

SINAI IN THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN
Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mokhtar Jum'ah
Minister of Awqaf

The Noble Qur'an speaks about Sinai in a way that calls for reflection. It stresses its importance and religious and historical position and makes us think times and times about the necessity of devoting considerable efforts to Sinai development and promote investment in Sinai resources and tourist attractions for religious, natural and medical tourism. Allah, the Almighty, swears in His Book by mount Sinai in His saying, "By the mount. And [by] a Book inscribed. In parchment spread open. And [by] the frequented House. And [by] the heaven raised high. And [by] the sea filled [with fire]" (the Qur'an, 52: 1-6).

In this *surah*, Allah first swears by mount Sinai, giving it precedence over the other objects of oath in the same *surah* even though they have a high standing and holiness. Moreover, Allah named the whole *surah*: "the Surah of the Mount."

In a more explicit and specific oath, Allah swears by Mount Sinai in the *surah* of *al-Tin* as Allah, the Almighty, says, "By the fig and the olive. And [by] Mount Sinai. And [by] this secure city [Makkah], We have certainly created man in the best of stature." (The Qur'an, 95: 1-4). Again, Mount Sinai is given precedence over the secure city that enjoys a high standing and holiness.

In addition, the Qur'an refers to some of the blessings of Sinai in the saying of Allah, the Almighty, "And [We brought forth] a tree issuing from Mount Sinai which produces oil and food for those who eat" (the Qur'an, 23: 20). Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him) said about this blessed tree, "Eat of its oil and use it, for indeed it is from a blessed tree." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi in his Sunan).

Sinai hosts the blessed spot mentioned in the Qur'an in the story of Prophet Moses (may Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him) , "But when he came to it, he was called from the right side of the valley in a blessed spot – from the tree, O Moses, indeed I am Allah, Lord of the worlds" (the Qur'an, 28: 30) and the sacred valley of Tuwa mentioned in the divine address to Moses (may Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him), "And when he came to it, he was called, O Moses, Indeed, I am your Lord, so remove your sandals. Indeed, you are in the sacred valley of Tuwā" (the Qur'an, 20: 11-12). This high standing that Allah, the Almighty, confers upon Sinai encourages us all to put it in our hearts and to protect it and to ransom it with everything we have.

No doubt, our armed forces shoulder this responsibility with exceptional bravery; they pay the ultimate sacrifices of for the sake of the homeland in general and for the sake of protecting Sinai and freeing it from terrorist and criminal elements in particular, the matter which deserves appreciation on one hand as well as siding

with the armed forces and providing them with all the necessary support, be it financial or moral support, on the other hand.

In an attempt to shed light on the religious, tourist, natural, cultural and historical attractions in North and South Sinai, we, in the Egyptian Ministry of Awqaf, decided to hold the International Competition of the Holy Qur‘ān in the city of Sharm al-Sheikh in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, South Sinai Governorate and al-Gomhuria Newspaper, which is one of the most important partners in the competition. Moreover, tours will be organized to visit the religious, tourist, natural and cultural attractions in Sinai as the guests of Egypt from all over the world will visit the city of al-Tur, ‘Uyun Musa, Saint Catherine and other attractions and will be briefed about the religious and historical significance of these places.

The Qur‘ān competition includes this year two new levels: the memorization of the Qur‘ān for young children less than twelve years old and the memorization of three Juz’ of the Qur‘ān at least for those with special needs. Sinai was chosen to host this competition on affirmation of our belief that Sinai is the city of peace and shall remain so, God willing. It affirms that Sinai occupies an important position in the heart and mind of all faithful Egyptians. Futile attempts perpetuated by enemies of humanity shall never dissuade us from building, developing and protecting Sinai. In addition, the competition stresses that the Egyptian people are strong and, that, hardships only increase their strength, stamina, determination and insistence on protecting their land and honor with unrivalled desire to confront and uproot terrorism.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Imams who submitted numerous requests to move their work to Sinai in order to confront the forces of extremism. I would like also to thank those who are in charge of the Da‘wah convoys including the internal convoys by the scholars and Imams of the North and South Sinai governorates and the semi-periodic public convoys sent by the Ministry to Sinai.