

Vanunu gets back his radio, books

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Jerusalem Post Reporter

Mordechai Vanunu chalked up a minor victory yesterday when the Jerusalem District Court ordered prison authorities to return the Walkman transistor radio and books which had been taken away from the former technician at the Dimona nuclear installation.

In the first hearing held in open court since Vanunu was brought back to Israel, Judge Zvi Cohen ruled that the prison warden had overstepped the bounds of his authority by treating the transistor radio and books as "benefits" of which Vanunu could be deprived. Vanunu himself was not in court during the hearing.

Judge Cohen upheld the warden's right to deny Vanunu access to a **daily newspaper**, which is paid for by the **Prisons Service**.

The judge also rejected a separate "prisoner's petition" in which Vanunu protested against the censoring of two personal letters which he had

sent. The judge ruled that the letters — one of which was sent to Vanunu's brother in the U.S. and the other to an undisclosed recipient — contained details which were under a court-imposed publication ban.

Vanunu, who is being kept in solitary confinement while awaiting trial for revealing Israel's alleged nuclear secrets to the London *Sunday Times*, was deprived of his radio and books after he flashed a message on his palm about his return to Israel to reporters waiting outside the Jerusalem District Court on December 21.

Yesterday's hearing revealed that investigators have recommended to the State Attorney's Office that Vanunu be prosecuted for revealing state secrets in this incident.

Attorney Danny Assan, of the office of Amnon Zichroni who is defending Vanunu, told the court that Vanunu needed the radio and the books in order to maintain his sanity.

"He needs something to keep

himself occupied, otherwise he will go crazy," he said. "It is like depriving Vanunu of his oxygen."

Assan described Vanunu's "extremely difficult" prison conditions, saying that the authorities "do not allow him to come into contact with a living soul. He has no one to talk to. His only company perhaps, are the tiny animals in his cell."

Assan added that only recently, "after several sharp letters," was Vanunu allowed to see sunlight during his daily hour-long stroll.

Assan said that Vanunu is allowed a family visit once every two weeks "and there are guards sitting next to him, hands ready to shut his mouth should he reveal some state secret."

Vanunu's attorneys submitted to the court a psychiatric opinion prepared by Dr. Ruhama Maraton. The psychiatrist, who did not actually see Vanunu, wrote that because Vanunu is being deprived of "outside stimulants" it is possible that he will seek "artificial stimulants" and inflict se-

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rious injury on himself, such as "cuts, burns and self-starvation."

Concerning the December 21 action, in which Vanunu wrote on his palm that he had been kidnapped at Rome Airport on September 30, Assan said that Vanunu "had the right to inform the world of an offence which had been committed against him."

In his arguments, State Attorney Uzi Chasson told the court that "prison is not a convalescent home." He said that Vanunu had apparently committed a serious crime and had also violated prison discipline.

Chasson said that Vanunu "had brought the punishment on him-

self," either "because he is obsessed, or because he wants to get the country in trouble. Today it is Rome, tomorrow Amsterdam and the day after it's going to be Paris."

Chasson said that providing Vanunu with a transistor radio and daily newspaper "would encourage a continuation of his deeds" because he is "anticipating hearing of the reverberations of his actions in the media."

Immediately following Judge Cohen's decision, Zichroni telephoned the prison where Vanunu is being kept in order to ensure that the radio and books, taken away 18 days ago, would be immediately returned.

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