



ASIA/HOLY LAND - Greek-Orthodox monastery under attack. The nuns are appealing to President Abbas

Bethany (Agenzia Fides) – The nuns of the Greek-Orthodox monastery in Bethany have sent a letter to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to urge the leaders of the Palestinian Authority to take charge, with appropriate measures, of the escalation of attacks that the religious house has been suffering lately: throwing stones, broken glass, theft and looting of the monastery property which constitute a real intimidating strategy. "We do not exclude" wrote the Mother Superior Sister Ibraxia in her letter to President Abbas "that behind these attacks there are those who want to foment discord among the children of the Palestinian nation". Local sources told Fides Agency that families in the area in recent days, both Christian and Muslim, have paid a visit to the monastery as a sign of solidarity, to reiterate that the population of Bethany is foreign to the aggression. "Someone wants to send us away", wrote Sister Ibraxia in her letter, "but we will not flee".

In the past the Greek-Orthodox monastery represented an oasis of spirituality in the city where Jesus resuscitated Lazarus, today known by its Arabic name al-Azariyeh and has become a suburb of East Jerusalem. In recent times, the whole area has undergone a decline made of unregulated urbanization, environmental pollution, increased crime. The erection of the separation wall between Israel and the Palestinian Territories has deteriorated the situation further. The monastery is now in an area where the Palestinian Authority fails to exercise firm control, a "no man's land" where crime, abuse of power and corruption are rampant. In recent months, while there continues to be a steep rise in the price of land in the area, those belonging to the monastery were partly outside the control of the sisters due to a local Muslim family clan who arbitrarily claim the right to property. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 16/07/2013).