



## **AFRICA/EGYPT - The false accusations against St. Catherine's Monastery have been rejected**

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - In an articulated press conference held in Cairo on Sunday, March 30, representatives of the Egyptian political and academic world rejected the false accusations of infidelity to the Egyptian nation and of collusion with foreign entities addressed recently against the monks of St. Catherine in the Sinai known and appreciated as one of the oldest Christian monasteries in the world.

The main author of the attacks against the Monastery is the retired general, Ahmed Ragai Attiya, who accused the monks of having changed the topography of the area, of having hidden the so-called 12 streams of Moses (those which according to tradition, quenched the Jewish people's thirst during their Exodus to the Promised Land), of having taken possession of 20 percent of the land in southern Sinai, of having turned the monastery into an area occupied by Greece and by the European Union. During a previous seminar held in Cairo by general Attiya, a publication which advocated the creation of a "Front for the defense of the southern Sinai " was also distributed and described the Greek monks as occupiers.

Taking a cue from these attacks, some of the media close to the Salafis have accused the Monastery of complicity with the Israeli intelligence services. And therefore pose a threat to national security.

The conference held yesterday was attended, among others, by the Monk of St. Catherine Gregorios al-Sinawi, the lawyer and former MP Ehab Ramzy, the consultant Rifat al Said and representatives of some local tribes involved in the security of the Monastery.

All the interventions rejected the charges on the basis of the documents that define the status of the monastic community and its relations with the Egyptian nation. Some of the speakers, in their speeches, foreshadowed the attempt to foment through lies, the popular hostility against the Monastery, in an area where armed Islamist groups are concentrated.

The area of the monastery's property includes 71 other gardens and minor monastic sites. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 31/03/2014)