

Israel's Nuclear Weapons Program

What Americans Need to know about Mordechai Vanunu

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I'm not a traitor. I'm a man with a conscience who did what he did out of a deep belief after much thought and many doubts. But I knew that I had to do it, that I had no choice...somebody had to do it...I contributed my share by making public what the public ought to know and they shut my mouth behind the prison walls. -Mordechai Vanunu

Mordechai Vanunu was released from Ashkelon prison to open air captivity in east Jerusalem on April 21, 2004 after 18 years.

In 1986, Mordechai Vanunu was clubbed, drugged, bound and kidnapped from Rome by the Mossad because he told the truth and provided the photographic proof of their clandestine 7 story underground WMD facility in the Negev.

In the case of Mordechai Vanunu, Americans need to know that the restrictions that have held him captive in Jerusalem come from the Emergency Defense Regulations which were implemented by Britain against Palestinians and Jews after World War II.

After WW II, Attorney Yaccov Shapiro, who later became Israel's Minister Of Justice, described the Emergency Defense Regulations as "unparalleled in any civilized country: there were no such laws in Nazi Germany."

During one of my seven trips to Jerusalem since 2005, I asked Vanunu, "If the British Mandate has expired why not the British Mandate's Emergency Defense Regulations?"

Vaunu replied, "The reason given is security but it is because Israel is not a democracy unless you are a Jew. This administration tells me I am not allowed to speak to foreigners, the Media, and the world. But I do because that is how I prove my true humanity to the world. My freedom of speech trial began January 25, 2006 for speaking to the media, the same day as the Palestinian elections...When I decided to expose Israel's nuclear weapons I acted out of conscience and to warn the world to prevent a nuclear holocaust."

In 1963, Peres was Israel's Deputy Minister of Defense when he met with President Kennedy at the White House. Kennedy told Peres, "You know that we follow very closely the discovery of any nuclear development in the region. This could create a very dangerous situation. For this reason we monitor your nuclear effort. What could you tell me about this?"

Peres replied, "I can tell you most clearly that we will not introduce nuclear weapons to the region, and certainly we will not be the first."

In 2005, Vanunu told me, "President Kennedy tried to stop Israel from building atomic

weapons. In 1963, he forced Prime Minister Ben Gurion to admit the Dimona was not a textile plant, as the sign outside proclaimed, but a nuclear plant. The Prime Minister said, "The nuclear reactor is only for peace."

"Kennedy insisted on an open internal inspection. He wrote letters demanding that Ben Gurion open up the Dimona for inspection. The French were responsible for the actual building of the Dimona. The Germans gave the money; they were feeling guilty for the Holocaust, and tried to pay their way out. Everything inside was written in French, when I was there, almost twenty years ago.

"Back then, the Dimona descended seven floors underground. In 1955, Perez and Gurion met with the French to agree they would get a nuclear reactor if they fought against Egypt to control the Sinai and Suez Canal. That was the war of 1956. Eisenhower demanded that Israel leave the Sinai, but the reactor plant deal continued on.

"When Johnson became president, he made an agreement with Israel that two senators would come every year to inspect. Before the senators would visit, the Israelis would build a wall to block the underground elevators and stairways. From 1963 to '69, the senators came, but they never knew about the wall that hid the rest of the Dimona from them.

"Nixon stopped the inspections and agreed to ignore the situation. As a result, Israel increased production. In 1986, there were over two hundred bombs. Today, they may have enough plutonium for ten bombs a year."

On January 25, 2006, after nearly two years of speaking to hundreds of foreigners since his release from prison, Vanunu was convicted by the Jerusalem Magistrates Court of 15 violations of a military order that had prohibited him from talking to non-Israelis and because he attempted to "leave the state" by taking a cab from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to attend Christmas Eve mass at the Church of the Nativity in 2004. The original indictment included 22 different violations; Vanunu was charged with 19 and acquitted of four. He was acquitted of speaking to foreign nationals on the internet and via video and voice chats.

Just prior to the taping of "30 Minutes with Vanunu" on March 26, 2006, Vanunu told me, "Many journalists come here to the American Colony, from CNN and NY Times. They all want to cover my story, but their EDITORS say no...CNN wants to interview me; but they say they can't do it because they don't want problems with the Israeli censor. BBC is doing the same thing. Sixty Minutes from the United States from the beginning they wanted to do a program, but because of the censor situation they decide not to do it."

On July 2, 2007, Israel sentenced Vanunu to six more months in jail for speaking to foreign media in 2004. On September 23, 2008, the Jerusalem District Court reduced Vanunu's sentence to three months, "In light of (Vanunu's) ailing health and the absence of claims that his actions put the country's security in jeopardy."

On June 14, 2009, Vanunu told me, "The Central Commander of the General Army testified in court that it is OK if I speak in public as long as I do not talk about nuclear weapons."

Vanunu's restrictions will be reviewed again by the Israeli High Court after Dec. 21, 2009. On July 6, 2009, the Supreme Court stated, "pending a review of his conduct, Vanunu will be able to ask for the restrictions to be lifted and be allowed to travel abroad...The state's representative noted that six months may be too short a time period to determine a change

in Vanunu's behavior and that the state will reconsider the restrictions based not only on Vanunu's behavior but a host of other considerations, including the time that had lapsed since he divulged state secrets to the British paper." [1]

It will soon be twenty-four years since Vanunu "divulged state secrets" and as Vanunu told me, "All the secrets I had were published in 1989 in an important book, by [Nuclear Physicist] Frank Barnaby, *The Invisible Bomb: Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East.*" [2]

Regarding Israeli behavior towards Vanunu, Americans need to know that in 1986, Israel kidnapped him from Rome but Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states: "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention", including abduction of a person by agents of one state to another state.

