

News



Govrin in Alexandria

Israeli ambassador to Egypt visits Alexandria Jewish community

The new Israeli ambassador to Egypt, David Govrin, paid a visit to Alexandria's small Jewish community and its ancient synagogue, which is in need of renovation; 'We, as the State of Israel, the country of the Jewish people, are very interested in this issue and are ready to cooperate with the relevant bodies to see it through.'

Roi Kais and Itamar Eichner | Published: 22.09.16 , 14:18

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Israeli ambassador to Egypt David Govrin, paid a rare visit to Alexandria in northern Egypt this week, together with embassy staff where they met with the head of the local Jewish community.

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The visit lasted two days and consisted of a tour of the great synagogue of Alexandria, named after the prophet Elijah, and the offices of the Jewish community. The synagogue, a magnificent and old building, was once home to over 20,000 Jews.



Ambassador Govrin in the Alexandria Synagogue

The ambassador met with the head of the Jewish community, Yusef Ben Gaon, who said that the tiny population of Jews remaining in Alexandria—a mere 17—and the community tries its best to maintain the synagogue and provide aid to community members in need. "I thank you for the important and



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pleasant visit," said the ambassador in fluent Egyptian Arabic. "We are pleased that you are here," answered Ben Gaon.



In a movie released by the Israeli embassy in Egypt during the visit, hopes were expressed that the Egyptian government would help renovate the synagogue. "We, as the State of Israel, the country of the Jewish people, are very interested in this issue and are ready to cooperate with the relevant bodies to see it through," said Govrin. In response, Ben Gaon said, "We are all brothers. We are all one. There is no one who is more important than the other. We are the same. God willing, everything will work out."



The old synagogue

The ambassador also visited the offices of the Jewish community, which includes a rabbinical court, a school, a registration office and sports teams such as Maccabi Alexandria. Moreover, Govrin took the opportunity to view the new library of Alexandria, which is meant to continue the legacy of the ancient library of the city. This site is also home to the first translation of the Torah. Members of the library, which is widely considered to be important to all Mediterranean countries, including Israel, see value in maintaining the culture, which includes Jewish culture.

Additionally, Govrin and his delegation visited the Sadat Museum to mark 40 years since Sadat made his historic visit to Israel, which made him not only a hero in the eyes of Egyptians, but in the eyes of Israelis as well. During the visit, the ambassador also managed to meet officials of the city's Christian communities, businessmen and civil society representatives as well.

To conclude his tour, Govrin paid a visit to the Ben Ezra synagogue in Cairo along with the head of the Egyptian Jewish community, Magda Haroun, who is known for her hostile views on Zionism and the State of Israel. As of July 2016, there are only six women in the Jewish community of Cairo.

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