Primate of Russian Orthodox Church meets with King of Jordan



On 15 February 2018, at the Throne Hall of the Patriarchal Chambers of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan.

The King of Jordan was accompanied by Prince Ghazi bin Mohammed, the King's Personal Envoy and Chief Advisor for Religious and Cultural Affairs; Mr. Ayman Al Safadi, Jordan's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates; Mr. Amjad Adaileh, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Jordan to Russia; Mr. Manar Dabbas, head of the Political Affairs Directorate; and Mr. Ghaith Al-Tarawneh, Acting Mass Media and Communications Director. Taking part in the meeting was Mr. Boris Bolotin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Kingdom of Jordan.

Representing the Russian Orthodox Church at the meeting were also Metropolitan Hilarion of

Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archbishop Antony of Vienna and Budapest, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administration for Institutions Abroad; Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman; and Archpriest Sergy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far-abroad countries.

Greeting the high guest, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said, "The Russian Orthodox Church attaches great importance to the dialogue with the leadership of Jordan, first of all, with Your Majesty."

As His Holiness noted, what the Russian people went through in the 20th century and in the previous centuries prompts them to take to heart the tragedies of other nations. According to the Primate of the Russian Church, an enormous challenge for all people of good will today is terrorism. "First and foremost, it is a threat to the Middle East, which is a multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious region. However, the terrorism also threats almost all countries," he added.

As Patriarch Kirill emphasized, the Russian Church believes that all countries must find strength to overcome their ideological, cultural and political differences in order to put up a united front to combat terrorism.

The Russian Orthodox Church, which is the Church of the majority in the multiethnic country, gives immense importance to the promotion of interstate and interreligious dialogue with the view of creating a united front to fight terrorism, His Holiness noted.

"We hoped that such front would be created during the military operation in Syria against terrorists, but, regrettably, it did no happen," Patriarch Kirill said, "Russia's aerospace forces, together with the government troops, did their work, as you know, very successfully. However, other countries, having formed a coalition, did their own work. The very fact that the two powerful armed groups, which did not coordinate with other, were present in that territory, was an enormous challenge. It posed a risk of large-scale hostilities; any mistake could lead to the direct clash between representatives of the nuclear-armed states. As soon as I realized this danger, I proposed to Pope Francis to meet without delay, albeit a Patriarch of Moscow had never before met with a Pope of Rome," His Holiness said and pointed out that during the meeting in Havana an agreement had been reached on some very significant issues. "First of all, we noted the dangerous situation in Syria," the Patriarch added, "It was our common understanding that those who are against terror must combat terrorism together, coordinating their actions."

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia also said that he recalled with gratitude his meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan that took place in 2012 not long before the tragedy unfolded in Syria and Iraq. "I remember you told me about the interfaith relations in Jordan, about the peaceful

coexistence of religions in the country," the Primate of the Russian Church continued, "I had a pleasure to see it with my own eyes. In your country both the Orthodox Christians and Muslims feel that this is their homeland and that they enjoy equal rights and have equal opportunities."

His Holiness also raised an issue of the revival of Syria and Iraq affected by the armed confrontation, noting that the Russian Orthodox Church, together with the Orthodox non-governmental organizations of Russia rendered considerable humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people during the hostilities, and continues to do so.

"Since in Russia the Orthodox Christians have very good relations with the Muslims and the Jews, we suggested that at this stage we should render aid together, so that the Orthodox, the Muslims, the Jews and representatives of other confessions could take part in these actions," Patriarch Kirill added, "And one can see that it opens new doors in providing humanitarian relief and that people have more trust in such projects."

His Holiness expressed his hope that the process initiated by the Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue held in Sochi would result in practical decisions. "We pray for this process to be a success, but we are aware of the fact that the fight against terrorism in Syria and Iraq is not completely over yet. Some developments cause alarm, such as sudden shelling, attempts to shell religious buildings. It is our firm conviction that the hardest period of confrontation is over; much work lies ahead as to the peaceful settlement of the situation in Syria and Iraq," the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church added, thanking the King of Jordan for his position on the raised issues and pointing out to a high level of interfaith dialogue and cooperation in Jordan.

King Abdullah II of Jordan expressed his gratitude to Patriarch Kirill for the warm welcome and noted that this meeting gave him yet another opportunity to realize how strong was the position of the Russian Orthodox Church not only in Russia, but throughout the world as well.

"The Orthodox Christianity was a part of our past, is a part of our present and must be preserved as a part of our future," the King of Jordan said. Otherwise, he emphasized, everybody will have to pay a heavy price. King Abdullah II highly appreciated the role that the Russian Orthodox Church plays in Syria by helping those affected by the war and all the oppressed and defenseless.

Jordan receives Christians from Iraq and Syria who flee from violence, the high guest said, noting that his country not only renders assistance to the Christians who are forced to leave their native lands, but also helps create conditions for refugees to return home, to their communities which have existed for many centuries. As King Abdullah II mentioned, Jordan and Russia managed to establish close cooperation in promoting the restoration of peace and stability in Syria.

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