Vanunu was charged with and convicted of treason and espionage. According to Section 99 of the Israeli Penal Code, treason is defined as "an act calculated to assist (an enemy) in time of war...delivering information with the intention that it fall into the hands of the enemy."

Section 113 defines aggravated espionage as "deliver(ing) any secret information without being authorized to do so and with intent to impair the security of the state" and a sub-clause provides for a penalty of seven years for the unauthorized collection, preparation, recording or holding of secret information; if this is done with intent to impair the security of the state and then, the penalty is increased to 15 years.

Vanunu got 18 years and was also rendered defenseless when the court ruled that his motivations were not ideological and they refused to allow Vanunu's own statements regarding his intentions to be considered in his defense.

A few days before Vanunu was lured from London to Rome, where he was clubbed, drugged and kidnapped by the Mossad, he spent three days being interviewed by Nuclear Physicist, Frank Barnaby.

Barnaby had been employed by the London Sunday Times to review the 57 photos Vanunu had obtained at various restricted locations in the Dimona and he also went to Jerusalem to provide expert testimony at Vanunu's closed door trial.

Barnaby testified, "I found the fact that Vanunu was able to smuggle a camera and films into and out of Dimona and photograph highly sensitive areas in the establishment astonishing. I very vigorously cross-examined Vanunu, relentlessly asking the same questions in a number of different ways and at different times...I found Vanunu very straightforward about his motives for violating Israel's secrecy laws he explained to me that he believed that both the Israeli and the world public had the right to know about the information he passed on. He seemed to me to be acting ideologically.

"Israel's political leaders have, he said, consistently lied about Israel's nuclear-weapons programme and he found this unacceptable in a democracy. The knowledge that Vanunu had about Israel's nuclear weapons, about the operations at Dimona, and about security at Dimona could not be of any use to anyone today. He left Dimona in October 1985 and the design of today's Israeli nuclear weapons will have been considerably changed since then...Modern nuclear weapons bear little relationship to those of the mid-1980." [3]

A total of 1,200 pages of transcript of that closed door trial have been released and Vanunu

told the court: "I wanted to confirm what everyone knew, I didn't want Israel to go on denying that it had nuclear weapons, and Shimon Peres to go on lying to (then US president) Ronald Reagan, saying that we didn't have a nuclear arsenal. I also wanted controls to be placed on these weapons." [4]

Defense witness and the Sunday Times journalist who broke Vanunu's story, Peter Hounam, stated, "It is clear that, as far as Vanunu's accusers are concerned, the trial is not only about whether this decision to reveal the secrets of Israel's atom bomb amounted to treason and espionage, it is also about whether his decision to become a Christian was at the root of his alleged treachery".

Hounam also testified that "We did not pay him money, but only covered his expenses... Money did not motivate him." [5]

Sunday Times journalist Wendy Robbins wrote, "Mordechai never asked for nor received a single penny for his information... he blurted out the whole tale without first setting out any financial preconditions. Mordechai got nothing out of the whole episode. He never 'sold' Israel's secrets — he told them."

In the 80's, Vanunu was transported to and from his closed door trial in a crash helmet, handcuffs and leg-irons, inside a van with blacked out windows that blasted noise to assure Vanunu would not communicate with journalists or supporters. During the court hearings, two Israeli security agents flanked him at all times in order to be able to cover his mouth if he began to reveal anything they deemed secret. The public, the press and all observers—even Amnesty International- were excluded from the hearings and the court's judgment was censored before publication.

On January 25, 2006, the first day of a freedom of speech trial in Israel only two reporters from minor media showed up for Vanunu's historic court case. Not one was in the court room on February 22, 2006, when it was revealed that Israel had gotten Microsoft to hand over all the details of Vanunu's Hotmail account before a court order had been obtained by eluding that he was being charged for espionage.

Vanunu wrote, "Microsoft obeyed the orders and gave them all the details...three months before I was arrested and my computers were confiscated...it is strange to ask Microsoft to give this information before obtaining the court order to listen to my private conversations. It means they wanted to go through my emails in secret, or maybe, with the help of the secret services, the Shaback, Mossad...Sfard [Vanunu's attorney] proved that the police had misled the judges who gave the orders to arrest me: to search my room, to go through my email, to confiscate my computers and that they misled Microsoft to believe they are helping in a case of espionage. The State came to the court with two special secret Government orders; Hisaion [documents or information that are deemed confidential by the government and kept from the court, the defendant, and lawyers.] This allows the prosecution to keep documents related to my court hearing secret. One was from the Minister for Interior Security and one from the Minister of Defense."

Americans need to know that Vanunu's secretly taped police interrogations, his 2004 Christmas Eve arrest for "attempting to leave the country" when he attempted to celebrate his first Christmas out of prison at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the confiscation of his private property by thirty Israeli Forces that stormed into his room at St. George's Cathedral in 2004, according to Vanunu had all "been done...under the false and

misleading statements to the courts of 'suspicion of espionage', and yet they are not charging me with spy crimes... and the fact is that I have not committed any crimes."

When Vanunu next faces the Israeli Supreme Court, the world will know more about Israeli democracy and Justice. Until then, learn more @ <http://vanunu.com/> and see and hear Vanunu in 2005, 2006, 2008 video interviews freely streaming @ VANUNU ARCHIVES: <http://wearewideawake.org/>

Notes

1. <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1246443734213&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>
2. http://www.wearewideawake.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1370&Itemid=223
3. <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/israel/barnaby.pdf>
4. <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/onvan.htm>
5. <http://www.toysatellite.org/babel/vanunu/vaninfo.html#top>

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