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Israel: Mordechai Vanunu sentence clear violation of human rights

Amnesty International today condemned the decision of an Israeli court to sentence Mordechai Vanunu, the anti-nuclear whistle-blower, to a further six months in prison for violating a ban on speaking to foreigners.

The organization considers Mordechai Vanunu to be a prisoner of conscience and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

"Israel is bound by international law not to impose arbitrary restrictions on Mordechai Vanunu, including on his right to travel within the country or abroad, his right to peaceful association with others and his right to express his opinions," Amnesty International said today.

Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Israel has ratified and is obliged to uphold, stipulates that:

"everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence" and that "everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own".

Background:

The Jerusalem Magistrate's Court sentenced Mordechai Vanunu on 2 July 2007 to six months in jail for violating the terms of his parole.

The conditions of Vanunu's parole were issued on his release after serving 18 years in prison for exposing secrets relating to Israel's nuclear capabilities to the British Sunday Times newspaper in 1986. He is former technician at Israel's nuclear plant near the southern town of Dimona. Upon his release in 2004, Vanunu was banned from leaving the country and talking to foreigners without approval, because Israeli authorities claimed he could still divulge classified information. Some two months ago, Vanunu was convicted of 14 parole violations including contact with journalists and attempts to leave Israel proper to go to Bethlehem, which is in the West Bank. The court's sentence was unexpected, and even the prosecution expected the court to hand down a suspended sentence, meant solely as a deterrent.

Amnesty International has up until this date been lobbying for the lifting of restrictions imposed on Vanunu.

"Israel is bound by international law not to impose arbitrary restrictions on Mordechai Vanunu, including on his right to travel within the country or abroad, his right to peaceful association with others and his right to express his opinions" - Amnesty International press release of 19 April 2004 (AI Index: MDE 15/041/2004).

Public Document

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