

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### Israel: Mordechai Vanunu sentence clear violation of human rights

Amnesty International condemns the decision of an Israeli court to sentence the anti-nuclear whistle-blower, Mordechai Vanunu, to six months' imprisonment for refusing to abide by arbitrary restrictions on his right to freedom of expression and movement. These restrictions were imposed in 2004, upon his release from 18 years in jail for revealing details of Israel's nuclear arsenal to a British newspaper.

Mordechai Vanunu was sentenced on 2 July 2007 by the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court, following his conviction on 30 April 2007 for breaching the restrictions imposed on him in 2004, in particular for contacting foreign journalists shortly after his release from prison in November 2004 and for attempting to leave Jerusalem to attend Christmas mass in Bethlehem in December 2004. Since his release in 2004 he has been subject to an order prohibiting him from speaking to foreign nationals, from going to certain areas in Israel and from travelling abroad.

Mordechai Vanunu remains at liberty on bail pending his appeal against the conviction and sentence. If he were imprisoned Amnesty International would consider him a prisoner of conscience and would call for his immediate and unconditional release. The organization reiterates its calls on Israel to immediately lift the restrictions imposed on Mordechai Vanunu, to allow him to leave the country if he wishes and to exercise his rights to freedom of movement, association and expression in Israel.

Israel is prohibited under international law from imposing on any citizen arbitrary restrictions on, among things, their rights to travel within a country or abroad, to peacefully associate with others and to express their opinions. Article 12 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Israel has ratified and is obliged to uphold, stipulates 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.

#### Background:

Mordechai Vanunu, a former technician at Israel's nuclear plant near the southern town of Dimona, spent 18 years in prison for revealing details of the country's nuclear arsenal to the British newspaper *The Sunday Times* in 1986. He was abducted by Israeli secret service (Mossad) agents in Italy on 30 September 1986 and secretly taken to Israel. Unlike most Israeli prisoners, Vanunu did not benefit from early release on parole but had to serve his 18-year prison term in full.

Upon his release in 2004, Mordechai Vanunu was banned from leaving the country and talking to foreigners, because Israeli authorities claimed he could still divulge classified information. He has repeatedly stated that he revealed all he knew about Israel's nuclear arsenal in 1986 and that he has no further information, and he and his lawyers have pointed out that the information he had at the time of his imprisonment more than 20 years ago has now long been in the public domain and is out of date.

Israeli officials contend that restricting Vanunu's freedom is necessary to prevent him from divulging further secrets about Israel's nuclear program. Amnesty International has stated that 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 20 years ago in Rome in what was clearly an unlawful act.