

Question for written answer E-002184/2025
to the Commission
Rule 144
Yannis Maniatis (S&D)

Subject: Protection of the Holy Monastery of Sinai

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine of the God-Trodden Mount Sinai, located in the foothills of Mount Horeb, is an immortal symbol of the coexistence of the three Abrahamic religions. Founded in 548 AD, it is the world's oldest continuously inhabited Christian monastery and listed as a World Heritage Site. Last week, an Egyptian court handed down a ruling reportedly stripping the monks of their ownership rights over the monastery and its surrounding lands. According to reports, the operative part of the ruling granted the monks the right to practise their religious duties on the monastery's land – which will be owned, however, by the Egyptian state and managed by the Office for the Protection of Antiquities. As a result, the monks – the vast majority of whom do not have Egyptian citizenship and whose residence there depends on residence permits (visas) renewed annually – are essentially 'guests', which endangers the functioning of the monastery after 15 centuries of continuous operation.

In view of the fact that the EU and Egypt have signed an agreement on macro-financial assistance under specific conditions, including respect for human rights, which includes the protection of freedom of religion and religious minorities, can the Commission say:

Is it aware of this ruling by the Egyptian court, and what will it do to ensure the unhindered operation and the survival of the Holy Monastery of Sinai?

Submitted: 1.6.2025