public hence, there is a close relation that can hardly be negated between the human rights culture and its practices relating to rights and duties in the light of the continuous exerted efforts for establishing these rights that guide citizens towards an active contribution in society. By respecting these rights and contribution in strengthening the legislative practices of these rights shall positively impact the development of a public political awareness as well knowledge of a correct democratic approach hence, it is difficult to separate human rights from one side and the national as well international legal and legislative cultures from the other side because strengthening of this culture is related to setting the foundations of its entire premises with all its guarantees of practices that eventually calls for the necessity of the enhancement of human rights since childhood to respect these values that shall positively support the human rights atmosphere in the light of the continuous adaptations of its related constitutional and legislative guarantees.<sup>(13)</sup>

Those who are responsible for spreading human rights culture must consider the nature of cultures in various nations through adapting to their communities as well setting the adequate practicing mechanisms likewise the constitutions and laws must cope with the said through utilizing new concepts of adaptation with the new world open to “globalization” that diminished distances and times where all borders mingle between countries and nations, distances approach nearer which has conveyed due to the existence of media and technology into a “small universal village” inside which various types of culture has formed with unified features and structure of values planned for in the care of “elitism” away from the social private cultural features of various countries and nations hence, the effectiveness of practicing and applying the human rights is based on the strength level of the related cultures to such rights to form public awareness of human rights and duties in enabling individuals to direct towards practice and respect of these rights that shall not be achieved except through the existence of an adequate culture as well provide the enhancing mechanisms for its support.<sup>(14)</sup>

The foregoing illustrates the important pillars of strengthening human rights within the humans’ sentiments, being part of decision-making, effective contribution of which requires providing trainings to citizens for gaining the adequate skills to practice these rights through organizations which work for supporting humans. The private interests of individuals unite with the public ones through deciding on whatever is correct, adequate and vital for their own interests and their country without any pressures paving the way for **the formation of the right and duty culture** usually measured by the extent of their ability in practicing the principles of freedom, equality and social justice and the extent of their satisfaction of the application and practices methods in their real life. Societies that lack the privilege of

freedom and equality are not considered healthy environment for the growth of efficient individuals as creativity can only stem out of minds that enjoy psychological comfort through their trust in just systems in their societies which favor no citizen over the other unless by what they provide of good deeds that benefits them with interests.

### **Third: The struggle for legalization of human rights**

Leaders of European communities obtain political roles in parallel to economic strength and free capitalistic system; knowing that this role has undergone through tough endeavors in the course of legalizing these rights as natural requirements of humans. Thus, the human rights theory is an outcome of humans' struggle in the way of legalizing human conditions which contributed in establishing the foundation of freedom theory and the supremacy of the new concept of human and the globe until these concepts are spread in the world taking various forms according to the norms and extent of acceptance in every society.<sup>(15)</sup>

The American declaration of human rights issued on 1766 A.D and the French declaration issued on 1789 A.D are considered the first instruments that consolidated these rights within national declarations as they express specific experiences of these nations including international conflicts and world wars forming various violations; as a consequence, the International Committee of the Red Cross is established for the protection of humans during any armed conflicts as well provide help for the victims of wars moreover, the League of Nations faced various problems, minorities, human trafficking, besides the role of the International Labour Organization is for defending the labor's rights. By the end of world war II, the United Nations issued its international convention for the prevention of human rights as the first issued declaration in acknowledgment of individuals rights; since that time the path of enhancing human rights has never ceased through the issuance of various agreements, conventions and guiding principles by the United Nations and other international and regional organizations.<sup>(16)</sup>

### **Fourth: Globalization & Three Generations of Human Rights**

Globalization has made the world a small global village where the prevention of human rights and freedom has become a joint responsibility between the international & national communities as well the civil societal institutions and human rights organizations in the light of the public opinion that is characterized by the awareness and culture on the international and local levels. Human rights concept has undergone numerous international transitions throughout its historical path targeting certain conceptual depth known as "**The Three Generations of Human rights**" through the issuance of the universal declaration of human rights acknowledged by the United

