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ASIA/TURKEY - The properties of the Monastery of Mor Gabriel returned to the Syriac Orthodox community

Mardin (Agenzia Fides) - The Assembly of Foundations, the highest deliberative body of the cartel authorities that in Turkey manage the assets of minority religious communities, approved that the ownership of the lands of the historic Monastery of Mor Gabriel is returned to the Christian Syriac Orthodox community. The Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arinc "tweeted" the news at the end of the meeting which ordered the return. According to Turkish sources consulted by Fides Agency, the General Director of the Assembly of the Foundations Aidan Nertem confirmed that the registration of transfer of ownership may be authorized without any problems. Last year alone, the Turkish Supreme Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal of a Syriac Foundation asking to regain possession of the Monastery, so far considered state property.
The Monastery of Mor Gabriel, founded in 397, is situated in the Plateau of Tur Abdin, in the south eastern province of Mardin, and is the oldest operant Syriac Orthodox monastery. The return to the Syriac Orthodox community of 244 thousand square meters of land connected to the Monastery is by land extension the most consistent restitution of property ordered by Turkey in favor of religious minority groups .
Recently the Syriac Orthodox community has been recognized by the Turkish government also the right to establish schools where the children of the community can be educated in their mother tongue.
The seat of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch in the thirteenth century had settled near Mardin, in the Monastery of Mor Hananyo, and had remained there until 1933, then moved to Syria (Homs first and then to Damascus). According to several observers, the strategy of attention recently inaugurated by the Turkish authorities towards Christian Syriacs aim at promoting the "return" from Syria to Turkey of the patriarchal Syrian Orthodox Seat. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 09/10/2013)

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