



ARCHBISHOP, former SINAI, DAMIANOS

Athens, 12/07/2026

Commemoration of our Holy Father Paisios the Athonite and Sinaite

Most Reverend Holy Brother, Mr. Symeon,
and beloved fathers of the Holy Monastery of Sinai, those residing at present
in the Holy Monastery,

With deep respect for the centuries-long history of our Monastery, I feel the need to address all of you as a father, with words of peace but also with the responsibility imposed by my position, having genuine concern for the unity of the brotherhood and the future of our Monastery.

As we move forward into the future, let us remember that every era reveals not only the strengths but also the weaknesses of all. It is not the time now to make an account of what has happened among us; yet I cannot overlook that there were actions and behaviours which historically exposed the Monastery and personally disgraced me, as well as disgraced those who defamed me, wounding the unity and dignity of the brotherhood. For these, the time and manner will be found for them to be judged, for God and history omit nothing and render to each according to the measure of truth.

We, however, are called today to stand before our conscience and the centuries-long journey of our Monastery, with a pure heart and a reconciliatory disposition, even though the trials we faced were unbearable and painful. For, as the holy Fathers teach, true spiritual courage is shown when a person chooses peace where he could demand his right, and love where he could hold resentment. With this mindset, let us continue our common path in the unity, truth, and peace of Christ.

Within this framework, I mention the following:

In the great and centuries-long history of our Monastery, we are all travellers. The Monastery is not the property of anyone; it is the house of all monks, living and departed, and at the same time the universal house of the Orthodox world.

I call upon you and earnestly ask you, immediately and without evasions, to invite

all the monks of the Monastery to return, in a peaceful manner, so that we may proceed united in the difficult struggle that lies before us.

Bigotries, egotisms, and every other passion or negative emotion that dominates us must be set aside; we must forgive one another; and, reflecting on the centuries-long history of our Monastery, its mission, its contribution to global Orthodoxy and to the sacred heritage of our Nation, we must offer, with self-sacrifice, a common struggle to protect it and to render to it all that it is historically entitled to.

Always with the due respect toward our Egyptian brothers, with whom our Monastery has maintained, throughout time, relations of mutual esteem, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence, and who, from the earlier rulers of Egypt, inherited—regarding our Monastery—not only rights but also inalienable obligations, consistent, however, with their faith. As a result, today more than ever, we must call upon the Egyptian State to engage in an official, open, and public dialogue, where all sides will speak with open cards. The Monastery of Sinai has never stood as an obstacle to their pharaonic undertaking; on the contrary, with patience and understanding, we tolerated works that disturbed the tranquillity and spirituality of our place, due to their importance for Egypt. If sincere dialogue continues on the basis we had jointly agreed upon—and which they violently, inexplicably, and without cause annulled unilaterally with the sudden issuance of the court decision—a solution can be found so that the project may be completed as they desire, the future management of the site and its visitors may be regulated, and at the same time our Monastery may retain its inalienable property right, as it has received it from the centuries.

Despite our convergence with the Egyptian State on the matter of the measured project, we remain with one essential disagreement. **The extraordinary phenomenon of the Holy Monastery of Sinai is born exclusively from human faith. Egypt sees tourists; we see pilgrims. They see a museum; we see a place trodden by God.** If they do not integrate our sacred perspective into their aims, a solution will never be found—and even if one is found, it will be unsuccessful and short-lived for the historical survival of the Monastery.

As you know very well, the deceitful invocation of the “safeguarding of the religious status quo” of the Monastery diverted the discussion in a misleading way toward something that was never questioned. The core of this right is safeguarded only through the clear recognition of the Monastery’s property status, that is, its full ownership; the recognition of its distinct legal personality within Egyptian and international law as defined by UNESCO; the granting of Egyptian citizenship to the incumbent Archbishop; and the special issuance of long-term residence permits to the fathers. Only these four elements guarantee

the eternal presence and continuity of the Monastery in this sacred place. Any other agreement, if it is not founded upon the recognition of the right of ownership, can be overturned at any moment, especially in more difficult times.

Egypt, with the silent consent of the Greek Government, retreated on 29/5/2025 **from the initial agreement of the out-of-court settlement**, which it had fully accepted and which recognized for us **full ownership over the entirety of the Monastery's properties**. Egypt never provided explanations, nor was it asked by Greece to provide explanations for this. Nevertheless, I was accused and deliberately targeted personally by some, claiming that I had supposedly concluded a treacherous agreement, while the exact opposite was true. I continued to emphasize to the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs — Mr. Georgios Gerapetritis and his Egyptian counterpart — the importance of the “**Achtiname**” and the other titles throughout the centuries, and that there still remained room for a real and just solution which, with respect, would secure the rights of both sides forever.

Regardless of what is differently leaked to the Press, an effort is being made to shift the responsibility and the final word onto the brotherhood, despite the fact that these two ministers, as they have publicly admitted, remain responsible, exclusively competent, and the architects of the new agreement — **still confidential** until today (;;;!!!) — which was shaped between them during the meeting they held on August 6th, 2025.

I reveal that I proposed to them the following alternative arrangement which, although it does not fully correspond to historical reality, provides the possibility for Egypt to be recognized as holding ownership over the land, **and for the Monastery to be recognized as holding ownership over the buildings and anything else that exists upon the land, with the strict condition of prohibiting the sale or change of use of any property by either the Monastery or Egypt**. In this peculiar but closer-to-justice manner, **the principle of mutual neutralization** is applied, so that both Parties remain protected.

