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HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF JEWS FROM EGYPT

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March 18, 2001

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

FAX 202-456-2461

Dear Mr. President;

The Historical Society of Jews From Egypt (HSJE) would greatly appreciate it if you would convey to President Mubarak of Egypt our serious concern about the Jewish religious articles and documents still in Egypt. These were left behind by the large Jewish community when the Egyptian authorities forced it to uproot and exile itself in the aftermath of the creation of the state of Israel. We respectfully request that this, our patrimony, be transferred to an academic institution in the United States.

In response to our request, sent directly to President Mubarak, Egyptian Ambassador Mr. Nabil Fahmy stated that these articles have been placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Antiquities and cannot be transferred abroad. (See attached letters.)

We cannot accept this response. How can religious objects and records that were in use less than a generation ago be classified as "antiquities", on a par with the Pyramids or the Sphinx? How can a country that persecuted its Jewish community solely because they were Jews help safeguard their heritage?

To give you some background, after the creation of Israel the Egyptian authorities began persecuting the Jews living in Egypt. They harassed us, made us live in fear, denied us equal opportunity, denied us citizenship even though we were born in Egypt, confiscated our property, threw many of us in jail even though we committed no crimes, and finally forced us to leave the country, frequently by simply expelling us. Before leaving, we were forced to pledge that we would never return and that we were voluntarily forfeiting all our assets. They stole from the Jewish community as a whole and from individuals of the Jewish faith in particular, assets amounting to billions of dollars, for no reason whatsoever. Our only crime was being Jewish. Not a penny has ever been returned to us. We all had to rebuild our lives from scratch in foreign lands.

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