

The Speech of the President of the Truth and Dignity Commission

1st public hearing

17 November 2016

Ladies and Gentlemen, honorable guests,

The great people of Tunisia,

The Truth and Dignity Commission is the outcome of the Revolution of liberty and dignity that managed to topple dictatorship in Tunisia...

We are gathered today in order to rehabilitate the people of Tunisia, men and women who stood up to the dictatorship because they had the courage to stand firmly and resolutely for the sake of their people's freedom and dignity, rejecting despotism and corruption.

This is a defining moment during which we meet to pay tribute to their bravery, steadfastness, resistance and sacrifice.

They are all fine patriots who love their country and have struggled relentlessly to defend and protect its sovereignty so that it can provide its population with a bright future.

Today is an historic day, a momentous step towards the construction of the rule of law.

Today is the time when we pay tribute to the heroes of Tunisia, a day no one could have expected or predicted ten years ago.

This event is not only important for the Tunisian people, but also to other people around the world where the forces of evil, injustice, crime and murder momentum day after day, spreading their poison and terror as is the case in our surrounding.

Tonight, we prepare to listen solemnly to the voice of the Tunisian victims, the victims of the human rights violations and all the victims who were deprived of their humanity worldwide.

Tunisia shall no longer accept human rights violations, nor shall this land leave ground for impunity, and this is the prerequisite for a genuine national reconciliation...

Today, the victims of despotism are fully entitled to and fairness... This is the message Tunisia is about to convey to the entire world.

The path we are embarking on today is the very same course to be pursued by anybody else, and by peace, liberty and justice loving people around the globe.

During the past two years, the Truth and Dignity Commission has undertaken the monumental task of collecting data and information about the victims, listening to their plights, fact-finding and investigating into the violations that they had sustained.

The Commission has received more than 65 thousand complaints. So far, it has conducted approximately 12 thousand confidential auditions. And based on the investigations we have conducted, we endeavored to establish the truth, trying to make sense of the way the values of society have been tampered with and how injustice went by unpunished...

Today, we have to pause and ask why all that had happened and how we can spare our society the repetition of such violations that have undermined our social cohesion for decades.

Today, we have also to pause and ask how the State institutions came to be utilized to serve filthy goals and how its security, judicial, health and educational apparatuses were instrumentalized to become tools serving despotism which left behind a trail of devastation, suffering, killing, enforced disappearance.

How can we today reform our institutions to build a powerful law enforcement system whose main task is to serve and protect the citizens, a judiciary that is independent enough to protect the rights, a national media that would be the voice of justice, a medical institution that heals the wounds instead of being the accomplice of the executioner?

The public hearing sessions due to extend over more than a year are essential to the assertion of values that must prevail and govern our society in order to protect it from all those scourges.

The public hearing sessions are designed in the first place to provide those victims reduced to silence for a long time with a voice.

They are also aimed at providing an overview, information to society as a whole, about the violations of rights and dignity that were taking place in the backstage.

Eventually, these public hearing sessions are designed to address the scourges that have blighted our society that we are all required to protect by combatting oblivion and by preserving memory...

The public hearing sessions will provide an opportunity to show that none was spared when it comes to the crimes of despotism, no political or intellectual social movement, no man or woman. The State of tyranny was just in just on one single count: its injustice...

The State shall tap into its respect for its citizens' right and the preservation of their dignity to build its solemnity.

Today, we will be listening to a small sample of the 62 thousand cases of the victims who have submitted their files at the Commission's premises, a small fraction of the 12 thousand victims who were heard. These are live and very outspoken testimonies of the different kinds of violations, their scale and the resulting trail of devastation and suffering for generations to come...

It is worth noting that responsibility falls on the shoulders of everyone. This is not just the responsibility of the State bodies that were implicated in those violations. It is also the responsibility of society with all of its individuals, especially when the latter give up their values and lose sight of the subtle line that separates right from wrong and good from evil.

This is what happens when evil sets in through a series of behaviors characterized by cowardice, collusion, inaction or snitching. All of these drawbacks constitute the breeding ground for the cancer of despotism to grow and for corruption to spread and linger on...

No voice shall surpass that of the victims of despotism!

Tonight, let our victims be our heroes and stars!

Let us listen to them so that such violations will not be repeated anymore, for our sake, the sake of our children and the sake of our country.