

## Vision Statement

Better appreciation worldwide of the historical and contemporary contributions of the Sephardic Jewish Diaspora

## Mission Statement

The Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project (CVJHP) aims to honor the memory of the Sephardic Jews who immigrated to Cape Verde in the 19th century and to document their contributions to Cape Verdean history and culture.



*Wahnon family in Cape Verde, circa 1898.*

## Project Goals

- Restore and preserve Jewish cemeteries in the Cape Verde Islands.
- Develop and disseminate educational materials (books, articles, videos) on the history of the Jews of Cape Verde
- Encourage tourism to Cape Verde's Jewish heritage sites

## Funding Needs

- Signage and ongoing maintenance of the Jewish burial grounds
- Identification and marking of Jewish heritage sites besides the cemeteries
- Creation of a permanent exhibition/museum about the Jews of Cape Verde and their contributions

*"The Government of Cabo Verde supports CVJHP's initiative to preserve Cape Verde's Jewish heritage by restoring, preserving and maintaining the Jewish cemeteries, one of the most poignant vestiges of the Jewish presence."*

**-José Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister, Republic of Cape Verde**

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Help us preserve and document this neglected chapter in the history of the Jewish Diaspora. Please make a tax-deductible donation via check or Paypal. CVJHP is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

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## CAPE VERDE

JEWISH HERITAGE PROJECT, INC

Honoring and preserving Cape Verde's Sephardic heritage by restoring and maintaining Jewish burial grounds, documenting the contributions of Moroccan Jews and their descendants to Cape Verde and nearby regions, and educating future generations about the Jews of Cape Verde



## History

Cape Verde, an archipelago of ten islands, lies in the Atlantic Ocean about 300 miles off the coast of Senegal, West Africa. As a result of over 500 years of Portuguese colonial rule, Cape Verdeans are predominantly Catholic. Jews from Morocco and Gibraltar began immigrating to Cape Verde in the mid-1800's for primarily economic reasons.

Hebrew and Portuguese inscriptions on the tombstones in the small Jewish cemeteries indicate that the majority came from the Moroccan cities of Tangier, Tetouan, Rabat and Mogador (now Essaouira) bearing Sephardic names such as Auday, Anahory, Benoliel, Benros, Benathar, Brigham (Ohayon), Benchimol, Benaim, Cohen, Levy, Maman, Pinto, Wahnon and Seruya.



*Village of Sinagoga (Portuguese for Synagogue)*

Today, Cape Verde, independent since 1975, has virtually no practicing Jews due to widespread assimilation and intermarriage. Yet, descendants in Cape Verde, Europe, and North America speak with great pride of their Jewish roots. Sofia de Oliveira Lima, a descendant of the Wahnon family, is the CVJHP representative in Praia.

## CVJHP and Local Partners

The Project has MOU's with the central and local governments and works with the descendants of the Jewish families to accomplish its goals. Descendants throughout the world are collaborating on various aspects of the Project such as providing oral testimonies, technical support and financial assistance.



*Descendants of Cape Verdean Jews in Rabat, Morocco, 2015*

The Government of Cape Verde declared the Jewish cemeteries and other places of Jewish memory as "National Historical and Cultural Patrimony" in June 2017 – a legal measure that protects Jewish heritage sites and conveys their significance in Cape Verdean culture.



*Restored Jewish burial plot in Praia, 2013*



*Delegation and descendants at CVJHP re-dedication ceremony in Praia, 2013*

## Project Background

The seeds of the Project were sown in the late 1980's while Carol Castiel, now CVJHP President, was managing a scholarship program for Portuguese-speaking Africa. From her Cape Verdean students, many with Jewish surnames, she learned of the Jewish burial grounds in the archipelago. Castiel's travels to the islands in the 1990's coincided with a resurgence of interest in Jewish roots, so she volunteered to help descendants who were pressing for restoration of the dilapidated cemeteries. Since then, Castiel has donated her time and effort to interviewing descendants, publishing articles, and educating Jewish communities and officials in Morocco, Portugal, Gibraltar and the U.S., about the need to honor and document the Jewish presence in Cape Verde. With 501(c) (3) status granted in 2007, the Project can more effectively achieve its goals.



*Ponta do Sol Cemetery of Santo Antão before and after restoration efforts*