His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's statement over the armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia issued a statement concerning the armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

I deeply sympathize with those living in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as with the peoples of Azerbaijan and Armenia over a new round of the armed confrontation which has been going on for over thirty years. Once again inhabited localities are being subjected to shelling, people are dying, and holy sites, cultural heritage objects and civilians' homes are being destroyed. I share sufferings of all the victims of this dreadful war and sincerely condole with the families of those killed.

The Russian Orthodox Church has being doing all she can since the onset of the conflict and will continue to exert every effort in order to, acting together with the religious leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, help re-establish peace in the long-suffering land of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Today I appeal to the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II, and to the Chairman of the Caucasus Muslims Board, Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshükür Pashazade. Dear brothers, together we have come a long way, exerting efforts so that this confrontation may not turn into an interfaith conflict, so that the problems may be resolved by peaceful means. Today each of us and all we together must do all we can to stop the bloodshed.

I attach great importance to the agreements reached through the mediation of Russia at the level of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan and Armenia. I call upon the state leadership of both countries to use the ceasefire in order to switch solution seeking to the political track. For the sake of the future of the two neighbouring peoples, I urge to extend the ceasefire and use it for peaceful negotiations.

A bad peace is better than a good quarrel: this old truth is relevant today more than ever. When there is peace, people can meet, communicate, and seek solutions to problems. But when there is a war and human blood is being shed and crimes are being committed, then it is difficult to reach joint political decisions.

I address my urgent appeal to all the conflicting parties: spare each other's lives. May the chronometer of the bloody feud stop in the name of peaceful future. Armenia and Azerbaijan historically were and will be neighbours; in any event, the Azerbaijani and the Armenians will be living side by side.

I wish to all those involved in this conflict success in seeking peaceful resolution to the existing problems. I ask you to show all your experience and wisdom in order to achieve real results and overcome the obstacles in the path of mutual understanding. Today many people's lives and your nations' peaceful future depend on your decisions.

+KIRILL

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

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