



Descendents of Spanish Jews to receive expedited citizenship 2012-11-27

Thousands of descendants of Jews who were exiled by Spain in the 15th century can now receive Spanish citizenship in an expedited process • Descendent of former Spanish citizen: A good idea that will shorten the bureaucratic process.

Spanish officials announced on Thursday that the government has taken steps to expedite the naturalization process for descendents of Jews who were expelled from the country in the 15th century. The faster process will also enable those who were forced to convert to Christianity to reclaim the proper status of their Spanish citizenship without having to go through time-consuming legal proceedings.

Although for many years Jews have been able to apply for Spanish citizenship based on their family history, the change announced on Thursday will grant them a special status and enable them to research their heritage within the Spanish Jewish communities that existed before the Jews were banished from the country.

Many Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492 fled to Istanbul, London and Cairo. Some however chose to accept an offer to convert to Christianity and others remained Jewish and secretly continued to practice their religion. Those who refused to convert to Christianity or leave the country were tortured and killed by the Spanish Inquisition authorities.

According to an estimate by the Spanish daily El Correo, the number of Jewish descendents expected to request citizenship based on the new guidelines will be high. During the years 2006-2010, the Spanish government granted citizenship to 844 people, 700 of whom were Jews.

"It sounds like a very good idea that will shorten the long and costly bureaucratic procedures and replace them with an expedited process," 56-year-old Aryeh Leon, who lives with his wife in Turkey, said. "I am planning on learning more about the matter this coming Sunday."

Activists working for the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain said that thousands of descendents of Spanish Jews throughout the world will now be able to benefit from the

new process, especially those currently residing in Latin America and Turkey.

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