

Producer: Egypt Does Not Allow Screening of Film About Egyptian Jews

Egyptian authorities have failed to issue a permit to screen a **historical documentary** about the country's Jewish community, the film's producer said on Wednesday, one of a series of disputes over **freedom of expression** under the **Islamist government**.

Egypt already had restrictions on filmmakers under president Hosni Mubarak, requiring them to seek approval from the **Censorship Bureau** to screen their work. After his overthrow in 2011, filmmakers were hoping for more artistic freedom, but critics of the government say little has changed.

Producer Haitham al-Khamissi said Censorship Bureau officials had told him State Security had requested to view his film, ***Jews of Egypt***, before it could be cleared to be shown in cinemas.

But a security source denied State Security was blocking the film, saying permits were granted by the Censorship Bureau. Officials at the Censorship Bureau were however not immediately available to comment.

Khamissi said renewing the permit for the film, which was first shown with official permission at a film festival in Egypt in 2012, would normally take a matter of hours, but he said he had been waiting for a week.

The film depicts changes in Egyptian society's acceptance of its ancient Jewish minority in the first half of the 20th century. Most Jews fled the country due to attacks on their community, particularly after the 1956 war, when Israel invaded Egypt along with Britain and France, which were trying to regain control of the Suez Canal.

"The authorities had already approved my film ... I'm only asking for a renewal of the permission but until now I haven't received it," Khamissi said. "They are worried about us, the people who think ... The content is controversial, politically."

"After the creation of Israel in 1948, the world view of Jews changed," he said. "There were worries that any Jewish Egyptian could be an Israeli spy."

Last month Egyptian prosecutors questioned an award-winning novelist over accusations that he had insulted religion, in the latest of a string of cases to cause concern over freedom of expression.

Khamissi said the screening last year lasted only one day and was for a limited audience, whereas the permission he is seeking now is to show the film to the public for several days.

Reporting by Asma Alsharif; editing by David Stamp and Jon Hemming.

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