Press Release, October 4th 2010
Carl-von-Ossietzky-Medal for Mordechai Vanunu
Award Ceremony, 11am, 12th December 2010, in Berlin

For over a quarter of a century, Mordechai Vanunu has been engaging in the struggle for total nuclear disarmament, for transparent democracy and for peace among nations with outstanding civil courage and fortitude.

He first became internationally known in 1986, when he released information to a British newspaper about the Negev Nuclear Research Centre operating near Dimona in the Negev desert that Israel had built in the 1950s and 60s. After examining this information, a British nuclear physicist and an American nuclear arms specialist concluded that plutonium produced and processed at this atomic plant would enable Israel to produce between 100 and 200 atomic weapons.

Vanunu had worked as a technician in the atomic plant for nine years. He decided to make the information public because he had been alarmed by the amounts of radioactive plutonium being produced in Israel. He had wanted to to inform the Israeli and the international public, especially as the Israeli leadership had left its own people completely in the dark about its atomic programme, an unacceptable situation in a democratic state.

Even before the information had been published, Vanunu was lured to Rome by a female Mossad agent at the end of September 1986, where he was kidnapped and transported to Ashdod. In a strictly secret judicial proceeding, a military court sentenced him to 18 years imprisonment for high treason and espionage in March 1988.

During his confinement, he has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize several times, and in 1987 he was awarded the Alternative Nobel Prize. More awards were to follow.

On April 21st 2004, Vanunu was released from prison, having served the full term, 11 years of which were spent in the solitary confinement of a small cell.

Yet he was released under strict conditions that show total contempt for universal human rights: Vanunu is, amongst other things, not allowed to leave Israel and is forbidden contact with foreign embassies or journalists. He is obliged to inform the authorities of all his movements.

Despite being confined in Israel, where he has been denied any freedom of movement and communication, Mordechai Vanunu has nevertheless managed to give countless interviews, for which he has been repeatedly imprisoned.

The most recent case was on May 10th of this year, when he was sentenced to three months for giving an interview to a foreign correspondent.

A hearing on Vanunu's illegal confinement in Israel has been scheduled at the Israeli Supreme Court for 9 am on 11th October 2010.

Vanunu's courageous conduct unquestionably recalls Carl von Ossietsky's undaunted resistance against armament and war during the Weimar Republic.

In awarding Mordechai Vanunu, the International League for Human Rights would like to draw international attention to the fact that he is still being held prisoner in Israel, deprived of elementary civil and human rights, although he has already served his prison sentence in full, and regardless of the fact that his information is now a quarter of a century old.

Likewise, 65 years after the first atomic bombs were dropped by the USA on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Vanunu's reminder of the dangers posed by nuclear weapons of mass destruction, for man and nature, should be strengthened, and his relentless efforts towards their worldwide abolition given continued support.

In the spirit of Carl von Ossietsky, the League urgently beseeches the Israeli Government to grant Mordechai Vanunu the freedom to travel so that he can personally accept the Carl von Ossietsky Medal 2010 in Berlin.