Nations General Assembly on the tenth of December 1948 A.D where the **First Generation** emphasizes the individual rights relating to the right for living, safety, eradication of torture, right of movement, freedom of speech however, this declaration has not stipulated the right of nations to determine their destinies nor the political and economic rights of communities yet, such rights are stated in the international covenant on political and civil rights as well the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights issued on 1969 A.D to represent the **Second Generation** of human rights. Despite all of that, the universal declaration of human rights has been viewed as an important event<sup>(17)</sup> and became a subject of debate between different concepts and ideologies. There is a universal referential instrument for humans regardless Man's gender or region or religion or ethnicity. This is not an obligatory declaration yet, its strength is derived from its ethical context with its impact on many national constitutions and internal laws of countries. Since the issuance of this declaration, it has been considered as the foundation but not the entire premises which made the United Nations General Assembly issue a subsequent convention to the aforesaid declaration specifying in details – in an obligatory manner – the limits for every country to abide by in the fields of applying human rights and freedom; besides to imposing some kind of international supervision regarding such application however, this supervision has not been implemented due to various interrelated factors that we shall not tackle now<sup>(18)</sup>.

The emergence of the universal declaration of human rights on 1948 A.D led to the formation of numerous organizations that focused on spreading awareness of human rights and defending the oppressed and prisoners of views for instance; Amnesty International Organization established on 1961 A.D which targets the prevention of human rights regardless any ideological or doctrinal conflicts; that received Noble Prize on 1977 A.D. The Arab Organization for Human Rights established on 1983 A.D in Cairo to deepen the awareness of citizens of their legitimate rights. On 1989 A.D, The Arab Institute for Human Rights was established targeting the awareness of human rights culture in the Arab world.

The **First Generation** focused generally on the freedom principle, yet intellectuals agree that most of its rights though seem vital, are characterized with negativity for only focusing on the civil and political rights back then however, the **Second Generation** highlights equality principle thus seen as positive rights for including all of the social, economic, and cultural rights in addition to guaranteeing the social justice and freedom, such rights have availed individuals the right of participation in the general social, economic and cultural lives from negativity to positivity with its vital impact on performing changes in the human rights culture that has altered from a defensive situation into a positive situation in support of rights to provide physical and intangible requirements as well participate equally in the

production and distribution of resources as a result of the development of social and political awareness of the human rights culture and the basic achievement of economic development in the advanced industrial countries.

In the developing countries; the scale of need associated with exploitation led to the formation of collective vision for the social and economic rights that may exceed the individual level reaching to the national and regional levels guided by an international system in prevention of human rights which invited the emergence of the **Third Generation** of rights through relying on the relationships between nations hence, the collaborative principle shall be the central pillar on which all the legal and human rights justifications are based however, human rights can hardly be achieved whilst surrounded by ignorance and poverty as well the lack of the least elements of dignified life thus, the Third Generation of human rights is thought of to represent the **right for development**<sup>(19)</sup>.

The importance of people's awareness of "**Solidarity Culture**" is intensified between the three generations of human rights. Despite the reference of human rights in many international independent instruments yet they are regarded as one integrated unit. This vision must imply the definition of human duties where the human duties convention is not too far to be issued in fulfilling to the indivisible principle of human rights where such principle has been deep rooted in the late years of the twentieth century.

### **Fifth: General Analysis & Observations**

The focus of nations, countries and the international forums on the human rights is increased yearly hence, such rights have occupied sophisticated position in countries under the supremacy of law and have become a distinguishing feature of the democratic systems that revolve entirely around a sole axis which is human dignity based on two substantial pillars known as "Freedom & Equality"<sup>(20)</sup>.

