

## Periodical Profile

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### Human Rights Culture: Conceptual Problems and Practical Challenges

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The concept of human rights is one of the theoretical and analytical approach linked to the problems of democratic transformation. This approach focuses on the study of political pluralism and democratic transformation from a human rights perspective. In this context, many issues are to be studied, such as the human rights concept as demonstrated in the discourse and visions of non-governmental organizations, the issue of peculiarity and universality of human rights issues, the subject of minority rights, the economic, social, civil and political rights, women's political rights, the evaluation of the status of Human rights and the problems of human rights education.

This Study seeks to discover the contribution of human rights culture to the provision of knowledge, skills and values associated with human rights. Besides, it analyzes the problems encountered the process of the dissemination of the culture of human rights and its impact on effectiveness.

#### **The Universality of the Concept of Human Rights: The Problem of Definition**

There has been a growing interest in human rights since the 1970s, with the emergence of some human rights organizations, groups and research centers along with the increasing attention of this issue at the national and global level.

While recognizing the fact that human rights have become universal in nature, the multiplicity and the conflict of theories in the field of human rights reflect the absence of a theoretical model that receives general agreement. This fundamental problematic, stemmed from the multiple intellectual and philosophical sources upon which theories are based, has caused many problems and difficulties in defining the concept of human rights, and accordingly has impacted the dissemination of the culture of human rights.

#### **The Human Rights Culture: Conceptual Framework**

Human rights culture encompasses set of values, cultural heritage, norms, traditions and mental and behavioral structures that are all consistent with the principles of human rights. Human rights education reflects the efforts made in the field of training and awareness-raising that aim at creating a global culture of human rights through the dissemination of knowledge and skills.



There are three concepts that are interrelated and overlapped with the concept of human rights culture; they are the concepts of political education, human rights education and pedagogic education.

### **The Role of the United Nations in the Dissemination of Human Rights Culture**

Within the context of promoting the comprehensive universal approach of human rights at the global level, the international community realized that the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959, the International Covenants on the Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966, along with the ratification of many States, is not enough to raise the awareness on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Also, this does not guarantee the effective practice of human rights on the ground. Therefore, the international community began to give further attention to the education of human rights in all academic stages and for all groups of the society. Meanwhile, the United Nations agencies and affiliated organizations made great efforts in this direction, topped by the declaration of the United Nations General Assembly, on 10 December 2004, of the World Program for Human Rights Education (from 2005 to 2019) in order to promote the implementation of human rights education programs with all segments of the society.

### **The Problems Facing the dissemination of Human Rights Culture**

There are a number of common problems facing the process of spreading the culture of human rights and hindering its effectiveness, they are as follows:

#### **1. The Problem of Cultural Peculiarity**

Political and intellectual controversy is raised about the universality and peculiarity of human rights at the local and international levels. This debate over the universality of human rights is questioning whether these rights are universal, regardless of the cultural relativity, the political systems and the economic and social developments, or they are relative in a way that gives legitimacy to the differences in the understanding of these rights from one culture to another?

The argument of defenders of the peculiarity of human rights is based on the fact that human rights are a social and historic phenomenon, and therefore they cannot be interpreted apart from the local environment and context.

The real problem here is that "the call for peculiarity, if extended, will adversely affect the universal nature of human rights and may open the door to the destruction of these rights on the pretext of peculiarity". On the other hand, the excesses and exaggeration in promoting the principle of the universality of human rights may result in sharp contrast to some cultural values in some societies.



### **2. The Problem of the Hierarchy of Human Rights**

This indicates the priority of a human rights generation or category, such as the civil and political rights over another generation, like the economic and social rights.

There are, of course, other factors that pose obstacles to the dissemination of human rights culture, but the Study focuses on these two problems because they are related to its purpose and subject. These problems reflect a different degree of perception of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 5 which refers to the right to life, and article 18 relevant to the right to freedom of belief, along with other articles on women's rights and the economic and social rights.

### **3. The Problem of the Dissemination of Human Rights Culture in Arab Societies**

The dissemination of the culture of human rights within Arab societies is facing many problems. Although, the ambiguity of the human rights concept to the average citizen is one of these problems, there are greater problems, however, related to settling the contradiction between the universality of human rights and the cultural peculiarity of Arab societies, as well as the negative attitude of Arab educated elite from Western norms.

### **Conclusions**

The Study has come out with a number of key results, among them:

- The dissemination of human rights culture is a comprehensive and ongoing process. It is considered a public project aiming to empower people with the basic knowledge necessary to free them from all forms of persecution and discrimination. It is also a mean to reinforce a sense of responsibility towards the rights of individuals and the interests of the public.
- Institutions of Educational and media as well as the civil society organizations can play pivotal roles in this process, including research, awareness-raising and training.
- The task of disseminating the culture of human rights is a comprehensive and ongoing process that requires the interaction of all parties; the State, Civil society, research institutions, universities and schools so as to achieve progress.
- the dissemination of the culture of human rights face a number of problems and challenges that would impact its effectiveness and influence, among them the cultural peculiarities and the hierarchy of human rights. These problems undermine the success of spreading the human rights culture in Arab societies.