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AFRICA/EGYPT - Patriarch Mathias I's visit postponed. No "Coptic mediation" on the Ethiopian dam

Alexandria (Agenzia Fides) - The Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Mathias I has postponed his visit to Egypt which should have taken place on 17 June. The postponment of the visit belies the assumptions circulating about the possibility of an "ecclesial mediation" carried out by Abuna Mathias and Coptic Orthodox Patriarch Tawadros II on the thorny issue of the Grand Renaissance Dam which is causing tension in the relations between Egypt and Ethiopia.
According to Egyptian media, Pope Tawadros had met some political leaders belonging to the Egyptian Coptic Church on Tuesday, June 11 to gather information and suggestions also concerning the dam. The meeting, which took place in the Monastery of Anba Bishoy in Wadi al-Natrun, near Alexandria, was also attended by the former Minister of Tourism Mounir Fakhry Abdel-Nour and Samir Morcos, a former adviser to President Mohamed Morsi.
The Egyptian government is concerned that the Ethiopian project of the Great Renaissance Dam may have a negative impact on the volume of the Nile waters. Already at the end of May Ethiopia begun to divert the flow of the Blue Nile in the direction of the dam under construction.
In recent weeks rumors had circulated - later denied strongly by the Coptic Patriarchate - that the Egyptian government also requested the mediation of Pope Tawadros to solve problems with Addis Ababa.
The Ethiopian authorities so far do not show themselves willing to work on the project. According to the Egyptian Institute of National Planning, Egypt will need by 2050 21 billion cubic meters of water per year in addition to the 55 million that currently respond to national needs.
The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was judicially bound to the Coptic Patriarchate of Alexandria in Egypt until 1959, when it was recognized as autocephalous Church by the Coptic Patriarch Cyril VI. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 13/06/2013).

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