



The humanitarian action was organized and carried out by the leaders of both Christian and Muslim communities of Syria and Lebanon. It was distributed by the local Christian and Muslim clergy and by the delegates from Russia. Among those who received the aid were the neediest people who were brought together for that purpose at religious centres in Damascus and Zahlé, as well as child welfare institutions.

During their visit, the delegation members met with religious leaders and representatives of state authorities of Syria and Lebanon. The Syrians noted that the action was unprecedented and expressed their sincere gratitude to the Russian state and to the believers who raised the funds, as well as to the Russian Orthodox Church as its main organizer and to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia as the initiator and supervisor of the project.

While in Damascus, the humanitarian delegation came under bombardment by terrorists, which continued for two days, targeting the places visited by the Russian delegation. However, the humanitarian action was not stopped; the project was fully implemented. The bombardment of the humanitarian mission gave cause for an official statement of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence and was on the agenda of a session of the UN Security Council on February 7.

With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and by the decision of Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations, led the delegation. The delegation also included Mr. Sergei Melnikov, secretary of Russia's Presidential Domestic Policy Directorate, executive secretary of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations; Imam Muhtasib Ildar Ziganshin of the Tumen Region, member of the Presidium of the Central Muslim Spiritual Board of Russia; Mufti Albir Krganov, chairman of the Spiritual Assembly of Muslims of Russia; Mr. Akhmad Kakhayev, first deputy chairman of the Central Muslim Spiritual Board of the Republic of Dagestan; Mr. Sergei Ryakhovsky, senior bishop of the Associated Russian Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith; Archimandrite Poghos Vardanyan, vicar of the head of the Russian and New Nakhichevan diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church; Hieromonk Yermogen (Korchukov), executive director of the Interreligious Foundation for Assistance in Implementation of Joint Humanitarian Projects, steward of the Zaikonospassky Monastery in Moscow; Mr. Sergei Baydakov, head of the Moscow Office of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society; Ms Nelli Kuskova, co-chair of the Committee for Solidarity with the Peoples of Libya and Syria; Imam M. Mirsayapov, head of the International Department of the Spiritual Assembly of Muslims of Russia; Mr. A. Tashtimirov, member of the Central Muslim Spiritual Board of Russia; Mr. Oleg Fomin, co-chair of the Committee for Solidarity with the Peoples of Libya and Syria; Mr. Hassan Nasralla, chairman of the Arab Diaspora Regional Non-Governmental Organization; and representatives of the Russian TV channels and news agencies.

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