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HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF JEWS FROM EGYPT

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FAX 718-998-2497 http://www.hsje.org

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.

Next

And now, close to fifty years later,

· 1. Egypt still has not made any restitution to its Jews for confiscated assets, as the free world has done with other Jewish communities;
· 2. Egypt still has not apologized for its past evil treatment of its Jews, as the free world has done with other Jewish communities;
· 3. Egypt still has not officially recognized the great contribution Jews have made to their country of birth, as the free world has done with other Jewish communities; and, incredibly,
· 4. Egypt is currently trying to pilfer what little is left of the Jewish heritage in Egypt.

The articles and records we are requesting are of religious significance, and were donated to the Egyptian Jewish community by its members for a specific religious function.

The United States has good relations with Egypt and provides it with three billion dollars in aid every year. We would prefer that this matter be settled without asking our representatives to introduce legislation to withhold aid from Egypt pending its compliance with our request.

We kindly ask that you take a few minutes to discuss this subject with President Mubarak when he visits the United States in the near future, and we thank you in advance for your efforts on our behalf.

Respectfully,

The HSJE committee and its Regional Officers

Joseph E. Mosseri
Secretary

Desire L. Sakkal
President

Attached: 1) Petition to President Mubarak March 22, 2000
2) Egypt's ambassador's Nabil Fahmy's reply June 26, 2000
3) Letter to Egypt's ambassador Mr. Nabil Fahmy February 21, 2001