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HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF JEWS FROM EGYPT

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Historical Society of Jews from Egypt Appeals to UNESCO:

"Convince Egyptian Culture Minister to Grant Access to Our Archives and Take Custody of Copies under United Nations World Heritage Protection".

New York, June 5th, 2008

The Historical Society of Jews from Egypt is a New York-based non-profit organization whose members come from a worldwide Diaspora of Jews exiled from Egypt since the 1950's, now numbering close to half a million individuals.

Years of requests to the Egyptian authorities for access and the right to photocopy the documents of the Jewish patrimony were met with obfuscation and silence. In view of the candidacy of Egypt's Minister of Culture to head the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Historical Society of Jews from Egypt (HSJE) has asked UNESCO to convince Egypt on its behalf and take custody of a copy of these archives under the Organization's World Heritage protection.

In response to its members' expressions of concern at the controversy surrounding press reports of Minister Farouk Hosni's 10th of May statement that he "would himself, burn any Israeli book found in Egypt", HSJE has appealed directly to UNESCO.

In a letter to UNESCO Director-General, Koichiro Matsuura, HSJE Founding President and Director, Desire L. Sakkal, noted " the communique of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre questioning the worthiness of Egyptian Culture Minister, Farouk Hosni, as a candidate for the next Director-General of your eminent organization".

Sakkal stated that "We feel that this has provided Mr. Hosni a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate his generosity to civilization and to cultures, as also his rejection of anti-Semitism".

The letter explained that "our registries and archives held in Cairo and Alexandria represent our history and acknowledge our identity as Jews originally from Egypt. All our attempts over the past decade, to get access from the Egyptian authorities to photocopy these documents, have failed".

The HSJE thus urged UNESCO "to take custody of this 'intangible heritage' of the Jews from Egypt, by negotiating with Mr. Hosni on our behalf the requested photocopying of our registries and archives in Egypt and then to hold these copies under UNESCO World Heritage protection".

The appeal added its confidence that, "in this manner, Minister Hosni will prove his good faith by responding to our call as Jews from Egypt and, simultaneously, show his commitment to the principles of UNESCO. " We understand Mr. Hosni is due to visit France mid-June and would appreciate, Mr. Director-General your efforts in resolving this matter by obtaining his formal agreement to our prompt access." concluded Sakkal

A copy of the letter was sent to Minister Farouk Hosni

For further information please contact Desire Sakkal to telephone 718-339-7007

You may also visit <http://hsje.org/homepage.htm> for updated information

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