



## **ASIA/TURKEY - Land confiscated: the Orthodox monks of Mardin resort to the European Court of Human Rights**

Mardin (Agenzia Fides) - Exhausted for a story that seems to have no end, unable to get justice from local courts, the Christian monks of the Syrian Orthodox Monastery of Mor Gabriel Mardin (in Southeast Turkey province) have announced an appeal to the European Court for human Rights against the Turkish state. The object of the legal dispute is a land of 250 acres, originally belonging to the monastery, but confiscated and registered in the public cadastre in 2008.

The Turkish civil authorities claim that, according to law, agricultural land not used for a period of more than twenty years are considered state property and the monks hold the land property illegally. Since 2008, the case is under investigation and in-depth law analysis. In the last three years, the monks have been the target of accusations of proselytism, of wanting to harm the people, of undermining the spirit of unity and solidarity of the nation.

In a note Fides received, the Orthodox monks of Mardin, on the other hand, underline the fact that they have been present on that land for over 1600 years, well before the arrival of Islam, the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. "These lands – they stress- belong to us and we have all the documents to prove it". For this reason the religious take the case to the European Court of Human Rights.

The Syrian Orthodox monastery of Mor Gabriel is located near the town of Midyat in the province of Mardin. It was founded in 397 A.D. by Mor Mor Shmuel and Shemun of Qartminet and took its current name in the eighth century, by the Bishop of Mor, Gabriel Qartmin (593-668). This is a very important sacred place for the Syrian Orthodox community. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 23/11/2011)