

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003212/26  
to the Commission  
Nikolaos Anadiotis (NI)  
(5 August 2026)**

**Subject:** Legal status of the Holy Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai and Egypt's obligations regarding religious and cultural protection

According to a recent report, the Holy Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai is facing serious challenges to the historical, legal and institutional status under which it has operated for fifteen centuries <sup>(1)</sup>, <sup>(2)</sup>. Judicial, administrative and political actions are said to be restricting the autonomy of the Monastery, the status of its property and the continuity of the monastic community.

The Monastery of St. Catherine is a Unesco World Heritage Site and one of the oldest functioning Christian monastic sites in the world <sup>(3)</sup>. At the same time, the EU and Egypt have upgraded their relations to a strategic and comprehensive partnership, which includes commitments to human rights, fundamental freedoms and respect for international obligations <sup>(4)</sup>.

In light of the above:

1. Has the Commission raised with the Egyptian authorities the issue of protecting the historical legal status and monastic continuity of the Monastery of St. Catherine?
2. How does the Commission assess the developments in the light of freedom of religion, the protection of Christian communities and Egypt's obligations as a State Party to Unesco?
3. Will the Commission link the issue to the EU-Egypt political dialogue and European financial cooperation, requesting clear guarantees for the Monastery, its property and its community?

Submitted: 5.8.2026

**Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission  
(24 September 2026)**

The EU welcomes the efforts by Greece and Egypt to work towards safeguarding the rights of Saint Catherine's Monastery and closely follows developments after the Ismailia Court of Appeals issued a ruling in 2025 linked to the legal status of the Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai.

In 2025, the Egyptian authorities informed the European ambassadors that the government remains fully committed to preserving the monastery's religious, historical, and spiritual status, emphasising that the court ruling formally protects the site for the first time.

The EU will continue to follow the matter and the commitments made by the government of Egypt, in close coordination with Greece, insisting on the necessity to preserve the monastery's religious, historical, and spiritual status, in accordance with the Unesco's World Heritage Convention. Broadly speaking, the EU prioritises freedom of religion or belief as an important issue within its external human rights policy, aiming to promote tolerance and combat persecution globally.

Through EU guidelines adopted in 2013 <sup>(1)</sup>, the EU engages with religious actors, monitors violations, and supports interfaith initiatives, raising issues of concern in its human rights dialogues and sub-committees.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.copticsolidarity.org/2026/07/12/the-crisis-of-st-catherines-monastery-the-progressive-dismantling-of-a-fifteen-century-status-quo/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://idicenter.org/article/ethiopias-judeo-christian-heritage-under-attack-part-2>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/921/>.

<sup>4</sup> [https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/joint-declaration-strategic-and-comprehensive-partnership-between-arab-republic-egypt-and-european-2024-03-17\\_en](https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/joint-declaration-strategic-and-comprehensive-partnership-between-arab-republic-egypt-and-european-2024-03-17_en).

<sup>(1)</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/06\\_hr\\_guidelines\\_religion\\_en.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/06_hr_guidelines_religion_en.pdf).