A decade ago, just before Valentine’s Day, everything changed on the day Oscar Pistorius killed his girlfriend.

The former Paralympic champion sprinter is now halfway through his prison sentence and will soon be set for possible parole.

A committee is meeting in Pretoria on Friday to decide whether to release the 36-year-old former stadium king, who has had both legs amputated and was convicted of the February 2013 murder of Reeva Steenkamp, the South African justice department and prison service said.

The decision of the committee, which includes representatives of the prison service, the police and civilians, is expected in the coming days, after deliberation. Under South African law, a convicted person can be granted a suspended sentence once half of his sentence has been served.

Oscar Pistorius, sentenced on appeal to 13 years and 5 months in prison in November 2017, has been eligible since July 2021. His behaviour in detention, his physical and mental state and the risk of re-offending will be scrutinised.

“The commission must determine whether the objective of imprisonment has been achieved,” prison administration spokesman Singabakho Nxumalo told AFP.

The long process, which began more than a year ago, included a meeting last year with the victim’s parents. They expressed shock at the idea of their daughter’s killer being released.

– Judicial saga –

On the night of 13-14 February 2013, the South African athlete was in his ultra-secure Pretoria residence with his partner. Convinced that a burglar had broken in, he shot through the bathroom door. Reeva Steenkamp, a 29-year-old model, was shot four times.

Six-time Paralympic champion Oscar Pistorius was rich, famous and at the height of his fame. A year earlier, he had become a legend by competing with the able-bodied in the 400 metres at the London Olympics, a first for a double amputee.

“Blade Runner”, as he was nicknamed, was arrested in the early hours of 14 February. He pleads misunderstanding.

Charged with manslaughter, he was sentenced in 2014 to five years in prison at first instance. The former stadium star wept during his trial, which was broadcast live on television.

The prosecutor’s office demanded a reclassification as murder and appealed. Appearing before the judges on his stumps, he showed himself “broken”, according to the defence.

The world became fascinated by the case and the judicial saga kept the media on its toes: the former champion was sentenced to six years in prison for murder in 2016.

Except in exceptional circumstances, the minimum sentence for murder in South Africa is 15 years. The prosecution believes that the courts have again been too lenient and is appealing again.

In 2017, the Supreme Court of Appeal sentenced Oscar Pistorius to 13 years and 5 months in prison.

Reeva Steenkamp’s parents tell the press that their daughter “can finally rest in peace”.

Failed by his sponsors, ruined, the stadium idol sells his house to pay his lawyers. He is incarcerated in a prison near Pretoria.

The victim’s mother, June Steenkamp, will attend the hearing on Friday, Tania Koen, the parents’ lawyer, told AFP.

The father, Barry Steenkamp, will not be able to attend for health reasons but the couple will submit their arguments in writing. “After that, the law will take its course,” the lawyer said, without giving further details about Steenkamp’s state of mind.

If parole is denied, the inmate will be able to request a review of his application.