

# Concepts of Democracy

## **Consent of the Governed**

The most fundamental concept of democracy is the idea that governments are established by the will and approval of the people for the purpose of protecting individual rights.

## **Free, Fair, and Regular Elections**

Elections allow citizens to tell the government their wishes, change leaders, address wrongs, or protest limits to their rights. Free, fair and regular elections allow the people to continue to express an ongoing consent of the governed.

## **Constitutional Limits on the Power of the Government**

Constitutions limit the potentially abusive power of a government. Power that is separated among governmental institutions is less likely to lead to tyranny.

## **Majority Rule and Minority Rights**

In democracies leaders and laws are elected and passed by a majority of voters or lawmakers. A majority of voters or lawmakers, however, cannot deny a minority group or an individual the human rights to which they are entitled.

## **Accountability and Transparency**

Government officials are responsible to the people for their decisions and actions. Transparency requires that the decisions and actions of those in government be open so the public can see how, why, and what decisions are made.

## **Multi-Party Systems**

A political party reflects the values, views, and needs of a group of people. Having multiple parties provides the government with information from a broad range of society. Laws made by this process are more likely to address legitimate concerns and be accepted by the population

## **Economic Freedom**

Individuals are free to own property, work, produce, consume, and invest in any way they please. This freedom is protected by the government with a minimum of restraint.

## **Rule of Law**

Laws are made within the democratic process with the maximum involvement of people, political parties, and government officials. Every person is subject to the law and no one is treated differently by the law.

## **Human Rights and Freedom from State Tyranny**

All persons are born free and equal in dignity. Governments should protect each person from the abuse of their rights.

### **Freedom of Expression**

Freedom of expression guarantees everyone's right to speak and write openly without government interference. It guarantees the right to inform the public, offer opinions of any kind, and challenge governmental power.

### **Freedom of Association**

It is impossible to defend individual rights if citizens are unable to organize around common needs and interests. Citizens must have the freedom to organize in order to solve common problems, influence government policy, and protect their rights.

### **Freedom of Religion**

Religion, personal values, and beliefs are a matter of individual conscience. Without the ability to think, believe, and worship freely, there can be no democracy.