



## Trilateral meeting of religious leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia takes place in Moscow



On 8 September 2017, a meeting between Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshükür Pashazade, chairman of the Caucasian Muslims Board, and Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, took place at the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow. The religious leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia arrived in Russia's capital at the invitation of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church to discuss ways of settling the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Addressing the participants in the meeting, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said in particular, "We have some inner potential that helps us – I believe it is true – overcome the disagreements that would be difficult to overcome in another audience <...> The very fact of this meeting is an important sign for our nations that our religions have a peace-making potential. Religion can and, I am sure, will play a unifying and reconciling role in the life of peoples."

The role of religious leaders is to exhort and guide people, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II, emphasized. "There is no alternative to peace in our region and to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict through negotiations," he said.

The chairman of the Caucasian Muslims Board, Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshükür Pashazade, noted the benefits of the trilateral meetings of religious leaders and the importance of easing the situation. The leader of the Azerbaijani Muslims called upon all the parties to do together "something good, something of significance," so that the confrontation would not begin again after they return home; "something that would bring about peace and accord."

The spiritual leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for the organization of the meeting.

The participants in the meeting discussed opportunities of exerting moral influence with regard to the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as ways to seek its peaceful settlement, and practical measures to ensure this.

As the result of the meeting, a joint statement was signed, which emphasizes the necessity of the dialogue and international peace-making efforts, and points out to the essential role of moral values in settling the conflict and putting an end to bloodshed, as well as presents a number of proposals aimed at easing the lot of people who have found themselves in the conflict zone."

Answering questions from journalists after the meeting, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said, "I appreciate the atmosphere that has prevailed today during the negotiations, and the results of the work. In a warm, open atmosphere the parties have honestly exchanged their opinions, without any hint of a hostile rhetoric. It is a sign that the religious leaders, feeling their full responsibility before God for the future of their peoples and their countries, discussed the problem that is, indeed, very complicated."

Speaking on behalf of all the participants in the meeting, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said in particular, "The signed document notes the necessity to change the atmosphere, the climate over this problem. It is important, first of all, with regard to the education of young people. Azerbaijan and Armenia will always be neighbours. There is no other reality but the reality of these two peoples living side by side. God willed them to live close to each other. And it is based on this fact that the relations between these two countries and peoples should be built up and the attempts to resolve this very complicated problem over the Nagorno-Karabakh should be made."

"I would like to say once again that religious leaders have a potential for peace-making activities, peace-making ministry in very difficult situations. And today's meeting shows it," Patriarch Kirill added in

conclusion.

*DECR Communication Service*

*Photo by Patriarchal Press Service*

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