We have to emphasize on the human rights concept in an accurate and inclusive manner including social or cultural or economic or political human rights whilst focusing on one aspect of these rights is considered an explicit distortion of its definition and content hence, those who are interested in this concept are required to search for the inclusive vision and the accurate definition of human rights especially in such a global atmosphere where most communities have lost their humanity due to the negative impacts of the innovative phase and the unprecedented material progress in history whereas such phase became critical social subject and ethical matter for the post-modernism intellectuals and the need to conduct successful methods of research against the global competitiveness as well to the impact of globalization with its consequences of change and givens that require fair discussions between nations based on the human principles focusing on justice and equality<sup>(21)</sup>.



One can realize the below contemporary scientific applications of human rights:

- Lack of inclusive and accurate definition of human rights as mostly are focused on, especially in the late years, the endeavors of applying specific criteria of some principles such as: democracy, political participation, women & children rights only.
- Freedom of speech, expression and organization have been intensely focused on in our contemporary time.
- Other human rights have been marginalized on purpose as well other rights relating to social, cultural, life and economic, health, education, residential rights reflecting apparent a decline that can never be apprehended.
- The human rights organizations on international, Arabic, and national levels have worked to observe the political remarks in the contained articles without applying any tracing to actual daily life problems represented in the unemployment, illiteracy and ignorance, health, education, employment, and clean environment for improving the standard of life.
- The deliberate marginalization of the basic human rights by the multinational organizations<sup>(22)</sup>.
- The explicit practice of double standards especially in the non-Arab countries towards Islamic and Arab countries. Double standard is increasingly felt profoundly in the nations of these countries. There are numerous evidences that manifest this feeling for instance the Palestinian nation rights that are abducted as well the Serbs violations in Bosnia that are considered historical crimes; war crimes that are displayed repeatedly due to the America's invasion to Iraq<sup>(23)</sup>; in addition to Middle East conflicts, "Arab Spring", coercive migrations, negative inhumane responses for the wasted human rights that have once been raised slogans by the Western countries which apparently witness the discriminatory culture that characterize the Western personality in these countries described as "Greatest".
- Double Standards notion is not just a contemporary matter however it has extended roots since old times especially after appointing the United States of America as the police of the world. The USA signed on the political and civil human rights conventions on 1996 A.D without signing on the economic, social and cultural human rights which illustrates various aspects most of which is the lack of social legislation in this country moreover, USA has not signed on the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women and children rights hence, both conventions are of importance regarding their emphasis on the economic support of these categories as well widening the social services for updating the societal development program; besides being substantial instruments for the development of human beings and an improvement for their type of life in the whole world<sup>(24)</sup>.

- Human rights are vital for guaranteeing the existence of humans on earth hence, they constitute part of the common humanitarian heritage including the concept of universality; if the universality principle is not viewed as part of human rights then it is impossible for the world to achieve any progress in the international prevention process whilst accepting this notion shall not mean the lack of faith in the multicultural existence or ignorance of the cultural variation hence, the religious, historical, regional and national aspects cannot be overseen in relation to human rights because the actual variations add to the universal concept of human rights through providing real assistance to such rights in drawing authentic universality features to guarantee understanding and respecting its presence as well considering its value emerging from the deep rooted characteristics of human nature which can be interpreted into dignity, sense of belonging, fraternity and solidarity.
- It is necessary to consider practically the **citizenship concept** in human rights<sup>(25)</sup> referring to the individual feeling of belongingness to their countries. Citizenship is a democratic spirit based on partnership in the rule and equality between people. On 1948 A.D, the universal declaration of human rights included special importance of the citizen's partnership in the general politics through three basic articles; article (19) stipulates freedom of speech that includes individuals' freedom of beliefs without any harassments ideas transmission and receipt through any methods regardless any limitations; article (20) states that "every person is entitled to participate in official communities whilst avoiding oppressing any one to belong to any community" and article (21) states "every person is entitled to participate in the general affairs of their country whether directly or through selecting representatives in absolute freedom to share in decision-making for instance: voting in elections, referendum on constitutional adjustments<sup>(26)</sup>.

