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THE UNTOLD EXODUS

As Passover Looms, New Report Reveals Expulsion of Jews from Egypt in Mid-20th Century Amid Losses Exceeding \$59 billion

April 7, 2025 (New York) — During the festival of Passover, the story is told of the exodus of the ancient Israelites from Egypt in the 13th century BCE. The untold story, is the second exodus and ultimate ethnic cleansing of the Jews from Egypt in the twentieth century.

Unlike its ancient counterpart, the modern-day uprooting of Egyptian Jewry is not a tale of triumph but of tragedy, bringing to a grinding halt, millennia of vibrant history and heritage.

“Egypt has held a unique and significant place in the history of the Jewish people,” said Sylvain Abitbol, co-president of [Justice for Jews from Arab Countries](#) (JJAC). Abitbol spoke about the Jewish connection to Egypt in the context of the new report released by JJAC, which illuminates the history and persecution of this community...and its abrupt end, resulting in the loss of \$59 billion in individual and communal losses. Egypt denies these facts.

Egyptian President Abdul Fata El-Sissi, in a 2023 meeting with then-US Secretary of State Anthony Blinkin, [claimed that Jews always lived peacefully in Egypt](#). “It has never been the case that Jews were targeted in their old or modern history.” Said Sissi. This is untrue.

From personal experience, Levana Zamir, President of the World Organization of Jews from Egypt, knows otherwise. “The Egyptians told us you are Zionists, you are enemies of this country, so we will confiscate all your assets. And they did,” asserted Zamir.

Zamir is a Vice President of JJAC, an advocacy and historical preservation group, which released its report on Egyptian Jewry as part of its ambitious and far-ranging project on the expulsion of nearly 1 million Jews from ten Arab countries and Iran. [The Egypt report](#) is the product of six years of intricate research, and the third in the series, following [reports on Syria](#) and [Iraq](#).

The report painstakingly details the rich — if fitful — life and culture that flourished in Egypt beginning in Biblical times and ended in the early 1970's. The report delves into property, businesses, assets and other holdings that were seized from Egyptian Jews as they were persecuted, imprisoned and forced to flee. The total amount of assets that were seized over the years is equivalent to more than \$59 billion by today's valuations, stated Dr. Stanley Urman, executive director of JJAC.

"Though many try to deny it, Jews are an indigenous people of the Middle East, having lived in Egypt and elsewhere in the region continuously for millennia, fully one thousand five hundred years before the advent of Islam," said Rabbi Dr. Elie Abadie, MD, who is JJAC's co-president. The truth about the uprooting of Jews from the Arab totalitarian regimes, dictatorships and monarchies has been denied for over 75 years. This important project endeavors to set the record straight," Abadie added.

"The contribution of Egyptian Jews to the country's development was particularly impressive " stated Urman. "They played a crucial role in establishing the foundations of the modern economy across all sectors: agriculture, industry, commerce, and finance. Specifically, they were instrumental in the financial and economic mechanisms that developed Egypt's infrastructure and enhanced its productive capabilities," he said.

Though the ancient Israelites fled Egypt in the time of the Pharaohs, they returned during the First Temple period. From the moment of the return of the Jews in 586 BC until this past century, the trajectory of Jewish life in Egypt was one of tremendous cultural achievement and community building followed by periods of persecution and destruction...and then the cycle would repeat itself. Indeed, Egyptian Jewish history is a dizzying account of perseverance against all odds.

The long and winding history of the Jewish community in Egypt includes a Who's Who of luminaries including the Saadia Gaon and Maimonides. In the 19th and 20th centuries CE, prominent Egyptian Jews include Moreno Cicurel, who founded a series of stores in Cairo; the Mosseri family, renowned for their influential Bank of Mosseri; and Joseph Smouha, the visionary behind the construction of Smouha City.

The Jewish contribution to Egypt was not confined to financial matters alone. One of the greatest musicians of modern Egypt was the composer Daoud Khidr Levi, better known as Dawood Hosni (1870-1937). Jews also made significant contributions to the development of cinema and theater in Egypt. Among them, Yaqub Sanu (1839-1912) was the most influential figure in modern Egyptian theater.

Nearly two decades into the 20th century, the Jewish population of Egypt was nearly 60,000 strong. The local Jewish community was enhanced by refugees arriving from

Europe and other places affected by persecution and rising antisemitism. In Egypt at this time, Jews integrated well into local and foreign commercial enterprises, consular offices, government positions, and financial systems.

However, for Egyptian Jews the 1930s marked a turning point. The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood injected a more religious and militaristic element into Egyptian nationalism. The ongoing conflict in Palestine further fueled this shift, as the "Palestine problem" became intertwined with nationalist fervor, xenophobia, and rising anti-Zionist sentiments. From this point on, things began spiraling downward for Egyptian Jews. Violence, arrests, bombings, blood libels and the virus of Jew-hatred had spread like a Biblical plague throughout Egypt. The establishment of the Jewish State provided Egyptian authorities with an excuse to terrorize local Jews. Between 1948 and 1966 the number of Jews who fled Egypt totaled 63,000.

For the remaining Jews of Egypt, the local reaction to the Suez Crisis made life miserable. By the end of June 1957, some 25,000 out of the 45,000 Jews in Egypt were estimated to have left. The Six-Day War resulted in the imprisonment and expulsion of the last major group of Jews, reducing the community to a few hundred. By the early 1970s, Jewish life in Egypt had virtually disappeared.

Today, there are only two Jews remaining in Egypt.

“Over the past 70 years, the long and proud history of Jews in Egypt slowly and inexorably moved toward extinction with the passing of each elderly Jew,” stated Urman. “The mission of JJAC is to preserve this history in the name of truth and justice.”

For further information on JJAC's report on the Jews of Egypt, or to request an interview with JJAC leadership, please contact Shira Dicker at shira.dicker@sd-media.com or 917.403.3989.