



# Center for African Studies

Spring 2018 Colloquium  
Tuesdays, 12:30 – 2:00 PM  
223 Moses Hall

February 27

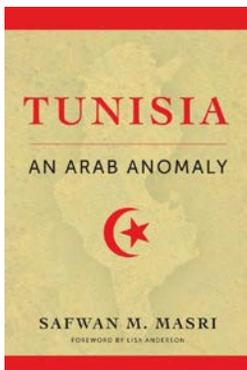
## Understanding the Tunisian Anomaly: An Inquiry into a History of Reform

Safwan Masri

Executive Vice President for Global Centers and Global  
Development, Columbia University  
Senior Research Scholar, School of International and Public  
Affairs (SIPA), Columbia University



In his talk, O'Connell will discuss how how effectively international criminal courts and regional human rights institutions The Arab Spring began and ended with Tunisia. In a region beset by brutal repression, humanitarian disasters, and civil war, Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution alone gave way to a peaceful transition to a functioning democracy. Within four short years, Tunisians passed a progressive constitution, held fair parliamentary elections, and ushered in the country's first-ever democratically elected president. But did Tunisia simply avoid the misfortunes that befell its neighbors, or were there particular features that set the country apart and made it a special case? How does the country consolidate its democratic gains as civil society and government priorities clash over issues of security, transitional justice, and economic reform?



Drawing on his recent book, *Tunisia: An Arab Anomaly* (Columbia University Press, 2017), Professor Safwan Masri will examine the factors that contributed to Tunisia's experience after the Arab Spring, focusing on the country's history of reformism in the domains of education, religion, and women's rights. Masri will argue that the seeds for today's relatively liberal and democratic society were planted as far back as the middle of the nineteenth century. These factors have not only been missing in other Arab counties, but an opposite, regressive trajectory has been followed in much of the rest of the region.

Professor Safwan M. Masri is Executive Vice President for Global Centers and Global Development at Columbia University, and a Senior Research Scholar at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA).

In his role as EVP, Masri directs a number of Columbia's global initiatives and is responsible for the development of an expanding network of Global Centers, located in Amman, Beijing, Istanbul, Mumbai, Nairobi, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, and Tunis. These centers work to advance Columbia's global mission and extend the University's reach to address the pressing demands of our global society.