Lead in: This audio feature is a profile about Magda Haroun, the president of the Egyptian Jewish community, and one of the few Egyptian Jews living in Egypt. The purpose of this is to document her life and to tell people some information about the history of Egyptian Jews.

*MAGDA HAROUN (MH): “I didn't choose to be born Egyptian and I didn't choose to be born Jew.” (:05)*

That was Magda Haroun, a 67-year-old Egyptian Jew and the president of the Egyptian Jewish community.

*MUSIC: Before Dawn*

In the period between 1948 and 1956, Egyptian Jewish families started to unwillingly leave Egypt because they were suspected as Zionist agents.

*MUSIC: Before Dawn*

Out of 60,000 Egyptian Jews, thousands started to leave and they never came back. And today, there are only three female Egyptian Jews in Egypt.

*MUSIC: Before Dawn*

Haroun’s life was not easy, even as a child. She attended a non-religious school where there used to be a diversity of students, however she still faced some challenges.

*MH: “At that time, we didn't change schools frequently. I started at the Lycee El Horreya in kindergarten and I graduated from this school, until now I have my schoolmates, we are friends, two of them are working with me actually now, one of them is Christian, one of them is Muslim.” (:17)*

*MUSIC: Before Dawn*

Lycee El Horreya is a school in Bab Al Louq, a neighborhood in Downtown Cairo. Back then, some Egyptian Jews were discriminated against, Haroun shared an anecdote with me that
resonated within her throughout many years, about her social studies teacher who once called Jews “Stray dogs” in front of the whole class.

*NAT Sound: Children in a classroom*

MH: “I didn't cry, my classmates, they all turned to see what was going to be my reaction. I stood up and walked all along the class and went out of the door, and... and I went back home and I said to my father, "I'm not going back to school."” (:17)

*MUSIC Commission by Omar Shehata*

Chehata Haroun, her father, was a prominent nationalist politician in the 1960s, and was known for his anti-Zionist politics.

*MUSIC Commission by Omar Shehata*

He went to Jail three times, once in 1948 in Farouk’s ruling period of Egypt, once in 1967, and once during Anwar El Sadat’s ruling period between 1970 and 1981.

MH: “because he was Jewish... on the first day of fifth of June, they arrested all male man from the age of 18 to the age of 60, some of them stayed for three years in prison.” (:16)

The struggles did not only stop at that, the Haroun family had a chance to leave Egypt when Magda’s older sister, Mona, had leukemia and doctors said that the only available treatment is in France, Chehata Haroun asked for an exit visa but the only permitted visa was an “exit without return,” and that was when he had to choose between his daughter’s health and his country.

Throughout all of her struggles, two friends remained by her side throughout the years, who now work with her in her father’s legal office, Haroun & Haroun in Downtown Cairo, and it’s where we met too.

*NAT SOUND: Downtown streets*

MH: “I have… my Monique Zoghaio, she's administrating the office, and I have another one, Niven Mohammed Amin, she's helping me with the community issues.” (:15)
And she didn’t restrict her social relations to family members or people of the same religion

MH: “I didn’t have Jewish friends at all, my friends were Muslims and Chirstians and I used to fast with them the first day of Ramadan.” (:09)

*MUSIC Commission by Omar Shehata*

This religious diversity was not only experienced in her school and office, it also existed inside her home, since her current husband is Christian and her two daughters from her first husband are Muslims, but she doesn’t think this is something awkward and believes that everyone surrounding them accepts their diversity.

*MUSIC Commission by Omar Shehata*

MH: “I know more about Christian religion and Muslim religion than my own religion....I don’t know for me anyway, celebration of holidays, either Muslim or Christian, or Jewish holidays is getting around on the table and eating.. it is food.” (:16)

Haroun explained that these gatherings give her a sense of belonging to the Egyptian culture, and a sense of joy.

*MUSIC Commission by Omar Shehata*

Tarek Saleh, an AUC alumnus who attended university from 1969 to 1973, confirmed in an interview done by Stephen Urgola for AUC’s digital archives, the fact that throughout old generations, Jews used to live out in the open…

*Tarek Saleh (TS): “And then all of a sudden they disappeared so.. We mixed between Jew and Zionist. They were Egyptians. And they're decent people.” (:14)*

*MUSIC Commission by Omar Shehata*

The Egyptian Jewish community is under threat and that’s what worries Haroun the most, the viability that everything would be lost after her death.
MH: “In Cairo we have 12 synagogues. Each one… each synagogue is different from the other. We have, of course, the cemetery. We have books, we have a library here downtown. We have a library here downtown, we have a library in Abbasiya, we have a library in old Cairo, my dream is to put them all together in one place.” (:21)

And this was the story of the Egyptian Jewish community whose end is approaching.

MH: “I have to fight for recognition as a… to be recognized as an Egyptian citizen, having the same rights and duties as all Egyptians.” (:11:05)

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