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I thank the International Human Rights League in Berlin for inviting me to speak.

The League is to be commended for its decision to give this year's Karl Von Ossietzky medal to Mordechai Vanunu. It is a courageous decision and in my view a correct and fitting one. I will say more about that later in this address.

I was asked to begin with a few words about myself. I am a native of Berlin, 1935, and a survivor of Krystallnacht, pogrom which I experienced as a small child in Berlin. On my father's side as well as my mother's, my family has deep roots in Germany that go back for centuries. If not for the rise of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust that followed, we almost certainly would have remained in Germany – my father with a successful medical practice, my mother as a photographer and documenter of landscapes and countries. If I continue to speculate: I would have grown up to be a German journalist, maybe entered political life, gotten elected to the parliament, and from there, who knows, to the Chancellor position, the sky is the limit when I take flight on the wings of imagination of “what would have happened if ...”

But in fact, none of that happened, and in March 1939 we emigrated, battered and bruised, to Jerusalem, Palestine, which was then under British rule.

Israel is a state of refugees, but to my dismay many – including the governments of Israel – have forgotten that and adopted the disgusting patterns of behaviour from which we suffered so much.

I too am a refugee, but I did not forget it, hence my commitment to human rights, social justice and peace, not only for Jews, but for all human beings. That is not obvious to several ministers in the government of Israel.

These principles make me part of the minority in Israel. There are those in Israel and the Jewish Establishments in various countries, including Germany, who define people like me as enemies of Israel, as facilitators of anti-Israeli propaganda and encouragers of anti-Semitism and hatred of Israel.

Be that as it may, I have the honour of informing you that I am not an enemy of Israel, but I am indeed an enemy of racism, wars, human rights violations and weapons of mass destruction – nuclear, biological and chemical. And that, unfortunately, places me in opposition to the Israeli government and a substantial part of the Israeli public. I am committed to expressing this message all over the world, because these positions transcend continents and national borders.

When the nuclear mushroom cloud rises over our region it will not ask me: are you a Jew? OK, you are exempt from radioactive contamination. Are you an

Arab or a Muslim? Then it is your fate to be roasted alive.

In December 1960 Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, made a brief statement in the Knesset announcing the construction of the nuclear reactor at Dimona. He added that it was a research reactor that would be open to scientists from all over the world. Already then it was clear that that was a lie. The reactor was built for military purposes with the help of France as a reward for Israel's support during France's war against Algerian independence. Israel's nuclear sin is linked to its sin of supporting French colonialism.

Israel is a nuclear power on the same scale as Britain, France and China. Israel has launched a nuclear arms race in a dangerous region, the Middle East. Israel has become a Garden of Eden for weapons of mass destruction – nuclear, biological and chemical. Estimates of the number of nuclear and hydrogen bombs in Israel's possession range between 100 and 450. To that must be added the chemical and biological weapons that Israel is developing in the biological institute at Ness Ziona. Here we have a historical irony: a state of the survivors of Auschwitz has turned into a time-bomb for the next holocaust – the nuclear holocaust.

The official Israeli position, that “we will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East” has been known for years now to be misleading, and no one is buying that fake merchandise. That stance

stemmed from an arrangement between Israel and the US that permitted the US to continue to support Israel and thus to circumvent the law passed by the US Congress according to which a state that is developing nuclear weapons in violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty is ineligible to receive US foreign aid.

The government of Israel and the organizations subject to its influence and/or control often make manipulative use of the Holocaust as an instrument to silence voices that are critical of Israel and to tar with the brush of anti-Semitism those who dare to assertively disagree with Israel's policies, especially those related to the Occupation and apartheid that Israel imposes on the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories. More than once this method has proved to be efficient and has pushed people into a defensive corner, thereby diverting fire from Israel towards its critics who now must prove that they are not anti-Semites.

Meanwhile some Israeli leaders have recently made a few slips of the tongue from which it can clearly be understood that Israel has nuclear weapons. Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert did it in an interview with a German newspaper. President Shimon Peres, who for reasons that are unclear won the Nobel Peace Prize, and who sees Israel's nuclear reactor as the pinnacle of his achievements, did it in a documentary film about the creation of the reactor in Dimona. Thus has the policy of "we will not be the first" gone down the drain.

Israel has also pressed the Holocaust into service on the issue of the nuclear arms. The doomsday weapon is intended, the media tell us in the name of the government, to prevent a second Holocaust. Again the Holocaust is used as cover for nefarious policy. In Israel they love to adopt the pose of the eternal victim who is in danger of destruction, along with to the mantra "the whole world is against us." It serves Israel's nuclear pimps very well. Thus do they sow fear in Israel. But the fact of the matter is that Israel is not facing liquidation or destruction from outside (maybe from within – but that is for another discussion). Israel has the strongest and best-equipped army in the Middle East, Israel is armed to the teeth with super-modern weapons, more than enough for self-defence, enough to be an occupying state that rule over another people for nearly 44 years now. There is no need for nuclear weapons.

The issue also of course has ecological and other aspects – for example, a human-made or natural disaster. The reactor in Dimona sits in the Great Rift Valley, an area prone to earthquakes. An earthquake high on the Richter Scale could rupture the reactor and create a radioactive mushroom cloud over Israel, which is thereby in danger of destruction even without war. And then there is the issue of nuclear waste that endangers the water table, particularly critical in a country where there is a shortage of water. And there is always the danger that leaders will use the weapons in a military adventure, or misread the intentions of the adversary, which is of course

particularly dangerous in a region like ours where so many leaders believe they have a direct line to God and think in terms of Armageddon. Not only in Iran; also in Israel.

