

What Role for Non-Governmental Organizations in the Age of Privatisation and Globalisation?

Abstract

This paper builds upon a comparison between the radical transformations in the closing decades of the last century, which had a far-reaching impact on the political, economic, social and cultural events of this century, and the drastic changes the world is now undergoing, particularly those related to privatisation and globalisation in economy, society and culture. The slogan "Socialism is the solution!", prevalent during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries has been replaced with the slogan "Liberalism is the solution!"

Socialism was considered a solution to society's problems and a means of securing social development and human dignity. In contrast, liberalism, sometimes described as inhumane, promotes no concern for the human dimension; rather it calls for submission to the market economy — *i.e.*, the law of profit, and the alienation of trade and employment from any cultural or civilisational values whatsoever.

We also highlight the dangers of "barbarous" liberalism within the Arab world. We will examine the wide structural differences and dualities which globally affect the economic, social and intellectual fields. We also describe the measures taken by Arab governments to alleviate the deep-seated crisis by providing as much employment as possible in administration and in industrial and social facilities, by subsidising raw materials, instituting free education and health services etc.. The onset of privatisation and globalisation has been accompanied by the elimination of such measures.

We, then, describe three direct negative consequences of privatisation and globalisation: 1) Widening the gap between the poor and the rich in general and intensifying the structural dualities in Arab society. 2) widening the gap between poor and rich children in a manner which makes communication among members of the same generation more difficult than communication among members of different generations. 3) Excluding and marginalising human concerns in economic and developmental activities, thereby submitting to the profit motive in all domains.

Our conclusion is that since globalisation imposes itself as the general order for both the present and the future, it is necessary to resist its negative consequences by proceeding from within that very order. To this end, use should be made of whatever means globalisation makes available in order to influence its course and direction. Accordingly, non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to draft an international declaration on the ethics of globalisation and development, a declaration which non-governmental organizations should strive to make binding by calling upon international governmental organizations; this move requires the militant support of all the organizations of civil society all over the world to enforce the declaration and make ethical behaviour part of the New World Order.