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Mistakes in Legal Translation: What Consequences?

Tourists visiting Israel were recently issued with a brochure entitled: “Jerusalem: There is no such city!”. The correct translation of course should have been: “Jerusalem: There’s no city like it!”. A sign at Copenhagen Airport used to read: “We take your bags and send them in all directions”. Meaning you’ll be lucky if you retrieve your luggage after your flight... These translation blunders are just cause for a good laugh but others should be taken much more seriously. In her book *New Approach to Legal Translation*, Susan Sarcevic claims that a simple translation error accelerated the drop of the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While most translation mistakes have far less serious consequences, using the wrong word can sometimes prove costly. Drawing examples from a variety of documents, from UN Resolution 242 and the 1929 Warsaw Convention to selected judgments of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and US Miranda warnings, the speaker will discuss the consequences of mistranslation in the legal field and share his view that, while careful word choice is important, the fear of getting it wrong should not be a hurdle.