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## **Periodical Profile**

### **Citizenship and Human Rights**

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The concept of citizenship overlaps with the concept of human rights so much that they are two sides of the same coin. We see this overlap when we go back to the history of interest in both concepts; the concern for human rights is a concern for the status of the individual in his/her society, that is, an emphasis on the individual's citizenship and membership in a larger social entity. By the same token, concern for the individual's membership in society as a "citizen" is a concern for the rights of this citizen as a human being, and for the duties that this citizen is expected to perform within a general framework of social responsibility. The convergence of citizenship and human rights occurs in any sense of citizenship. If citizenship is legally understood, it is as a legal membership within the state, through which the individual acquires a legal status associated with nationality, identity documents and other considerations. If citizenship is understood in this legal sense, it is within the framework of rights, since there is no legal status without acquired rights. The least of these rights is obtaining documents confirming a citizen's legal identity. If the understanding of citizenship extends to membership in society and the associated participation in politics and other fields offered by society, the issue of rights comes to the fore, where membership of the community is defined in terms of the rights entitled to individuals and the duties that they are expected to perform. If citizenship is understood as the basis of the national state, which constitutes the largest entity to which individuals have a sense of belonging, this national state can continue to exist only if it respects its citizens' human rights. Finally, if citizenship is understood as an energy of belonging that makes an individual an active participant in the life of his/her society, this energy does not radiate and does not pay good unless it is accompanied by civil rights of citizens. A person deprived of his/her



rights, loses his/her sense of belonging to the state and becomes unable to gear himself/herself up for the sake of the country. Seen this way, it becomes clear that the two concepts lead to each other: there is no citizenship without rights, nor are there rights without citizenship.

The relation between the two concepts can be traced on a different historical level, as they are closely connected in liberal political thought. Eighteenth-century revolutions, that is, French and American revolutions dated 1789 and 1765 respectively, called for equality between humans. The belief that people were born equal and that they had natural rights since birth was upheld. These revolutions also advocated the freedom of citizens and that they enjoy equal rights in a unified national state. On this basis came the International Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 which stressed the justice and equality of rights. Liberal thought was able thereby to create a formula for a strong connection between citizenship and human rights. Expanding the limits of the concept of human rights so that it is regarded as a set of universals that apply to individuals of all nations has led to expanding the concept of citizenship so that now we speak of international citizenship. Such a term points to entitlement to citizenship and its related rights in any place in the world. This is the basis for the protection of the rights of immigrants and refugees who form communities in some countries. Rights in this sense are dictated by reason and not by political decisions. Wherever there are people there are rights whatever the circumstances may be.

Against this background we present this issue of the journal which discusses human rights in a number of articles that deal with the problematic of citizenship and human rights from different angles. Perhaps the more pressing question is: to what extent does our Egyptian constitution fall in line with international agreements on human rights? This issue contains an article that tackles this point and confirms through analysis of the text of our constitution and the texts of international agreements the extent to which this harmony has been achieved. The Egyptian constitution clearly articulates principles that protect the identity and rights of the individual such as freedom, justice and equality. Citizens' rights are organized and protected by constitutions. Constitutions in turn should conform with the requirements of world citizenship. This is proven by harmony between laws and local constitutions on the one hand and international agreements on the other. Further proofs of this harmony come from measures taken in each community to protect human rights or to stress the humanity of humans regardless of his/her



religious, ethnic, linguistic or regional affiliation.

In this connection one of the articles offers an analysis of the the declaration of human fraternity drawn by Al-Azhar and the Egyptian Church, an agreement that reflects the civil will of the great religious institutions. By “civil will” I am referring to the willingness of these institutions to override strict religious interpretations and open up to an international perspective confirming the humanity of man wherever he/she may be. There is no doubt that this will is a major force in combating extremism.

Nor is there any doubt that the legal approach to the issue of human rights in relation to citizenship poses an important problem in the case at hand. The problem lies in the legal balance between rights and duties, entitlements and responsibilities. This issue contains two articles dealing with this problem. The first examines the legal dimensions of citizenship, considering that citizenship is essentially a legal right; it explains the nature of the relationship between citizenship and rights. The second article deals with the relationship between the exercise of rights and responsibilities by looking into some of the provisions of the Egyptian Constitutional Court. This relationship between right and responsibility is the bone of contention in the human rights question. A right is only a right in the light of duty, and if rights are denied by an executive authority, the law returns them to those affected by the denial. If duty is neglected or weakened, the law reinstates it. As an offshoot, another issue is raised as to the extent of disciplined commitment in performing duty in exchange for exercise of rights. This commitment must not be due to being subject to the rule of law, but must also stem from individuals’ conscience. The inner drive is stronger and more durable than external impositions, and should therefore be the main driving force in the performance of duty.

Education occupies a high place among the issues relating to civil rights and citizenship. Through the educational process, citizenship culture is instilled, and human rights culture flourishes. As part of this awareness comes the article on education of citizenship that also teaches acceptance of difference. This is an important educational issue that has sparked a global and local debate. Education must not only be directed towards cognition and skill formation, but must also provide for construction of the mind at the mental, psychological and emotional levels. Along with the family and mass-communication institutions, education in many countries is moving towards the formation of a system of social



values that revolve around faith in difference. Most important among these values promoting faith in difference is citizenship. This could lead to enhancing values of respect, tolerance, trust and empathy. Supporting this kind of education can create a culture of civic spirit which is the foundation of human interaction.

The concept of human rights is expanding day by day, helped by a growing global and regional discourse on human rights and citizenship. This has pushed the limits of human rights to go beyond concrete rights to more abstract ones such as the right to dignity, safe living and participation. This issue of the journal contains two articles that tackle two types of moral rights. The first article deals with the right of respect for social and cultural specificity. This is an inherent right informed by human independence and freedom to choose a way of life with which others must not interfere in any way. Most constitutions and civil rights documents provide for this right. Paying attention to such a right in a society like ours is of paramount importance, where the culture of people allows for interference with privacy. Efforts must be exerted elbow aside this culture and replace it with respect for privacy where violation thereof under any circumstances is not allowed. The second article discusses the right to confront extremist ideology. This is a subject that deserves reflection and support, because modern societies suffer not only from the loss of privacy, but also from the violation of their security and stability by extremists with consequent violence and terror. The right to combat extremism subsumes the right to confront terrorism. There is no doubt that awareness of this right, and its dissemination through the collective conscience of the nation mobilizes society against extremism and terrorism, protecting it from manifestations of instability and insecurity.

Finally, domestic efforts to protect human rights should be given due room. One of the articles therefore covers the role of The National Council for Human Rights in Egypt. The Council is a model for organizations concerned with protecting rights of citizenship. Attention to such domestic organizations is an indication that this is not only about the existence of constitutional and legal texts or international documents, but, first and foremost, about the actual practices without which no rights or citizenship become real.

With its variety of articles and angles of vision, we hope that this issue will serve the general objective of this periodical, which promotes cultural, academic and political discourse on civil rights.