

Knowledge & Democracy

(Published at Al-Quds Newspaper, 11 February 2003)

Democracy is a Palestinian public demand what ever we prefer to call it, like SHOORA* or majority rule, or public rule, what is most important is the main goal, which is the respect of the public, equality between people, and their participation in decision making around what concerns them, to serve their aims and not to discriminate between members of the community. Democracy is not an American or Israeli demand, but we cannot separate between what is called democracy and delivering the information to the public, to exchange roles between the leaders and the normal people, this cannot be achieved unless:

1. A law that protect the freedom of speech, the freedom of organizing, and the freedom of thinking, which is the main issues here.
2. An independent law system through the existence of a law that represent the interest of all community sectors without any difference between the community members due to their political believe, or religious, or race, or any tripe or group they belong too.
3. Forming an independent law team with high qualifications under the supervision of an independent law system which supervise the judges choosing criteria depending on their qualifications, and integrity, and not on their political believes, or religious, or race.
4. An executive authority which is elected in a real democratic way which provide each citizen the freedom of election without any pressure from any group or strong side that can influence the results of election.
5. An independent security agency (Police), highly qualified and trained, not from the military equipment side only, but from the educational side, holding the right skills to deal with the public in a high professional manner.
6. Free journalism, with high professionalism, that can balance between its national commitment, its professionalism, and its ability to prove it self, and not just work directly and indirectly to please the strong groups and political leaders of the society, but reflects public opinion, and not judge people or control them, it should be controlled by a highly professional, and responsible rules, and not by any political believe.

These above mentioned points are part of any democratic system, and the most important is to distribute authority between the independent law authority, being highly qualified, with high integrity, and the democratically elected executive authority, also the professional, strong, free journalism on one condition, that non of these authorities should form a power center, but to work on protecting the weak citizen, and compete to provide the citizens with its services without any discrimination between them, due to their political believes, organization, family, or any political side, and not to frighten them or pressure them in a direct or indirect ways, this is because the strength of the authority is in its ability to provide safety, security, stability, and respect for every citizen no matter how weak or unprotected by a person in a high position, or a family, or a certain group.

Because the main source of violence in any community is the lack of security by the normal citizen, and denying him/her the right to express his pain, or what is going on around him/her from issues, or his inability to participate in decision making for matters that concern him, or concerns his faith, so his balance becomes in secure which pushes him to look for ways of protection, and lead him/her to plead to a person with high authority or in a high position or a leader of some group to protect him, this is usually what happens in the non democratic societies, which lack the clarity in the relationship between the three authorities were the power of groups and gangs concur all, so all is mixed up together and measures gets lost between every group and the other, and the loyalty of the person becomes to a certain tribe or group, and not to the principle or a law, so many starts to look for ways of search for illegitimate power and considers it as a way of protection so they get trapped more, and loose the compos and loose his way, while many gets

more and more involved in violence. The most important reasons for violence is the feeling of insecurity, physiological and economical insecurity, and being ignored, when we ignore a person and ignore his existence or his opinion or his right of expressing himself and being proud of his identity, he will lose his way and starts to use illegitimate ways, where he will become a victim and a criminal in the same time, where he will destroy his life and the lives of others, here is where the story begins.

We the Palestinians are the most who have been exposed to this kind of ignoring when we were denied by the occupation and the whole world to be recognized as a people with our own identity, personality, and rights, as we lived until a short while ago without being allowed to carry a passport or an identity that recognize us as Palestinian, at the same amount when a person is being denied to express himself, his own personality, thoughts, and opinion he seeks violence which is one of the options that can create conflict inside the community and destroy its unity where the self salvation becomes a goal instead of seeking general salvation to all the community as one.

From here we can say that two points are important the most, the first is the existence of a measure for right and wrong where we can judge matters through it, while until today there is no one law that are being implemented in the Palestinian lands. The second point is the unity of the executive authority in one and not leaving the Palestinian citizen swinging between many sides of official and nonofficial authorities doesn't know which to please. The citizen right is to know where to go when he is being subject to unfairness, or from which side he will be punished if he had don something wrong. In the stabilized countries this duty is being taking care of by the police only, where the police are the only side allowed to follow up the citizens actions, where they go to the civil courts where in its turn go to the law and the legislative counsel. Does this happen in our country?

In addition to this, the information has to do with the understandings, we use many expressions that we do not agree with the way its translated or what it means, which is used in our lives, where we do not look closely to its meanings, most of these expressions can be taken from another language or culture, where it is used under certain circumstances that are different from ours, and the way we run our lives, in spite of this we stop and think that these circumstances not through our use of it in our media and not through our politicians declarations, where we notice that we do not look closely as the Israeli people do in using these expressions. Maybe one of the reasons for this specially in the local media that many of our journalists are not qualified scientifically or enough trained to work as journalists and many from them came to journalism for other maters, economical or political as it happens in most of our institutions which are being politicalized and drifting away from professionalism.

Shouldn't we stop and assess what we use from expressions, and all our media programs where sometimes it publish without studying or preparation, as many of our local television stations publish some reports directly that shouldn't be published and information without making sure of its sources or its reliability to the point that many of our local television stations receive its tips and news from normal citizens through telephone calls directly on screen without making sure that these news are true, or if this citizen is a journalist or not, or if he has his own purposes to publish certain news, or is he reliable to publish or transfer a media news, by editing it and judging the news it self as suitable or not. Did this citizen take a good look to what is happening around him, or did he saw or hear this news from a distance so he rushed to transfer it to our media, even most of the times this citizen name is not mentioned so the news came from an unknown source. Not just any one can transfer or publish news on the media, only qualified, and trained reporters, as journalism is a job you should study for and earn a degree for it as far as I know.

So shouldn't we revise what our media is using from expressions, and also how our authority people use these expressions in there announcements, because what is happening is not spontaneous but is done on purpose by all means.

The media is the source of information for the normal citizen, and there is no democracy without freedom of reaching information, the duty of the media does not include judging this information or guess what is right or wrong, but reach the good, analyze the news, and deliver it to the citizens. This needs qualifications and training, as its not an inherited process, as if my brother is a journalist so I can be one, or if my father is a journalist, or if my family owns a media office, so I can be a journalist, journalism is a science, a study, a skill in writing news, transferring it, analyzing it, and delivering it in the right way, and this is one of the main basis for real democracy.

*** Shoora: is the Islamic term of democracy.**

Yours in peace & reconciliation,

Noah Salameh