

Israel Defiant on its 'Nuclear Arsenal'

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A senior Israeli official insists that Tel Aviv will not change its nuclear policies despite international calls for the denuclearization of the Middle East.

"There is nothing new here, and no reason for a change of direction on our part," the unnamed Israeli official was quoted by Reuters as saying on Friday.

Under an "ambiguity" policy, Tel Aviv neither confirms nor denies having nuclear weapons. However, according to the British *Jane's Defense Weekly*, security experts believe Tel Aviv is in the possession of 100 to 300 atomic warheads.

Washington has so far invariably maintained a policy of silence on Tel Aviv's nuclear arsenal. It has also abused its veto power at the UN Security Council to block any resolution that it considers critical of the Israeli regime.

Middle Eastern countries, however, are beginning to question White House's "don't ask, don't tell" policy towards the supposed Israeli nuclear arsenal, which according to Arab states threatens the region's security.

Meanwhile, world powers have used a current non-proliferation review conference in New York to underline Tel Aviv's refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and also campaign for a nuclear-free Middle East.

According to Reuters, however, Israel has expressed dissatisfaction for being discussed at the NPT forum.

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