

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT



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## Israel: Allow Mordechai Vanunu to travel to events on whistleblower protection

As his lawyers petition the Israeli Supreme Court this week, Amnesty International is calling on the Israeli authorities to lift the bar on nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu leaving Israel so that he can attend events being organized in the UK in June on the protection of whistleblowers.

Fifty-four UK parliamentarians have invited Mordechai Vanunu to speak to the UK Houses of Parliament in London on 18 June about his 18-year prison sentence for revealing information about Israel's nuclear capacity in 1986 and the 10 years he has spent since his release in 2004 living under punitive restrictions. Amnesty International considers the restrictions to violate his rights to freedom of movement, expression and assembly.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International is inviting Mordechai Vanunu to join a [panel](#) of prominent speakers at the Frontline Club in London on 17 June to present their work for greater protection of whistleblowers around the world. They include the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue, and individuals connected to recent cases of whistleblowers whose human rights have been violated, including Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning.

Mordechai Vanunu's defence team are currently preparing to petition the Israeli Supreme Court this week to allow him to travel to attend the events in London in June. An Israeli Ministry of Interior ban is in place preventing Mordechai Vanunu from leaving Israel and is expected to be renewed by the end of this month. Vanunu is also not permitted to enter consulates or embassies or to go within 500 metres of international borders, border passages, harbours or airports.

A military order banning Vanunu from participating in internet chats and communicating with foreign nationals, including journalists, without obtaining permission has just been renewed. At the end of May, when the current restrictions on him expire, Vanunu's defence team will petition the Supreme Court for *all* of them to be lifted.

Avigdor Feldman, Vanunu's lawyer, told Amnesty International: "Upholding these undemocratic and ridiculous restrictions, for the last 10 years, after Vanunu served a prison sentence of 18 years has nothing to do with the security of the state, but are vindictive and cruel steps, which serve one purpose, to outcast Vanunu and destroy him as a human being and as a true anti-nuclear activist".

Amnesty International believes that the Israeli authorities' justification for their actions – that Vanunu could reveal further secret information about Israel's nuclear arsenal and that he is a national security threat – are spurious. Vanunu's knowledge of Israel's nuclear capacity is restricted to 1986, almost 30 years ago. As he has said repeatedly, he has no more information. The information he does have is publicly available, not to mention completely irrelevant today.

According to nuclear physicist Frank Barnaby, who [interviewed](#) Vanunu in September 1986 in his role as a consultant to the UK newspaper *The Sunday Times* prior to its publication of Vanunu's revelations, he was motivated by a belief that the Israeli and international public had a right to know about Israel's nuclear weapons programme; and that "he seemed to be acting ideologically".

The panellists participating in the Frontline Club event have first-hand knowledge of the retaliation whistleblowers face for their actions. On 17 June, they will explore how whistleblowers can be

protected, and by extension how the public's right to information can be protected. This includes implementing measures such as those laid out in the 2013 [Global Principles on National Security and the Right to Information \("Tshwane Principles"\)](#).

They will talk about the failure of governments around the world to protect whistleblowers and instead subject them to various forms of retaliation, including prosecution, for disclosing information governments want to keep secret. This includes information about human rights violations.

### **Background**

Mordechai Vanunu is a former technician at Israel's nuclear plant near the southern town of Dimona. He revealed details of the country's nuclear arsenal to *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. He was tried and sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment.

He was held in prolonged secret detention, in violation of the prohibition of arbitrary arrest or detention contained in Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). There are also serious concerns about the secrecy of his trial and the severe nature of the charges on which he was convicted, as well as the 11 years he spent in solitary confinement between 1986 and 2004, which amounted to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The ongoing restrictions against him are arbitrary and contrary to Israel's obligations under international law, particularly the ICCPR, which prohibits arbitrary interference in the rights to freedom of movement, freedom of expression and freedom of association and protects individuals from being punished again for the same offence. The restrictions are not part of any parole conditions imposed since he served his full sentence.

In May 2010 Mordechai Vanunu was imprisoned for three months, after being convicted of breaching his restrictions by speaking to foreigners and attempting to attend Christmas Mass in Bethlehem.

*For more information see:*

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE15/024/2010/en>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/israeli-nuclear-whistleblower-returned-solitary-confinement-2010-06-18>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE15/013/2010/en>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE15/019/2010/en>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE15/046/1991/en>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/usa-commute-bradley-manning-s-sentence-and-investigate-abuses-he-exposed-2013-08-21>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/usa-must-not-hunt-down-whistleblower-edward-snowden-2013-06-24>

Public Document

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