

CAPE VERDE  
JEWISH HERITAGE PROJECT, INC



**PRESS RELEASE**

**RE:** Impact of Moroccan Cultural Mission to Cabo Verde, April 13 – 20, 2026

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**FROM:** Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project, Inc. (CVJHP)

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The first-ever Moroccan Cultural Mission to Cabo Verde energized descendants of Moroccan Jews who immigrated to the then-Portuguese colony in the 19th century and prompted Cabo Verde's UNESCO Representative, José Evora, to affirm that Cabo Verde's Jewish patrimony deserves greater national and global recognition. Evora's declarations were echoed by the Mission participants, each of whom was awestruck by the Jewish burial grounds as well as the commercial buildings, residences, and agricultural properties the Jews from Tangier, Tetuán, Rabat, and Mogador (Essaouira) left behind. **Foreign Minister José Luis Livramento** received Mission participants and underscored the critical role played by Moroccan Jews and their descendants in Cabo Verde's economic and social development.

Mission participants **Leila Maziane**, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Hassan II University; **Miloud Loukili**, Professor of Law of the Sea at Mohammed V University; **Abdellah Ouzitane**, President of the Center for Studies and Research on Culture and Hebraic Law at Bayt Dakira, Essaouira; **Younes Ajarrai**, writer and member of the Council of Moroccans Overseas (CCME); and **Michel Abitan**, artist, and performer of Judeo-Andalusian music also interacted with descendants of the Auday, Benchimol, Brigham (Ohayon), Benoliel, Cohen, El-Baz, Levy-Bentub, Levy, Pinto and Wahnnon families who shared memories of their Moroccan Jewish forebears.

At each of the three cemeteries visited, **Michel Abitan** **donned a tarboosh and offered traditional Hebrew prayers in honor of the deceased**. He also paid homage to the Moroccan Royal Family with special appreciation for H.M. King Mohammed VI, who provided vital funding to Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project (CVJHP) to restore the nation's four Jewish cemeteries, which had fallen into disrepair. Fresh paint, limestone wash, and new signage displaying "Hours of Operation" and "Visiting Rules" will now allow the heretofore closed cemeteries to open to the public, including international tourists.

Ribeiro Grande Mayor (CMRG), Armindo Luz, delivered opening remarks at a Symposium on Cabo Verde's Judeo-Moroccan Heritage to a packed auditorium of history teachers, high school students, academics and community members who listened intently to Mission participants' observations and to UNESCO representative, José Evora, who drew many historical and cultural parallels between Cabo Verde and Morocco. In addition to organizing cemetery visits and the symposium, CVJHP facilitated interaction between Mission participants and their academic and professional counterparts in Cabo Verde to foster lasting educational and cultural linkages. **Organized and financed by Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project (CVJHP)**, a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC, the cultural mission evolved into a veritable pilgrimage to Cabo Verde's refurbished Jewish cemeteries and other places of memory.

**The Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project (CVJHP) is a non-profit organization founded by Carol Castiel in 2008** to honor the memory and document the legacy of Moroccan and Gibraltarian Jews who immigrated to Cabo Verde in the mid-late 19th century when it was a Portuguese colony. It now has a permanent subsidiary in Cabo Verde: CVJHP – Delegação Cabo Verde, led by Simão Levy. CVJHP financed research for and published the book *Os Judeus Marroquinos de Cabo Verde: Século XIX*, which is slated soon for publication in English. **For more background information, please visit: [www.capeverdejewishheritage.org](http://www.capeverdejewishheritage.org) and [Facebook.com/CVJHP](https://www.facebook.com/CVJHP).**