



Patriarch Kirill meets with Zakharchenko, Pasechnik and Medvedchuk

December 25, 2017 – His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with Alexander Zakharchenko, Leonid Pasechnik and Viktor Medvedchuk at the synodal residence in the St. Daniel Monastery in Moscow.

During the meeting in which the Russian Orthodox Church acted as mediator, agreements were reached between Kiev and Donbas on the conditions for an exchange of captives. It is expected to take place within the next few days.

‘Today in the St. Daniel monastery the process of negotiations on all the details concerning the exchange of captives has been completed’, Patriarch Kirill reported summing up the negotiations, ‘As you know, the process was not at all easy, and our Church has taken part in it as much as is proper. I would like to underscore the contribution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the person of His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry. I would like to thank all the participants – both those who are here now and those who are absent today – for their understanding of the importance of having an exchange of captives to happen on the eve of the New Year and the Nativity of Christ’.

According to His Holiness, not all those who were taken prisoner in the course of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine are mentioned in the available lists. ‘It is my fervent hope that further efforts will lead to the liberation of all prisoners. For the Russian Orthodox Church it is a very important matter’, His Holiness stressed noting that there is the flock of the Russian Church on the both sides of the armed conflict.

‘The Russian Church grieves when brother raises a hand against brother. And I would like to stress the need for a peaceful settlement of problems involved in the hostilities in eastern Ukraine. It is my deep conviction that nobody needs a conflict taking a heavy toll but efforts from both sides are needed to stop it. I hope that the process, which has begun, will continue and become a guarantee of establishing a lasting peace with justice. May God help us all in fulfilling this vital task’, Patriarch Kirill said in conclusion.

In his turn, Alexander Zakharchenko said, ‘A really significant event has taken place today as the last conditions have been talked over, and on December 27 an exchange will take place by the “306 for 74”

formula thanks to you, Your Holiness and to you, Viktor Vladimirovich. I hope that the Ukrainian side will keep its promises as well.

'It is a really sacred course: people who have spent over three years in captivity will be able to come back home thanks to both the Church and the authority who have managed to organize this all. The most important thing is that we will show that we are ready to make constructive steps for the sake of exchange of captives and establishment of peace which will reign sooner or later, and a great credit for it goes to Your Holiness', Mr. Zakharchenko said.

Leonid Pasechnik, in his turn, said, 'On behalf of the Lugansk People's Republic I state that we too are ready to make the exchange on the conditions and agreements reached at today's meeting'. We, both the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, re-affirm our readiness to hold negotiations and to settle the conflict in Donbas through peaceful means'.

Viktor Medvedchuk reminded those present that the proposal for an exchange of war prisoners, which was voiced at the New Jerusalem monastery on November 15, was supported by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

'It is symbolical that it is in the Patriarchal residence that we have managed to clear all the questions, to exchange approved lists and to state our readiness to carry out this exchange on December 27', the leader of the public movement "Ukrainian Choice – the Right of the People".

'The Russian Orthodox Church has been engaged in dealing with humanitarian problem (in the conflict zone – *ed.*) since 2014, and today we are ready to do all that is possible so that over three thousand people could come home to their families before the New Year and Christmas. Thank you very much, Your Holiness Patriarch Kirill. I thank the representatives of Donetsk and Lugansk, Alexander Vladimirovich and Leonid Ivanovich, for what we have managed to do. This is really a great work and I wish to hope that we will continue striving for a consensus in all matters so that peace may triumph in Ukraine including in the regions where, regrettably, hostilities continue'.

Patriarchal Press Service

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