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## New leader to head Egypt's Jewish community



Egypt's Jewish community has announced that it has elected the daughter of a well-known leftist and nationalist icon to protect its heritage and care for its dwindling, elderly membership. Magda Haroun, 60, told the Associated Press on Tuesday that she aimed to continue the work of her predecessor, Carmen Weinstein, who died on Saturday at the age of 82. Weinstein was known for her efforts to preserve synagogues and a Jewish cemetery. "My new priority is to preserve the Egyptian Jewish heritage ... to give it back to Egypt, because it belongs to Egypt," Haroun said. Haroun, an Egyptian who is fluent in Arabic, French and English, was born in Alexandria, Egypt's second largest city. She attended school in Cairo, and graduated from Cairo University with a degree in Applied Arts. She runs a patents and legal affairs firm with her sister Nadia. Haroun said she considered herself Egyptian before Jewish, born and raised in the country. Her father Chehata Haroun was a prominent Egyptian nationalist, one of the founders of the leftist Al Tagammu Party. He was known for his anti-Zionist politics and his defense of Egyptian Jews against accusations of having greater loyalty to Israel than to Egypt, at the peak of the Mideast wars. Haroun had previously told the AP that only around 40 Egyptian Jews remain in the country, a far-cry from the once-thriving Jewish community that largely left more than 60 years ago at a time of hostilities between Egypt and Israel. "I will continue taking care of them, socially, medically, gathering them for the holidays, and burying them with dignity," Haroun said. Haroun was unanimously elected as community president at an extraordinary general assembly meeting held on Monday, following Weinstein's death. Since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, an estimated 65,000 Jews left Egypt - most of them traveling to Europe and the West. Few of them settled in Israel. The remnants of the community are split between Cairo and the Mediterranean city of Alexandria that was also once a thriving multicultural and cosmopolitan hub. Considerable hostility persists in Egypt, where radical preachers and others regularly denounce both Israel and Jews in general. However, Haroun said that Egyptians were kind-hearted and what ultimately mattered was social interaction. "If you treat others well, you will be treated well," she said. Haroun dismissed any fears from the rise of Islamists to power in Egypt after the 2011 overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak in a popular uprising. "The community size is still the same, and they keep dying one after another, what's the difference?" But she said that the ensuing political turmoil around the community had made members fearful. "Don't forget that most of the community is elderly women and housewives, uninvolved in everyday life," she added. "When they see