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Israel: Vanunu should now be released, says Amnesty International

After Mordechai Vanunu was allowed out of solitary confinement for the first time in more than 11 years, Amnesty International calls for the Israeli authorities to go one step further and release him as redress for the persistent and past human rights violations to which he has been subjected.

"To allow out of solitary confinement someone who should never have been in such appalling, dehumanising conditions is only a first step," Amnesty International said today. "Mordechai Vanunu should now be released."

Mordechai Vanunu's fundamental human rights have been consistently violated ever since he disclosed classified information to the *Sunday Times* newspaper in London, saying that, despite denials, Israel was running a major secret nuclear weapons program. His abduction from Rome in September 1986 by agents of the Israeli Government constituted arbitrary arrest and detention. He was then held in secret, unacknowledged detention until November 1986. His trial was also secret and he has been prevented from speaking -- sometimes by being physically gagged -- at every court appearance since then.

For the first time on Thursday Mordechai Vanunu was allowed out of isolation in Ashkelon Prison to mingle with other Israeli prisoners.

Amnesty International delegates and members have consistently been told by Israeli officials that Mordechai Vanunu cannot be freed or allowed to mix with others because disclosure of his 12-year-old information posed a threat to Israel's security.

"Now that the Israeli authorities have, by their actions, buried this lie, we call on them once again to end this sorry history once and for all and release Mordechai Vanunu," Amnesty International said.

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