

**During a workshop conducted by "SHAMS" center
Emphasis on the importance of the periodic local elections to ensure the peaceful
and democratic transfer of authority**

Hebron- Human Rights and Democracy Media Center held a workshop in Dura town in Hebron governorate on importance of conducting periodic local election.

The workshop was attended by large youth audience, and started by giving a brief introduction about the center and the dialogue and outreach project by Mr. Mahmoud Assi (activities coordinator from the center), who emphasized on importance of community participation in local elections in order to achieve the peaceful transfer of power.

The workshop hosted the lecturer Mr. Abdulateef Abu Safiya who said that the existence of free and fair periodic elections is a crucial and an essential element for achieving peaceful transition of power, and considered key features of any democratic system, as it is the only way to echo the meaning of a peaceful and periodic transfer of power, with an assumption of the existence of a genuine multi-party competition for different directions and views in the context of democratic political pluralism, which guarantees the peaceful transfer of power from one party or coalition to another, to avoid power monopoly by one single party. He added, the peaceful transfer of power through elections and a multiparty system is almost summarizes the attributes of the democratic system, in addition to providing opportunity for public opinion and strong role for civil society organizations and media institutions to practice influence and an active role in government accountability.

Abu Safiya also noted that the basic terms of the circulation of power reside in the existence of multi-party system, where multiplicity of parties and political groups is in fact the most important condition for peaceful and democratic circulation of power, which is infeasible under the single-party system that embeds the free choice option between the different political trends, as it allows the sole political to dominate all political functions and decisions of the State, and therefore election loses its basic meaning and turns to be a form that is closer to a referendum or consensus or to other types of expressing the opinion towards a unilateral party.

He also added the minimal form of a multi-party system is the existence of at least two rival political parties that guarantees the normal rotation of power between these parties in the interval periods established by the laws governing elections.

The second condition in addition to the existence of a multi-party system is the way that election is conducted in a fashion that guarantees a fair, democratic and transparent manner periodically.

If circulation of power means assuming and relinquishing authority on a periodic fashion, then election is the sole tool of organizing this process through conducting fair, transparent and free elections by resorting to applicable methods being used so far in modern democracies either by majority of votes or by ratio depending on preferences of the concerned state.

Participants of the workshop emphasis on importance of conducting fair and periodic elections as it is the safety valve for the political process in general and guarantees the non monopolization of one single party to remain in authority perpetually.

In addition it provides a tool to gauge the different trends of voters and it represents one of the most important stations in which the people exercise their sovereignty and their role as the adjudicator between the competing political currents in the country.

Abu Safiya continued that the third condition of fair and transparent election process is the national consensus on institutions of the state and majority ruling that takes into consideration minority rights and that the power circulation is not a process for

changing the state but rather a change within the state and changing the elite ruling characters in the state (change of faces).

Abu Safiya added that the circulation of power has many facets most importantly the absolute circulation where the ruling party entirely turns to be an opposition party, and the other form is the relative circulation where part of the ruling party join the opposition party and the third is the circulation through a mediator which is applicable when neither any party achieved majority in parliament and a third party outweighs one of the competing parties. He noted that the diversity of shapes of power circulation construed the different facets of the democratic system and reflects a social and political agreement within the society.

Participants reiterated importance of periodic and fair election process to ensure circulation of power on a peaceful and democratic basis that provide equal opportunities for all political parties including opposition parties and minority representatives.

Another important factor essential for a proper election process is that need for organizing the relation of the ruling institution with the citizens on the basis of citizenship, this means that all society categories enjoy equal rights and duties in the context of equal opportunities and equal participation in the political decision making process without any form of discrimination based on racial, language, color, religion and social hierarchy differences.

At the end of the workshop, participants stressed that the democratic election is a reliable tool for compromising political conflicts in a peaceful and civilized way through the availability of a peaceful rotation of power's mechanism that guarantees smooth change of the center of power and possibility for the opposition parties to compete in the election process also it provided political legitimacy or winning party with is an important element for any government to successfully assumes its responsibilities.