

TUNISIA: JUDGING CRIMES OF THE PAST TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE

IMAGINE A MAN.

Let's call him Saber. Saber is Tunisian. During a peaceful demonstration for democracy he is hit by a bullet fired by a policeman. He was taken to the emergency room with a severely injured leg. By the time Saber is discharged from the



Photo for illustrative purposes

hospital, the revolution has since overthrown the government. But his personal situation is critical. The bullet, still lodged in his leg, causes him great pain, leading to significant medical bills.

But Saber's needs are not only medically related. He wants the police officer who fired the shot, as well as his superiors, to be held accountable. He is demanding that justice be served. But to whom does he turn for help? Saber does not dare go to the police, nor does he have confidence in the judges still in place from the former regime. The challenge is also to impartially and independently judge former crimes. So Saber wants to gain reparations. Most importantly though, Saber, with hundreds of other victims, wants to be considered a victim not only of the demonstrations, but also of the torture and other violations of fundamental human rights that he suffered before the revolution.

Avocats Sans Frontières is gathering stories like Saber's to better defend the cases of all victims in transitional justice.

This is the challenge of transitional justice, a justice that can enable a country that has experienced a conflict or violence, to move toward a democratic regime. In Tunisia, as in other *Arab Spring* countries, confidence in justice must be restored and reconciliation with the problems of yesterday is necessary to build a better future.

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