

**On the article  
“Egypt ... Fights for Leadership Succession in Jewish Circles” by Ahmed Ibrahim**

**Summary and Comments by**

**Rami Mangoubi,  
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**Synopsis:** The article is concerned with two questions:

- 1) The dispute, starting in 1993 and with increasing intensity following the recent death of Esther Weinstein, over leadership succession between two women in Egypt and their respective supporters: Carmen Weinstein or Esther’s daughter, and Marika Smouha Levy, and
- 2) The pursuit by Egyptian Jews all over the world of compensation for their lost properties in Egypt.

The article also mentions a few facts about famous Egyptian Jews who lived in Egypt, and others who are now in Israel.

Ahmed Ibrahim in my view writes an article with strong **anti-Semitic undertones**. With the above two topics, the article **tries to shed a negative light on Egyptian Jews by alluding to popular Jewish stereotypes in Egyptian minds such as greed and love of money**.

Ibrahim thinks that by asking for their rights and gathering support for their demands, the Jews are **both insolent and racist**. Ibrahim concludes the article with the following paragraph. I added words in brackets [...] from the body of the article for context and clarity:

**“And as such the crisis [of leadership succession] reflects the difficult situation that the community is enduring, but that situation does not prevent Jewish groups and greater powers [the European Union, the United States, and the World Jewish Congress] from demanding, and with insolence (*waqaha*) [emphasis added by me], that the rights of the community be restored, and this by itself represents another example of Jewish racism.”**

**My comments:** Ibrahim expresses a dominant state of mind in the Arab world whereby Jews, when assertive about what he admits are their rights, are being insolent and racist. How dare this Dhimmi group, once tolerated in Egypt provided they keep their place and pay the guizyeh or additional

poll tax, and who only sixty years ago were being killed like sheep by the Nazis, how dare they assert their right and demand to recover their losses!

### **How the article describes the two questions, and additional facts provided**

#### **The dispute between Weinstein and Levy**

Thus, the dispute between Levy and Weinstein is played up. Levy and her supporters accuse Weinstein of taking exclusive control of all the community's possessions and contributions from abroad. The article describes the property as consisting of real estate and other possessions in the heart of Cairo, in Alexandria, and throughout the country. Levy also says that members of the community live under the poverty line, so that the community's precious possessions that Weinstein controls must be dealt with resourcefully. Levy thus sees the need for new blood in the community's leadership.

Apparently, after Esther assigned her daughter Carmen to the leadership post, Levy took possession of the key to the door of the Ismailia Synagogue until a leader is democratically elected.

Ibrahim states that Weinstein feels she deserves to be the community's leader based on the years of experience she spent under her mother managing the community's relations with the Egyptian government, and with Israel.

According to the article, in what in my view constitutes an attempt by Weinstein to garner support in Egyptian circles, Weinstein trumpets the fact that her family did not leave for Israel but stayed in Egypt, and that her family condemns the Israeli government's policy (The article uses "Tel Aviv") towards the Palestinians. Weinstein claims that this created difficulty for her family. I interpret this to mean difficulties with Jewish groups from abroad.

#### **Egyptian Jews abroad:**

Regarding the desire of Jews who left Egypt to regain their losses, Ibrahim claims that there are over **3500 lawsuits** against the Egyptian government, with claims adding up to over **5 billion dollars!**

Ibrahim claims, and finds it strange, that the European unions and the United States stand behind the rights of former Egyptian Jews. He states that an "American Committee for Religious Freedom" recently visited Egypt, and focused on the case of "the Jews" (quotation used by Ibrahim). Members of Egypt's Jewish community living outside of Egypt were included in the committee, and the committee met with members of the Jewish community still in Egypt.

Ibrahim states that the Egyptian members of the committee presented Egypt with an entire dossier listing Jewish property in Egypt, specifying the properties' location. The

dossier was obtained from Israel. Ibrahim says the committee recommended that this property be returned, in his words, “based on the excuse that Jews fled Egypt and left their property behind during the war of 1948, and following the July 1952 Revolution.”

Ibrahim also states that the World Jewish Congress is also pursuing the same objectives. He sees that this endeavor will create a crisis for Egypt as it faces pressure from “Jewish groups and forces”.

**Additional information on Egyptian Jews in the article:**

The article also states that Egyptian Jews had many notables from among them, and gives the example of Ya’acub Sanua (Abu Nadhara), “the cartoonist and founder of the Egyptian Theater”. The article also mentions Da’ud Husni, “the famous composer who left his finger prints on Egyptian broadcast”, Youssef Qatawi, “around 1924 minister of finance and of communication”, and artists like Nagua Salem, the belly dancer Camilia, and Raqia Ibrahim. The article claims that the latter is currently Israel’s goodwill ambassador in New York.

The article states that Egyptian Jews were successful in Israel. As examples, the author mentions Rabbi Ovadia Yossef, and the Engineer Ovadia Harrari at Israel Aircraft Industries, who was head of the Lavi fighter pilot project, which Ibrahim calls Israel’s premier Aerospace project. Others mentioned are Yossef Bar-el, listed as “head of the Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA)”, and Eli Cohen, the famous spy hanged in Syria.