

**VERSIONS**

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07 x 04 min.

RIGHTS

Worldwide  

ORDER NUMBER

82 4832 | 01-07

Power to the People

The word democracy originates from Greek and means “rule of the people.” But how that is understood and interpreted in any particular society is determined by its history and culture, level of development and religious views. In many countries around the world currently, democracy as it is practiced in Western industrialized countries is currently being put to the test. What role do free elections, majority rule, participation or fundamental and human rights play? Intellectuals and activists provide insight into the pro-democracy movements in their countries and explain why democracy must be understood as a process that emanates from the people and contributes to the tangible common good of all members of a society.

01 Tunisia

As a doctor Emna Menif has a demanding job, but that hasn't stopped her from getting involved in a movement for democracy. She wants to see a civil society emerge in Tunisia with equal rights for men and women. “Democracy has to come from the bottom up.”

02 USA

The leaders of the civil rights movement used to be Quentin James' heroes. Now he's a campaigner himself fighting against financial greed and calling for a sustainable environmental policy.

03 Russia

“Power to the millions, not the millionaires,” is Isabelle Magkoeva's motto. Magkoeva, who teaches Japanese, comes from an affluent family, but that hasn't stopped her from taking to the streets to protest against the unequal distribution of resources and to stand up for a better educational system in Russia.

04 Greece

Participation is important to Lila Bellou. She had little interest in politics until the crisis hit Greece. As a lawyer she is involved in a wide range of initiatives and wants to show people that they have rights and should use them.

05 Spain

Marc Masmiquel and his friend Monica Cuende want to do more than just protest. The young Spaniard is involved in the “public economy” movement for a more democratic and fair economic system.

06 Brazil

For the protest movement “Juntos”, or “Together”, Rio's soccer temple Maracanã is a symbol of how Brazil wants to present itself to the outside world. The nation is putting on airs in the build-up to the 2014 soccer tournament, say the movement's members, and turning a blind eye to social woes in the process. Young activist Maira Mendes is trying to harness demonstrations as a vehicle for change in her country.

07 Turkey

Architect Elif Tanverdi is part of the “Gezi Park generation” and calls for “more tolerance for the different-minded”. More and more young people in Turkey are protesting against the leadership of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and government paternalism.