

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002248/25
to the Commission
Nikolas Farantouris (The Left)
(4 June 2025)

Subject: Threat to the religious and property rights of the Orthodox Monastery of Sinai in Egypt

St Catherine's Monastery at Sinai is the oldest continuously operating monastery, dating back to 456 AD, and an integral part of Christianity.

A recent court decision by the Egyptian judiciary (28 May) calls into question the ownership status of the Monastery, confiscates its property (from land to holy relics) in favour of the Egyptian State and creates conditions in which its future operation is objectively impossible. ⁽¹⁾ Egypt and Greece — directly historically linked with the Monastery — had reached an out-of-court settlement that would protect the property of the Monastery, but Egypt 'neglected' to sign it in a timely manner. ⁽²⁾ The court ruling, which has provoked a reaction from all Orthodox Europeans, is a flagrant violation of religious and individual rights and constitutes a direct threat to a significant Christian community.

Accordingly:

1. What does the Commission intend to do to protect the religious freedom of Orthodox Christians in Egypt and the property rights of the Monastery at Sinai?
2. Given that the recently agreed provision of macro-financial assistance of EUR 4 billion to Egypt is conditional on progress in areas such as respect for democracy and the rule of law and the safeguarding of human rights, does the Commission consider that this condition for the provision of financial assistance has been met?

Submitted: 4.6.2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(18 July 2025)

The EU is closely monitoring developments following the Ismailia Court of Appeals' ruling linked to the legal status of the Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai. In parallel, this matter is also subject to ongoing direct negotiations between the Greek and Egyptian governments.

The Egyptian authorities have provided reassurances that they remain fully committed to preserving the monastery's religious, historical, and spiritual status and reaffirmed that the monks' access to the site will not be affected by the court ruling.

The EU and its Member States will continue to follow this matter and the commitments made by the government of Egypt. In addition, the EU engages regularly with Egyptian authorities on the implementation of Egypt's national and international commitments in the area of human rights, the rule of law and freedom of religion or belief.

On 18 June 2025, the European Parliament approved a provisional agreement reached with Council on a Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) package for Egypt worth EUR 4 billion.

The draft Decision, adopted on 23 June 2025, requires in its Article 2.1 that Egypt 'continues to make concrete and credible steps towards respecting effective democratic mechanisms — including a multi-party parliamentary system — and the rule of law, and guaranteeing respect for human rights' ⁽¹⁾.

The fulfilment of these parameters shall be continuously monitored by the Commission services throughout the lifecycle of the MFA (2.5 years).

The EU closely monitors human rights developments in Egypt, both through engagement with a wide range of interlocutors as well as through institutional consultations held regularly under the Association Agreement, and in international fora, including the United Nations Human Rights Council.

¹ <https://orthodoxtimes.com/orthodox-church-to-eu-deep-concern-over-egyptian-court-ruling-on-sinai-monastery/>

² <https://www.ekathimerini.com/politics/foreign-policy/1271268/historic-sinai-settlement-never-signed/>

⁽¹⁾ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0125_EN.html.