To my dismay Germany too is part of the picture, all because of that twisted moral and political use to which the Holocaust has been put. Instead of concentrating on the main lesson of the Holocaust, which is to preserve democracy and to struggle for human rights and against racism and tyranny, Germany sees itself – with Israel's encouragement of course – as having the duty to express its commitment to Israel through the provision of military equipment among other things. Germany has provided Israel, as a gift, with three super-modern submarines that can carry nuclear missiles. That is not just a potentiality; it is the current reality. It happened during the incumbency of Foreign Minister and Vice-Chancellor Joschka Fischer, the leader of the Greens. Another absurdity: the Greens, at the root of whose existence is the anti-nuclear struggle, provide the means for nuclear warfare in the most explosive region in the world.

I wrote to a letter to the Green faction in the Bundestag to request that they at least make the delivery of the submarines conditional on an Israeli commitment that they would not be nuclear-armed. The Honourable Members did not bother to answer. The friendship between former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer was stronger than their commitment to the campaign against nuclear weapons. Hence the absurdity that

Germany is helping Israel and the Middle East create the next holocaust as compensation for the previous one. This is what is called systemic madness.

Another point that I want to emphasize is that we oppose nuclear arms in the hands of Iran no less than in those of Israel. As Israelis we naturally focus on the country in which we live, but we are a modest component in an international front of proponents of peace and human rights who see nuclear weapons as a terrible danger in any place, especially in the Middle East and in a fundamentalist state that violates human rights, like Iran.

We hope that the international struggle to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons will succeed through negotiations and not through another war, the consequences of which are liable to be fraught with disaster for all. The fact that Israel is applying pressure everywhere for military action against Iran while hinting at the possibility of unilateral Israeli military action is frightening, for nobody knows what Iran already has in its basement. Israel could play an honourable part in the creation of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction if it would agree, as the party that set the region on the path to nuclear armament, to divest itself of them in a supervised and coordinated process.

In conclusion, a few words about Mordechai Vanunu. When he worked as a technician in the nuclear reactor at Dimona, it became clear to him that he was part of a machine that was making nuclear bombs behind the backs of the citizenry, without reporting to

them and without any public discussion of the matter. He thought that it should be reported to the public. The public's right to know is an important principle in a democratic regime, and certainly so when it comes to issues that affect the lives of every person. He reflected and he acted: he could not publish the information in Israel because the censor would not permit it, so he made use of the democratic press outside Israel, and told the English newspaper the Sunday Times of London what was happening in Dimona. In doing so, he realized the Jewish biblical rule that "You shall surely rebuke your neighbour." (Leviticus 19:17).

Israel acted like a terrorist organization, and in complete disregard of international law, kidnapped Vanunu using Mossad agents, tried him in a closed trial the outcome of which was a foregone conclusion, convicted him of treason and espionage and sent him to prison for 18 years. Vanunu's act was similar to that of Karl Von Ossietzky, who also brought to the public's attention information that the government was trying to conceal. Karl Von Ossietzky too was put on trial for treason, but in the Weimar Republic the judges were more moderate than their Israeli counterparts, and they sentenced him to 18 months in prison.

Mordechai Vanunu and Karl Von Ossietzky were not and are not traitors but humanists who followed the dictates of their consciences on behalf of the citizenry and against governments that were betraying their citizens. Another point they have in common is

international recognition of their actions in the face of rejection and isolation at home.

Karl Von Ossietzky was murdered by the Nazis, but his pacifist action won international recognition, which was expressed among other ways by the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize, which he received while incarcerated.

Mordechai Vanunu too has won recognition and appreciation all over the world as one who has made an important contribution to the international struggle against nuclear weapons. He is the recipient of several peace prizes, and for years now he has also been a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Karl Von Ossietzky has now won recognition from his own people, which Vanunu has not yet done. Vanunu served his full sentence, including 11 years in complete isolation for the purpose of driving him out of his mind so he could be institutionalized for the rest of his days. The State of Israel failed to do that. Vanunu showed himself to be a man of rare personality, willpower and determination and he walked out of prison after 18 years with the same commitment for which he had entered it: opposition to nuclear weapons.

Two more points should be added. First: Few decades ago Mordechai Vanunu joined the Anglican Church. That is an unforgivable sin in a state ruled by religious and nationalist zealotry. In Israel there is no separation of religion and state, and a Jew cannot marry a non-Jew. Israel has not yet internalized the

democratic concept that a person's religious faith is his or her own business and not that of the State.

Second: Mordechai Vanunu was born into the Moroccan Jewish community. The European Ashkenazi Establishment has always treated everything that has origins in the Arab world with superiority, contempt and arrogance.

These two points are worthy of a separate discussion, but since we are not gathered here for that purpose, I will not elaborate on them today. I mention them because they are a partial explanation for the Israeli political and military Establishment's harsh, uncompromising and vengeful treatment of Vanunu in comparison to other cases.

The authorities of the State of Israel cannot forgive Vanunu for not having asked forgiveness and absolution, and they continue to harass him with restrictions on his freedom of speech and movement, basic democratic rights. That is why he cannot be here today to receive the medal. Israel and China are two states that treat men of conscience who have won international recognition with cruelty. I hope that an appeal will go out from here to the government of Israel to stop the abuse of Mordechai Vanunu and permit him to leave Israel so he can be a free man at last. Only then can a belated ceremony be held here in Berlin to give him the medal.

I thank you for your attention.

Berlin, 12 December 2010