The Vacuum of Democracy

By Hajjullah Zia

People living in a democracy must see themselves as the ultimate source of power and must be involved, in one way or another, in their own path toward the ideals which are also set in the United Nations declaration of Human Rights: “Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all Members of the human family is the foundation, justice, and peace in the country.”

Democracy rests upon the principles of majority rule and individual rights. Democracies guard against all powerful central governments whose policies are not in the interest of the local or regional and local levels, understanding that all levels of government must be responsive to popular requests for human and civil rights, if possible.

Democracies understand that one of their prime functions is to protect such basic human rights as freedom of speech and religion; the right to equal protection under law; the opportunity to organize and participate fully in political, economic and social life; and that there should be no obstacle in the way of the advancement and success to the development of the country. One of the most vulnerable capacities in man, which he needs most intensely in order to develop himself, is his capacity to think. He needs freedom to think to be able to think. They are egalitarian in the sense of being the same for everyone. They require empathy and the rule of law and must not be given to the same extent of abuse by the same group of people. They should not be taken away except as a result of due process based on specific circumstances, and require freedom from unlawful imprisonment, torture, and execution. They are inherent and universal rights. They are part and parcel of the rights of minorities to which Western democracies place such importance to ethnic and religious minorities, including rights to public education and freedom of belief and thought.

The freedom of belief and thought is a social need. It implies that man should be free in these vital aspects of his human nature: freedom to say what he thinks, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of thought and belief. These rights are crucial to advancing human dignity and the dignity of the individual. They are inherent entitlement simply because she or he is a human being, and which are “inherent in all human beings” regardless of nationality, race, color, language, ethnic origin or any other status. They are applicable everywhere, and the right to freedom of religion and to the freedom to change one’s religion or believe in man, which he needs most intensely in order to develop himself, is his capacity for thought and belief.

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