

False Human Rights:

Analyzing the Ideological Function of Human Rights

Discourse in the Hegemonic System from the Perspective of Imam Khomeini.

Abstract

The "human rights" discourse is considered one of the main components of legitimization in the contemporary international order; however, from the perspective of Imam Khomeini, this discourse has practically taken on an instrumental function. Rather than relying on human dignity, it serves to consolidate hegemonic powers. This article, taking an analytical approach based on the documents and statements of Imam Khomeini, examines the gap between the "official discourse" and the "actual function" of human rights. It demonstrates how this concept has become a tool for major powers to exert influence in the political, security, and global economic spheres. Finally, it analyzes Imam Khomeini's proposed solutions for liberating nations from the cycle of hegemony and achieving genuine human rights.

Keywords: Human rights, global hegemony, Imam Khomeini, economic dependence, international institutions, discourse critique.

Introduction

Since the formation of the United Nations Organization, the human rights discourse has become an important indicator for assessing the legitimacy of governments and political systems. However, many critical theorists argue that the actual function of this discourse differs from its official claims. Within the intellectual framework of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini stands as one of the earliest and most profound critics of this discourse. He emphasizes that "human rights" within the hegemonic system is not a tool to protect human dignity, but rather a means to control nations and advance the interests of major powers.

The purpose of this article is to systematically analyze Imam Khomeini's perspective on the nature and function of the human rights discourse in the international order.

The Gap Between Slogans and Reality in Human Rights Dialogue

Imam Khomeini believes there is a deep chasm between the moral claims of human rights and the actual conduct of global powers. He states:

"The logic of bullies! The issue is not human rights. The logic of bullies is bullying; it is the rifle and the machine gun."

Sahifeh-ye Imam, Vol. 3, p. 346.

In his view, human rights in the Western narrative are more of a political tool than a humanitarian principle—one that is interpreted, enforced, or ignored depending on the interests of the powers involved. This perspective forms a fundamental critique of the "double standards" and "political selectivity" in the implementation of human rights principles.

International Institutions and the Reproduction of Hegemony:

One of the central axes of Imam Khomeini's critique is the unjust structure of international institutions, such as the "Security Council" and "human rights organizations." He remarks:

"That issue of the human rights organization and... the Security Council, these are things that the powerful created so they can do whatever they want to these weak nations."

Sahifeh-ye Imam, Vol. 11, p. 296.

This analysis reflects his fundamental distrust of international institutions. With their discriminatory structures—especially the existence of the "veto right"—they practically interpret justice in favor of major powers. Consequently, Imam Khomeini argues that instead of safeguarding human rights, these institutions have adopted a security, political, and hegemony-driven function.

Human Rights and Neo-Colonialism in the Economic Sphere:

Imam Khomeini explicitly exposes the link between human rights and colonial mechanisms in the global economy. He says:

"Human rights means the rights of the oppressors. They have the right to take all our oil and give nothing in return."

Sahifeh-ye Imam, Vol. 11, p. 133.

This statement highlights how major powers use the slogan of human rights to justify unjust economic policies and the plundering of weaker countries' resources.

According to the Imam, neo-colonialism operates through "economic dependence," and nations that lack economic independence cannot defend their political rights either¹.

Non-Governmental Organizations and Ostensibly Humanitarian Associations:

In Imam Khomeini's view, the current of hegemony does not operate solely through official institutions; a broad array of non-governmental organizations, foundations, and human rights associations also play a role in maintaining this structure. He clarifies:

"The very essence of these associations that have been established in America or elsewhere under the guise of human rights associations... they have created all of them in order to trample upon human rights."

Sahifeh-ye Imam, Vol. 8, p. 369.

This analysis aligns with critical theory and the "structure-function" approach in political science: while the outward appearance of these organizations is humanitarian and rights-defending, their actual function is to consolidate hegemony and control global public opinion.

The Awakening of Nations and the Way Out of Hegemony

The logical conclusion of this intellectual framework is that nations must remain vigilant regarding the nature of the official human rights discourse and not accept it unquestioningly. Imam Khomeini emphasizes:

"Those who claim to advocate for human rights are the greatest violators of human rights."

¹ Sahifeh-ye Imam*, Vol. 12, p. 97; also Vol. 16, p. 456.

In his belief, there are three fundamental solutions to liberate nations from this cycle:

- Reliance on domestic capabilities and economic independence².
- Resistance against the domination-seeking of major powers³.
- Redefining human rights based on divine dignity, genuine justice, and human values.

These points form the theoretical foundation for an alternative discourse to counter the official and dominant human rights narrative.

Conclusion

Imam Khomeini's perspective on human rights offers a profound, structural analysis of the hidden functions of this discourse in the international system. In his view, Western human rights are an "ideological tool" serving hegemony, and the institutions claiming to defend them are not protectors of human dignity, but cogs in the machinery of major powers.

Based on this analysis, the true freedom and rights of nations can only be achieved through economic independence, political vigilance, and resistance against hegemony. This article demonstrates that Imam Khomeini's thought can serve as a theoretical basis for critiquing the dominant human rights discourse and presenting a more justice-oriented and humane vision of human rights.

² Sahifeh-ye Imam*, Vol. 20, p. 458.

³ Sahifeh-ye Imam*, Vol. 21, p. 411.