



Freedom blocked: Israel claims Vanunu has more secrets

Secret agents stop parole for Vanunu

Peter Hounam
Jerusalem

THE Israeli security services have blocked attempts to obtain an early release for Mordechai Vanunu, the Israeli technician imprisoned in 1986 after revealing the secrets of his country's nuclear weapons programme to *The Sunday Times*.

Vanunu attended a parole hearing last Sunday with hopes of going free after an officer from Shin Beth, Israel's internal secret service, visited him in jail two months ago. The officer told Vanunu, whose sentence runs until 2004, to start packing his belongings as the service did not intend to contest his application for parole.

However, when the hearing began in a special security court inside Beersheba prison, representatives of Shin Beth and two other security services testified that Vanunu might still possess vital nuclear secrets, even after 16 years in jail.

They also claimed to be fearful that he might reveal embarrassing details of his capture: he was seized by a team of Mossad agents who lured him to Rome in an elaborate honey trap.

Ernest Rodker, of the British-based Campaign to

Free Vanunu, described the official objections to his release as cruel and inhuman. "It is an incredible situation that someone can be kept in prison because they might reveal information about their own violent kidnapping," he said.

The hearing was adjourned until December 31 after new evidence was submitted by the secret services. When the court reconvenes, Avigdor Feldman, Vanunu's lawyer, will argue that Vanunu disclosed everything he knew about the Dimona nuclear plant to *The Sunday Times* before he was abducted.

He also plans to renew an attempt to subpoena Shimon Peres, who was Israel's prime minister at the time. Peres gave an extensive interview to Israeli television last year in which he boasted that he had helped to mastermind the nuclear programme with the assistance of the French.

Feldman said yesterday that Vanunu had no more damaging nuclear secrets to reveal and it was wrong to argue he should be kept locked up because he knew details of how he was brought to Israel.

The Campaign to Free Vanunu in London lobbies for his release and holds a vigil near the capital's Israeli embassy every Saturday morning.