I had also made clear that an essential prerequisite for any agreement was that it must have an interstate character and corresponding legal commitment, so that, beyond the Monastery and Egypt, Greece would also co-sign it as a party — and not that an agreement be concluded exclusively between the Monastery and Egypt, which a future Egyptian government of a more extreme orientation could overturn in a single night.

At the same time, I observe that various publications attempt to present as a supposed “success” an agreement which, if it corresponds to reality, essentially constitutes a complete failure and a dangerous undermining of the future of our Monastery. On 04.07.2026, an article was published in “Proto Thema” stating that the forthcoming agreement recognizes the Egyptian State as owner of all

areas but grants the Holy Monastery possession and use of them in perpetuity, without financial compensation. The agreement covers all buildings and facilities within the walls, as well as chapels outside the walls, such as the Church of the Holy Summit, while the gardens — which are of vital importance for the daily life of the monks — are fully confiscated, and reference is made to a simple long-term lease for a symbolic fee, as if these were commercial properties and not the core of our monastic life.

According to property law, the only strong right is ownership, while possession and tenure depend on the decision of the owner; and indeed, with this specific agreement, if the Monastery irrevocably recognizes, as is foreseen, then it relinquishes its inalienable and unique right of ownership in exchange for a pittance which ultimately will not even be granted. In a deceitful manner, an attempt is made to present such an arrangement as a positive development, while in reality it would mean that the Monastery loses ownership of its property and is transformed into a tenant in its own place.

If this constitutes the content of the agreement being promoted, then it is not a success at all, **but a deeply offensive and dangerous degradation of the historical, spiritual, and functional autonomy of our Monastery, a violation of our fundamental individual and religious rights, and an evident attempt to transform our Monastery into a Museum.**

The same publication states that Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has included the issue in the agenda of his contacts with the President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. However, for me, what is crucial is not merely the presence of the matter on the agenda. What is crucial is the prioritization. The matter of the Holy Monastery of Sinai and its priceless relics is not just another diplomatic subject; **it is an issue of national and spiritual responsibility, with a value that cannot be assessed, cannot be compared, and cannot be placed in second rank in relation to any other agreement, with significance equal to or even greater than that of Hagia Sophia and the Monastery of Chora.**

The protection of the Monastery's property and its treasures require top priority, clear political will, and personal commitment at the highest level. And yet, whenever, during the critical moments of the negotiations, I requested in writing to meet with the Greek Prime Minister, he chose to avoid me. This stance does not accord with the gravity of the matter nor with the responsibility he himself claims to assume.

In the press, it is continuously leaked that the brotherhood has been informed of the agreement, implying that all the Fathers are fully aware of it. You know very well that you have never informed either me or the other Fathers who are exiled

in Greece, something which you are obliged to do according to the Fundamental Regulations of the Monastery — which many of you, out of ignorance, consider to supersede the holy canons and to constitute a modern “Hodja’s oven.” It is inconceivable — and you are not legitimized — for a group of nine individuals, without thoroughly informing the entirety of the brotherhood about the content of the agreement and without convening a General Assembly at the Monastery with the presence of all the Fathers, to negotiate on your own and to make decisions on your own. The Monastery does not belong to you, and in the event that you take any arbitrary and illegal decision on your own, it will burden each one of you exclusively and personally, even though the accountability and impact will, over time, fall upon the entire body of Hellenism and Orthodoxy. And History, of course, will judge you accordingly.

Finally, if it has been decided by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Georgios Gerapetritis, and his Egyptian counterpart to adopt a tactic of “salami-slicing” and strategic depth, so that our Monastery is gradually transformed into a museum and we into employees, then there is no room for discussion.

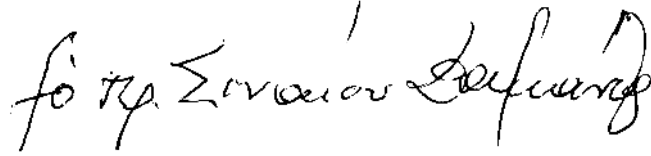
We must resist to the utmost and begin an international struggle, mobilizing the global Orthodox world for the protection of our Monastery. In this struggle — and despite my 92 years — I place myself at the disposal of the Monastery as a simple soldier. Today we exist here because some, throughout the centuries, sacrificed their lives when necessary. The tradition of the Senaites Fathers is not compromised, indulgence, prosperity, or financial dealings with the authority of the time, nor guilty silence; it is consensus, dialogue, patience, but also self-sacrifice, constant material and spiritual struggle, and survival under harsh conditions. The harshness of these sacred rocks reflects the quality of our life.

Today, more than ever, we are called to stand as worthy guardians of a place entrusted to us by History, Orthodoxy, and God. The Monastery of Sinai is not merely a monument; it is a living testimony of centuries, a light in the desert, an arc of spirituality and peace. Its future depends on the courage and unity we will demonstrate today.

Let us therefore stand with courage, with a pure heart, and with unwavering faith. Let us fulfil our duty toward our Fathers, toward history, toward God — who, apart from being the God of the living, is also the God of our departed Senaites brothers, those who watered with their tears, their ascetic sweat, and even their blood, and who devoted with zeal their entire lives to our Monastery and, now invisible, both admonish and support us.

With the hope that the All-Good Lord, who appeared in glory on Mount Sinai, cares for our Holy Monastery. I embrace you paternally.

With prayers and blessings,

A handwritten signature in Greek, which reads "for the Sinai Damianos". The script is cursive and fluid.

† **Archbishop, former Sinai, Damianos**

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