Oluwasegun Oluwabunmi Falana

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REVIEW OF CHAPTER SEVEN AND EIGHT

CHAPTER EIGHT: CITIZEN ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy; they have a collective right to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems as part of self-determination. The people have a right to take part in their government, including through genuine elections to determine who will legitimately occupy governmental offices. These precepts are embodied in the universal declaration of human rights and in modern constitutions all over the world. They capture the meaning that “the government is of the people, by the people and for the people”.

The term citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare.

Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of, or to be divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship. Civil refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty, while political citizenship is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of a political community or as an individual elected by the member of such community. Social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to resources that allow them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the standard prevailing in society.

Individual’s rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. In order to let the citizen have a share in the running of his/her government a group of rights is very essential. These rights are not absolute, a right may be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state, it becomes a civil right. If the civil right of a citizen is invaded by another citizen or the government, he is entitled to seek redress in the court of law. Some important rights include; right to life, right to work, right to freedom of religion, right to education, right to association and right to freedom of speech.

Democracy is derived from the Greek word “demos” meaning people and “kratos” meaning rule that is “rule by the people”. The concept of democracy originated from ancient Greece. While there is no single main definition of democracy, we can however, deduce from the various definitions available the following features of democracy;

1. The fundamental rights of the citizens is guaranteed
2. Independent and impartial judiciary
3. Existence of rule of law
4. Freedom of press
5. Periodic election that is free and fair

While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties to the state;

1. The duty to vote
2. All citizens must pay taxes
3. All citizens must obey the law
4. A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticism
5. A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community
6. He or she must support the public education in every way possible.

In conclusion, Citizens pay an important role in democracy. There would probably be no democracy without the co-operation and commitment of citizens. Citizens must be aware of their rights and responsibilities as without the awareness of the citizens, the government can turn into a tyranny. Citizens must not lose sight of the pursuit of public interest; a positive attitude should be maintained with development of the state being the priority.