

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003286/26
to the Commission**

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(17 August 2026)

Subject: Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai: rule of law and EU-Egypt relations

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, a Unesco World Heritage site and one of the oldest continuously used Christian monasteries in the world, is facing legal and administrative proceedings that raise serious concerns about the recognition of its legal personality, the recognition of its archbishop and abbot by the Egyptian Government, its ability to exercise legal representation before the courts and the protection of its property rights, which are protected by international law. This is happening just as the Egyptian Court of Cassation is about to deliver its final ruling on the case and as the EU deepens its partnership with Egypt.

In light of Articles 2 ⁽¹⁾, 3(5) ⁽²⁾ and 21 ⁽³⁾ of the TEU and Decision (EU) 2025/1267 providing macro-financial assistance to the Arab Republic of Egypt, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Were the above developments taken into account in the recent positive assessment of Egypt and in the decision to continue providing financial assistance to the country?
2. Are the above developments in line with Egypt's obligations concerning religious freedoms, effective access to justice and the protection of religious institutions?

Submitted: 17.8.2026

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(13 October 2026)

The EU acknowledges the constructive cooperation between Greece and Egypt in safeguarding the rights of Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai following the 2025 Ismailia Court of Appeals ruling linked to its legal status.

In 2025, the Egyptian authorities reaffirmed to European ambassadors their commitment to upholding the monastery's religious, historical, and spiritual status, emphasising that, for the first time, the court ruling provides formal legal protection for the site.

The EU will continue to follow the matter, in close coordination with Greece, stressing the importance of preserving the monastery's religious, historical, and spiritual status, in accordance with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's World Heritage Convention.

More broadly, the EU regards freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) as an important issue within its external human rights policy, promoting tolerance and combatting persecution worldwide.

Under the 2013 EU guidelines ⁽¹⁾ on FoRB, the EU engages with faith-based actors, monitors violations, and supports interfaith dialogue, while addressing concerns through its Human Rights Dialogues, political consultations and relevant sub-committees.

¹ Article 2: The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities.

² Article 3(5): In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the strict observance of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.

³ Article 21: The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, respect for human dignity, equality and solidarity, as well as respect for the United Nations Charter and international law.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/06_hr_guidelines_religion_en.pdf.