Interreligious Council of Russia issues statement in response to appeal of All-Ukrainian Council of Church and Religious Associations

The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Associations sent an appeal to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill as Honorary Chairman of the Interreligious Council of Russia, calling upon him to facilitate the release of the Ukrainian sailors detained on 25th November 2018, as well as the release of "hostages and captives in eastern Ukraine." The Interreligious Council of Russia took a decision to issue a statement in response to this appeal at its session on 25th March 2019.

The text of the statement is given below.

We, heads and representatives of the traditional religious communities of Russia, with pain and prayerful compassion see that the armed conflict continues in eastern Ukraine and regret over its negative aftermaths for the peoples of our two countries. It is beyond our competence to give legal assessment of the Ukrainian citizens' detainment; it is a prerogative of law enforcement institutions. However, committed to the principles of humaneness, we express our hope that the time will come and the detainees will return to their homeland.

It is our conviction that religious leaders are called to make their contribution to the cessation of the confrontation. We express our solidarity with all the oppressed, wronged and suffering people, regardless of their citizenship, political and religious beliefs, nationality and social status. We reaffirm our willingness to do all we can to settle the conflict and seek peaceful and mutually acceptable resolution to the existing disagreements.

We are deeply concerned over numerous facts of violation of the rights of believers in Ukraine, over forcible seizures of church buildings of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, over intimidation of parishioners and clergymen, over violence and pressure. We consider inadmissible any attempts to use religion as an instrument for reaping political dividends.

It is our hope that the blessed peace will be restored in the land of Ukraine and that our brotherly countries will again develop neighbourly and friendly relations.

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