Supporting Transitional Justice, Accountability and Reconciliation in the MENA Region
No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ)

Project Summary

Background
A democratic revolution is sweeping the Middle East and North Africa, born on the populations’ demands for change, representing a cry for liberty and a call for changes to the traditionally restricted and closed-off social and economic dynamics in the region. These citizen revolutions, building on long-established opposition movements, have shown strong and vital societies that have continued to develop despite the environment imposed by authoritarian and closed regimes. Responses to these demands range from the extremes of civil war and violent repression, to offers of greater or lesser reforms, through to total capitulation of previous rulers. Common threads running through all “Arab Spring” countries are the desire and need for justice, accountability and reconciliation, for acts committed during the revolutions and for past years and decades of human rights abuses. Transitional justice, accountability and reconciliation (TJAR) concepts are therefore already on the political agenda, with varying degrees of clarity as to how they fit within each country’s specific process of transformation. To ensure TJAR processes contribute effectively to reconciliation and stability, it is important that they are conceived as part of a transition towards democracy and the rule of law, not merely be a rote response in the transition from authoritarian systems. Justice and accountability for past violations are an essential component of building stable States, to demonstrate a real break with the past and to ensure that emerging political institutions are built on a solid foundation of respect for the rule of law that includes accountability of their current and former leaders to the people. To that end, TJAR processes cannot be designed by external experts and grafted onto a country’s political dynamics. Instead, they need to stem from, and be perceived as stemming from, participatory consultations led by in-country democracy and civil rights advocates, or at least reflecting their own vision of the end game of the “transition”.

Project Goal
The goal of this 36-month program is to promote democracy and human rights protection through incorporating TJAR in decision-making on conflict resolution and stability, development, and reconstruction planning in MENA countries. This program has three strategic objectives: (1) to support transitional justice, accountability and reconciliation mechanisms and processes through the provision of technical support; (2) to build in-country civil society capacity on TJAR issues, including on advocacy and documenting human rights violations; and (3) to increase awareness among target groups about TJAR.

Project Details
NPWJ will manage the program using a modular system where external assistance will be provided to and through local actors. NPWJ will monitor and analyse developments in the region and, in consultation with partners, will determine the most appropriate cluster of activities in a given country at any given time, based also on needs as perceived by local stakeholders and long time NPWJ partners in the region, including the Arab Transitional Justice Working Group. The program is a flexible and responsive system, allowing for immediate responses to needs as they arise, by rolling out, combining or merging activity modules based on short lived windows of opportunity with potential for lasting political impact. Target countries include Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

Project Activities
The project will continuously monitor and evaluate target countries to identify clusters of activity modules for the selected target country or countries. Each module is designed to address specific TJAR issues as they arise in each country: they are not necessarily sequential, each responds to a different set of needs. Activity modules already identified include:

1. Activity 1: Technical assistance for designing and implementing TJAR mechanisms, including technical assistance to policy-makers and training for officials and staff of TJAR mechanisms.
2. Activity 2: Technical assistance for gathering and preserving evidence, including working with local actors to gather and preserve evidence for use in TJAR processes.
3. Activity 3: Civil society advocacy capacity-building on transitional justice, accountability and reconciliation, including training and mentoring to build civil society advocacy capacity on TJAR issues.
4. Activity 4: Civil society capacity-building to document human rights abuses, including training and mentoring for civil society on documenting, analysing and presenting information about human rights abuses. Participating organisations will be encouraged to form a network to design and implement a documentation project.
5. Activity 5: Civil society capacity-building to conduct outreach campaigns, including training and mentoring for civil society on conducting outreach campaigns on TJAR. Participating organisations will be encouraged to form a network to design and implement an outreach project.