

# Democracy Between Illusion and Reality

(Translated)

Al-Rayah Newspaper - Issue 587 - 18/02/2026

**By: Ustaadh Mahmoud al-Laithi\***

Amid the global political discourse, democracy is presented as the pinnacle of human reason in organizing governance, and marketed as the sole guarantor of freedom, justice, and human rights. Yet serious scrutiny reveals that this image is merely a propagandistic veneer concealing a contrary reality: democracy is neither an applied truth nor a feasible system as promoted, but an inherently contradictory idea, practically impossible to realize, and predicated on deceiving people in the name of “rule by the people” while reality testifies to the rule of capital and controlling elites.

## **The Reality of Democracy: A Thought Without Substance:**

Democracy, in its common definition, means “government of the people, by the people, for the people.” Yet this very definition collapses at the first practical test. The people as a whole neither govern, nor legislate, nor manage state affairs. Instead, actual rule is exercised by a specific elite that circulates power among itself, through pre-regulated electoral mechanisms, controlled by laws, financing, and media influence. As for the “will of the people,” it remains a slogan invoked when needed, and disregarded when it conflicts with the interests of the powerful.

Parliaments, presumed to represent the people, in reality lack genuine independence from lobby groups, transnational corporations, and centers of financial influence. Legislation enacted in the name of the majority often contradicts its direct interests, which explains the widening gap between rulers and the ruled in states described as long-established democracies.

## **The Claim of Freedom and Justice is False:**

Democracy claims to guarantee freedoms, but reality shows that these freedoms are selective. They are granted when they do not affect the interests of the capitalist elite, and are confiscated as soon as they are threatened.

As for justice, it is reduced to formal equality before the law, while class disparities are left to run rampant without restraint. Democracy has neither prevented the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, nor halted the impoverishment of millions, nor stopped colonialist wars waged in the name of spreading democracy itself.

## **The Impossibility of Democracy in Principle:**

Democracy is impossible to achieve because it is based on a structural contradiction. It claims that sovereignty belongs to the people, but at the same time it subjects this people to a constitution and laws against their will, and restricts their choices to a limit that cannot be exceeded. It also assumes equal political awareness among all, whereas reality reveals vast disparities in knowledge and influence, placing final decisions in the hands of those who control money and media.

Moreover, entrusting legislation to human majorities or minorities opens the door to fluctuation and disorder. What was right yesterday becomes crime today, and vice versa, according to interests and circumstances. This renders values themselves relative, lacking any fixed reference or absolute standard of justice.

## **The West Itself Searches for an Alternative:**

Criticism of democracy is no longer the monopoly of the West’s adversaries. It has become part of the domestic debate in its own intellectual centers. There is an increasing number of writings that discuss the crisis of democracy, post-democracy, and the erosion of trust in institutions. Partial alternatives are proposed, rule by experts, technocratic models, or enhanced corporate roles in governance, all of them implicit admissions of the failure of the original idea.

However, these alternatives do not address the core of the problem, because they remain confined to the same capitalist framework, maintain sovereignty for someone other than the Creator, and make man a legislator, instead of Allah (swt), so the crisis moves from one form of crisis to another, without a radical solution.

## **The True Alternative to Capitalism:**

In contrast, Islam offers a comprehensive governance system based on a clear principle: sovereignty belongs to the Shariah, and authority to the Ummah. Legislation belongs not to humans but to Allah (swt) says, ﴿إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ﴾ **“Legislation is for none but Allah (swt)”** [TMQ Surah Yusuf: 40]. With this, the question of reference is settled, and the door to tampering with values and rulings is closed.

As for the Ummah, it has the right to choose those who implement this Shariah and manage its affairs, to hold them accountable, and to remove them if they deviate. This achieves genuine, not merely formal, political participation within a stable framework of fair rulings.

## **The Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly Guided Caliphate): A Practical Model, Not a Fantasy:**

The Khilafah (Caliphate) is neither an impossible thought nor a distant dream. Instead, it is a ruling system actually implemented, with history bearing witness to its justice and care. In it, the ruler was a servant of the Ummah, its deputy in applying Islam, subject to the judiciary and publicly accountable, as Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (ra) stated in his first address: فَأَنِ اطَّيْعُونِي مَا أَطَعْتُ اللَّهَ فِيكُمْ، فَإِنَّ عَصِيئْتَهُ فَلَا طَاعَةَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ **“Obey me as long as I obey Allah (swt) in your regard; but if I disobey Him (swt), there is no obedience to me.”** In this system, rights are preserved not as “concessions” from the state, but as binding Shariah rulings. And man is protected because he is a honored creation, as He (swt) says, ﴿وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ﴾ **“And We have certainly honored the children of Adam”** [TMQ Surah Al-Israa: 70].

## **The Fundamental Difference Between the Two Alternatives:**

The difference between democracy and Islam is not merely in mechanisms, but in philosophy and foundation. Democracy makes man a legislator, whilst Islam makes him a servant of Allah (swt) and vicegerent on earth. Democracy ties governance to shifting interests, whilst Islam ties it to unchanging truth. Democracy generates perpetual struggle over power, whilst Islam regulates power through Shariah rulings and responsibilities that prevent both tyranny and anarchy.

After centuries of experience, democracy has proven to be an unrealized illusion. It is a slogan masking a reality of injustice and contradiction. The West itself now recognizes its impasse, yet remains unable to escape its crisis because it rejects divine reference. Islam, however, offers the true alternative, not as an abstract theory, but as a comprehensive system of governance, eternally valid for every time and place. Returning to Allah (swt) will save humanity from wandering and achieve the justice that human systems have failed to achieve.

**O Ummah of Islam, from its East to its West:** The time has come to realize that the ruling governance systems imposed upon you are nothing but shackles that have restrained your potential, torn up your unity, and made your wealth prey for enemies. The democracy presented to you, as a path to salvation, has been nothing but an instrument for perpetuating dependency and distancing you from your true civilizational project. Your unity can only be under one Rayah banner, your leadership only under one Shariah, and your state, the one that restores your standing among nations, is the Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly Guided Caliphate) on the Method of Prophethood, which unifies and does not divide, establishes justice and does not oppress, leads and is not led.

**O Soldiers of Egypt Al-Kinana:** O you who hold power and strength, O you who have been throughout history the Ummah’s shield and sword, your Shariah responsibility is great, and your trust is immense. You are of the core of this Ummah, yet today what is intended for you is to serve as a shield for failed regimes, and a guardian of interests that bear no relation to Islam or to Egypt. Your true victory lies not in protecting a man-made system or constitution, but in siding with your Ummah, enabling it to regain its power and decision-making authority, and establishing the ruling governance of Islam that eliminates injustice, liberates the lands, and unifies the Ummah upon the truth. Allah (swt) said, ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ﴾ **“O you who have believed, respond to Allah (swt) and to the Messenger (saw) when he calls you to that which gives you life.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Anfaal: 24].

\* Member of the Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir in Wilayah Egypt