

Nobel laureates urge Israel to let Vanunu receive int'l rights award

Atomic whistleblower seeks to attend ceremony granting him the International League of Human Rights' Carl von Ossietzky Medal in Berlin.

By [Yossi Melman](#)

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Nobel laureates have petitioned Israel's government to allow atomic whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu to leave the country so that he may receive an award issued by the International League of Human Rights in Berlin.

The award Vanunu is to receive is the Carl von Ossietzky Medal, named after the renowned German pacifist, who had opposed the Nazi regime, and who was later held in a concentration camp and murdered.

Ossietzky is also famous to have been denied the Nobel Peace Prize laureate as a result of Nazi Germany's unwillingness to allow the peace activist to leave its border when he was named laureate in 1935.

Vanunu was named as this year's recipient in October, at which time the International League of Human Rights issued an open letter urging the Israeli government to allow Vanunu to participate in the ceremony.

The letter was signed, among others, by several Nobel laureates, such as Mairead Corrigan-Maguire, German writer Günter Grass, chemist Harold W. Kroto, physicist Jack Steinberger, as well as singer Nina Hagen, author Felicia Langer, and former Vice President of the European Union Luisa Morgantini.

Following the letter, Vanunu's attorney Michael Sfar sent a letter to Interior Minister Eli Yishai and Deputy State Prosecutor Shai Nitzan, saying the atomic whistleblower was willing to commit himself to returning to Israel following the ceremony in Berlin.

In his letter Sfar asked whether "Israel was interested in joining the unlovely ranks of nations who prevented their citizens from receiving international prizes by preventing their arrival at ceremonies?"

The comment by Vanunu's lawyer cites, among others, communist Poland which prevented Lech Wałęsa from receiving the Nobel Peace Prize as well as the Soviet Union, which barred author Boris Pasternak from claiming the Nobel Prize in Literature.

It should be marked that ,currently, China is preventing 2010 Nobel Peace Prize laureate dissident Liu Xiaobo from leaving the country.

Vanunu was convicted of treason and imprisoned for 18 years after telling a British newspaper in 1986 about his work as a technician at Israel's main atomic reactor, disclosures which cracked the secrecy around the assumed Israeli nuclear arsenal.

He was released from prison in 2004 but has not been allowed to leave Israel. In 2007, Vanunu was sentenced to six months in prison for violating the terms of his parole.

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