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## **Democratic culture for Promoting Peace & Development in the Middle East – A Lebanese Viewpoint.**

### **Peace and democracy do really go hand in hand?**

When you hear the word "democracy", what other word immediately comes to your mind? "Elections" or "freedom", perhaps? "equality" or "human rights"? Or maybe "peace"?

Indeed, most developed countries considered as strong democracies are also peaceful countries. Peace, development and democracy seem to go hand in hand?

### **No magic recipe: Grey zone?**

It is in post-conflict situations that the need for strong and legitimate institutions is felt most strongly, even when they are often absent from the landscape or at least seriously compromised.

In fact, peace processes are a time of hope that opens new horizons, whether it is to stop violence or to create a more democratic and just society.

Admittedly, elections alone are not a true democracy. Democracy and good governance must extend beyond the ballot box, especially after a conflict or a climate conducive to conflict, where a return to violence is still imminent.

The relationship between democracy and peace building is not always simple and clear. It must be rooted in local traditions and conducts to ensure its legitimacy. These processes, which are complex and composite, may require a lot of time.

Above all, it is important to find a way out of the “grey zone” of "semi-democracy", if only because it provokes more conflicts than an entire authoritarianism or a true democracy.

### **Recently, a youth revolution erupted in Lebanon, like never seen before, calling for more transparency, good governance and respect for freedom.**

Lebanon has long practiced democracy according to its basic rules: the parliamentary majority resulting from free and transparent elections governs, the minority makes opposition. However, it turned out that majority rule over the minority does not ensure real "national participation".

Corruption and government inefficiency are crippling, the social and economic situation is worsening, and the young generation flee the country. Good governance must accompany the development and the progress of democracy. Therefore, the rule of law, inclusion, accountability,

transparency, meritocracy, protection of human rights and freedoms, and the end of corruption must be the norms to ensure a sustainable development of the country.

Lebanese political leaders should therefore agree on a new pact specifying the issues that should be the subject of consensus, otherwise they would remain unresolved.

It is now imperative for the Lebanese leaders to agree on which pact and which Republic they wish for Lebanon so that they replace the “competitive democracy” by "consensual practices". With the rule of law and good governance, this is the only way to save the “Living together”, the national unity and civil peace in Lebanon.

### **Consider the future and the change agents**

Democracy needs to be part of a culture of development and peace building. However, if democracy is imported or imposed, it does not take into account local realities and it will be partial and inconsistent.

Education has an ethical, moral and legal mission to develop the culture of democracy, peace, solidarity, diversity and tolerance, directly and indirectly.

Lebanon is a “message” and a real model of multi-confessional and multi-cultural co-existence. Eighteen religious/cultural groups, after different wars, realized how to overcome the war trauma and decided to build a positive future with a strong “will to live together”. Peace, tolerance, open-mindedness, solidarity and hopefulness became inherent characteristics that allow looking forward to a prosperous future together.

In the era of open media and social networking, the younger generation created the change and triggered the revolutions.

Are these future leaders equipped with the necessary qualities, virtues and values?

How can we build institutions (governmental, educational and social), that actively (rather than passively) accomplish their roles and fulfil their missions?

Are they promoting citizenship, openness, the rule of law, the will of “living together”, the respect of freedom and the culture of peace and tolerance? Are they well preparing the Change Agents of tomorrow? And what shall be the programme of action?

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