We are desperately in need of practicing real democracy in all fields in a way that conforms with the variable societal and new universal values hence, the democracy is not a sole law but series of humanitarian values formed all over numerous historical eras that's why there shall be hardly any developmental occurrence in life nor guarantee to human rights away from the actual application of correct democracy<sup>(27)</sup>. Democracy is an old terminology that appeared with the existence of human race and the establishment of governments and countries used by people of different ideologies including all political, social, economic, intellectual categories. Democracy is not merely institutional or mechanical rules as represented in elections, memberships and voting...etc.; these mechanisms are not solely sufficient for the enhancement of democracy however, ethical and democracy values must go aside to cover all the intellectual and behavioral

aspects known as the cultural conditions or the standard requirements of democracy; most important of which revolve around respecting human rights of privacy and independence, political forgiveness and readiness to reach middle grounds, persuasion sustained by democratic methods.

Human rights and democratic practices are inseparable hence; democracy represents the optimal means of providing humans their natural rights; they are correlated notions or two faces of the one coin moreover, the democratic systems prevent human rights through the enhancement of these rights; they are two substantial pillars for developing humans' capabilities through their participation in fostering freedom and justice, equality and wise rule cultures.<sup>(28)</sup> Without believing in these notion, humans shall not achieve the “**effectiveness of the aware human self**” nor can overcome the challenges nor the natural catastrophes nor cease the fires of wars and conflicts over life's resources.

Without this required awareness of culture, the human freedom of thoughts will disappear, the morals will deteriorate, and opportunities for growth and nourishment will vanish. Citizenship, sense of belonging and social peace shall grow fragile. the best evidence thereof is that today's world is witnessing stagnation and backwardness, due to violation of human rights, and manipulation of conventional powers adopting practices contradicting the historical movement and progress. Such states cannot overcome this backwardness state so long the conventional notions still rule, consequently annulling the rights of individuals in their society, whilst manipulating all aspects of life and diminishing freedom by applying double standards, leading to inequality and lack of justice, which are replaced by a “backwardness curse” in all concrete and abstract aspects.

History has proven that the political systems sometimes neglect the social rights leading to lack of political freedom. The upcoming century may suggest integrated values of freedom, equality, justice and humanity without any traces of wars, aggression, or discrimination with the prevalence of fraternity between nations and exchange of interests. Is it about time to consider human's freedom as a means for achieving progress through the acknowledgment of the elevated cultures without oppression while asking these questions: **until when shall we keep calling for rights we are not aware of its cultures? Do we consider all the declared international conventions supporting human rights culture?** We need to establish an international social contract for enhancing equality and justice between nations through the eradication of segregation, aggression, terrorism and extremism before issuing condemnations. We need a social contract establishing all the universal human principles fostering acceptance and forgiveness as well enhancing the cultercity instead of the notions of “culture conflicts” and “end of history”; such contract shall support nations in determining their destinies and achieve progress.

## Sixth: A Vision for Enhancement of Human Rights Culture

It is useful to suggest the following regarding the support and enhancement of human rights culture in the hope of reducing the gap between saying & doing, concept & practice, theoretical speech & practical application:

- 1- Search in coordinating mechanisms between all the international human rights organizations for enhancing human rights culture as well enable nations to practice effective democracy and partnership in decision-taking along while highlighting transparency and wise rule.
- 2- Unveiling the challenges facing nations to practice their freedom and democracy serving the enhancement of human dignity in the sense of an organized relationship between the right to a dignified life and the social responsibility and duties.
- 3- Supporting a rational & calm dialogue for achieving the aspirations of dignified nations.
- 4- Continuous cultural & media support for nations to deepen the wise rule concept for guaranteeing the practice of rights and individual freedom based on a just law within the framework of a country of “citizenship”.
- 5- Improving programs that aim for the betterment of the marginal communities as well enabling them towards effective partnership in society.
- 6- Providing opportunities for obtaining information and transparency of all the cases of society.

Finally, I would like to assure that human rights are not merely set of rules and conventions relating to economic and political conditions but mainly a “**Culture**”.

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