Equality and Citizenship from the Perspective of the Islamic Parties: Study of Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) of Egypt

Ahmed A.M. Atawna, Mohammad Redzuan Othman and Abu Hanifah Haris

Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract: New influential parties have emerged in some Arab countries after the Arab spring. A lot of them are Islamic parties who have announced that they adopt and practice democracy. The focal focus of this paper is the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)-the Muslim Brotherhood’s political arm in Egypt-the most important factor among these parties. Due to its great attendance and influence in the political, economic and social life of the Egyptian people, Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is also the largest and most spread Islamic movement in the Arab and Muslim countries. Since its foundation in 1928, MB has been working constantly to fulfill its famous slogan (Islam is the Solution) and implement Islamic law. The findings indicated that the woman and the non-Muslim are forbidden from some of their rights as citizens, such as running for presidency, in MB and FJP political doctrine. Depending on their understanding to Islam, they believe that woman and non-Muslim should not be the president. Nevertheless, the analysis of the collected data for the study show that most likely they may follow the advanced stance of some Islamist experts by giving non-Muslims and women the right to run for the presidency if they take their chance to rule democratically.

Key words: Equality • Citizenship • Muslim Brotherhood • Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) • Egypt

INTRODUCTION

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and its political arm, Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), concept of democracy has resulted in a lot of contradictions between the common understanding and application of democracy and the MB perspective. Their Islamic reference that forces them to judge any political issue according to the Islamic criteria has not only led to contradictions, but may lead to create a new ruling system. Their desire to merge between Islam, as a comprehensive ideology that includes a lot about politics and democracy that created and flourished in non-Muslim conditions and states, has caused many difficulties for them. They have spent a long time trying to answer questions about the conflict between democracy and Islam. Still many inconveniences are strongly present despite the great efforts put by MB as a group and many scholars belong to MB.

They have refused the opinion asking them to take democracy completely, or let it completely. They have the right to benefit from any good idea in the world, regardless of its creator, as many of MB cadres believe. They are convinced that democracy is a result of great human experiences and they have to build on it. From their perspective they have both the right and the ability to accommodate democracy with Islam and the Islamic law. This is their natural right as a part of the international community. As will be discussed, their political and intellectual efforts have led to special understanding to many democratic principles, particularly, equality and citizenship.

Equality and Citizenship as a Democratic Principle: Equality is one of the prime human and democratic values. It will not exist among people if it is not changed to a conviction and culture. Everyone must deeply believe that all people are equal, regardless of their race, religion, color and economic or social class. Everyone must believe that each person has good attributes as well as negative ones i.e. no one is ideal. Any person could be peculiarly just through his/her efforts and roles in serving other people and his/her nation and humanity, without giving himself/herself any priority or special case; all people have and share him/her the same rights [1].

Corresponding Author: Ahmed A.M. Atawna, Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.