

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Israel/Occupied Territories: No restrictions or conditions must be imposed on Mordechai Vanunu upon his release**

Amnesty International urges the Israeli authorities not to impose any restrictions or conditions on former nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu upon his release on Wednesday after 18 years in jail.

"Mordechai Vanunu should be allowed to exercise his rights to freedom of movement, association and expression in Israel and should be allowed to leave the country if he wishes," said Amnesty International. "His release is long overdue and Israel must not continue to violate his fundamental human rights once he is released from prison."

Vanunu, who worked as a technician at Israel's Dimona nuclear facility from 1976 to 1985, was sent to jail 18 years ago for exposing secrets relating to Israel's nuclear capabilities. In an interview with the UK-based Sunday Times in 1986, Vanunu revealed evidence that Israel possessed and produced nuclear weapons. Israel, which to date has refused to sign the nuclear non proliferation treaty, has never confirmed or denied the information.

Vanunu maintained that he acted out of conscience to expose Israel's policy of building nuclear weapons with no debate or authorization from its own citizens.

On 30 September 1986, Vanunu was kidnapped in Rome by agents of Mossad, Israel's secret services. He was drugged and secretly shipped to Israel. After a secret trial, he was sentenced to 18 years on charges of treason and espionage. His repeated requests for early parole were consistently rejected by the Israeli authorities. On 21 April he will have served his 18-year prison sentence in full.

In recent months Israeli officials have publicly supported and called for Vanunu to be detained beyond expiry of his sentence, or for his freedom to be restricted upon his release. Available information indicates that the Israeli authorities intend to impose heavy restrictions on Vanunu's freedom upon his release, including banning him from leaving the country, confining him to assigned residence, and denying him the right to be in contact with journalists and foreigners.

"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," said Amnesty International.

Vanunu has expressed the desire to travel to the United States upon his release to be with his adoptive parents and to recover from the physical and psychological strain of 18 years in prison, mostly in solitary confinement.

Israeli officials contend that restricting Vanunu's freedom upon his release is necessary to prevent him from divulging further secrets about Israel's nuclear arsenal.

"Israel's determination to curtail Vanunu's freedom and contact with the outside world seem to be intended to prevent him from revealing details of his abduction by Israeli secret service agents 18 years ago in Rome in what was clearly an unlawful act," said Amnesty International.

Vanunu has repeatedly stated that he revealed all the information he had in 1986 and that he has no further information.

"Vanunu must not be subject to arbitrary restrictions and violations of his fundamental rights on the basis of pretexts or suspicions about what he may do the future," said Amnesty International.

### **Background**

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".

The rights to freedom of expression and association are guaranteed by Articles 19 and 21 of the same Covenant.

### **Public Document**

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