

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 09, 2016

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi
Arab Republic of Egypt

Dear President El-Sisi,


As Jewish Members of Congress with a strong interest in Egyptian-American relations and the preservation of the long history of Jewish life in Egypt, we write to request your assistance in preserving Jewish heritage sites in Egypt. Synagogues, cemeteries, libraries, Torah scrolls and other Judaica, as well as irreplaceable records of a community that once numbered nearly 100,000, are in grave danger.


The Jewish community in Egypt has shrunk dramatically, and the few Jews who remain have acknowledged their inability to preserve and maintain the history, heritage, and artifacts of Jewish life in Egypt. We have immediate concerns for many Jewish sites including the crumbling roof on the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue in Alexandria and the groundwater damage to the historic 12th Century Maimonides Yeshiva in Cairo, which was painstakingly restored by Egyptian antiquity specialists only five years ago. We are also concerned about the protection of the centuries-old Bassatine Cemetery, which has been vandalized and overrun by squatters; the long-term preservation of the remaining synagogues in Cairo and Alexandria; the care and use of the dozens of Torah scrolls in Egypt some of which are individually owned by Egyptian Jewish families living in the United States; and the preservation and access to the Egyptian Jewish community registers.

In recent years, representative associations of Jews from Egypt, key Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Committee, and the U.S. Embassy in Cairo have been in close contact with the Egyptian Cultural Ministry and the Ministry of Antiquities to propose cooperative, international efforts for the restoration and protection of this heritage, such as a Museum of Egyptian Jewish Heritage.


Mr. President, we respectfully request that you act now to save these heritage sites that reflect Egypt's rich history, and its once-thriving Jewish community, by supporting international initiatives, which should include the input and involvement of Egyptian authorities, to ensure their long-term preservation. We believe conservation projects such as the proposed museum would bring in tourism revenue in addition to informing Egyptian and international students about the country's diverse cultural heritage.

We stand ready to assist you in these efforts, and we look forward to your response.


Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress


Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator

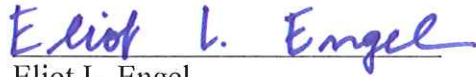
cc: H.E. Yasser Reda, Egyptian Ambassador to the United States



Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress



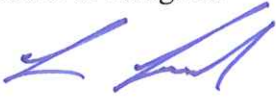
Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senator



Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



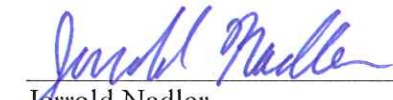
Benjamin L. Cardin
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Lee Zeldin
Member of Congress



Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senator



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Al Franken
U.S. Senator



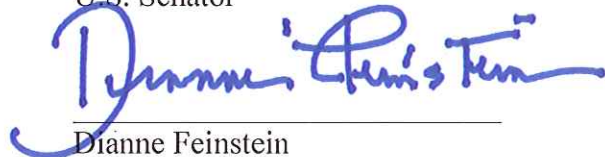
Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



Brian Schatz
U.S. Senator



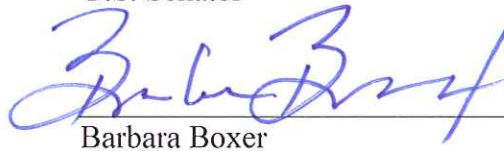
Alan Grayson
Member of Congress



Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator



Adam Schiff
Member of Congress



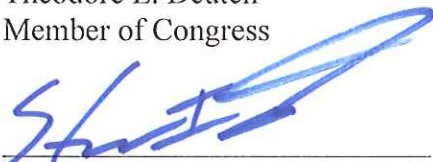
Barbara Boxer
U.S. Senator



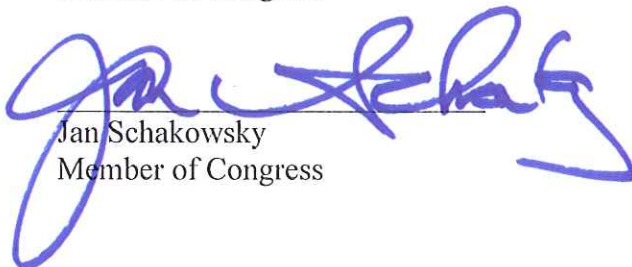
Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress



Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator



Steve Israel
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
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Alan Lowenthal

Alan Lowenthal
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Debbie Wasserman Schultz

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Lois Frankel

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Steve Cohen
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John Yarmuth

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress