



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with President of International Committee of the Red Cross



On 6 December 2018, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with Mr. Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), at Patriarchal and Synodal residence in St. Daniel's stavropegic monastery.

The Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR) was represented by Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov) DECR deputy chairman; Archpriest Sergy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far abroad countries; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov) DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; and Deacon Andrei Titushkin, a staff member of the Secretariat for far abroad countries.

Accompanying the ICRC president were Magne Barth, head of the ICRC Regional Delegation for the RF, Belarus and Moldova; Marie Dubeau and Valentina Kim, deputy heads of the Regional Delegation,

and Veronika Vybornova, specialist of Communication Department of the Regional Delegation.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said that the Russian Orthodox Church considers the ICRC work as very important and added: "Social and charity work is a priority in our Church after liturgical services and educational activity. We have established a special unit that renders assistance to people in emergency situations."

His Holiness told the guests about the work of the Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Ministry, which also trains clergymen for work with such people. We established this Department some ten years when we understood that it was not enough for our clerics to act as volunteers and that they need specific training. Now we have many such clerics and at the same time Orthodox volunteers, the young ones on particular. Social work is being done in the Russian Federation and also beyond its frontiers.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed his concern over the situation of Christians in the Middle East and North Africa and underscored that not only Christian minorities but also Muslims are suffering from political instability and military conflicts.

"I have visited almost all Middle East countries, though today we pay most attention to Syria," His Holiness underscored. He recalled his visit to the Antiochian Orthodox Church in 2011 and his meetings with many people in the streets who asked me to help Syria, to prevent the seizure of power by radical islamists. Christians at that time felt free, lived without any restrictions, and interreligious relations were harmonious.

The Russian Orthodox Church has been rendering help to the suffering from the very beginning of the conflict. "We believed it necessary to work together with Muslims. Islam is the second in number religion in our country, and we have a good organization called the Interreligious Council of Russia, which is a forum for cooperation with Buddhists, Muslims and representatives of other religions," His Holiness noted.

"We know about your efforts in Syria and highly appreciate your work," he said to the ICRC president and added that the Russian Orthodox Church considers participation in the restoration of the country, including church buildings and monasteries. His Holiness added that the Church also helps people who had suffered in the southeast of Ukraine and mentioned other directions of the social ministry of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The ICRC President Maurer thanked His Holiness for an opportunity to meet with him and for his kind words about the ICRC, and told him about the ICRC activities.

