



Patriarch Kirill meets with Supreme Mufti of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan



May 28, 2017 – His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with the Supreme Mufti of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan Maksatbek aji Toktomushev.

Greeting the Supreme Mufti, Patriarch Kirill said in particular, ‘Good day, dear brother! I am very much delighted at the opportunity to visit the remarkable land of Kyrgyzstan. I have never been here, and I wanted very much to come but due to various circumstances it did not happen.

‘It is important that in the country in which most people confess Islam, Muslims and Orthodox Christians live in peace, and it has always been so – before and after the 1917 Revolution.

‘We were equally subjected to persecution by the atheistic authorities. Muslims and Orthodox Christians suffered but we always had the feeling of solidarity and mutual support. We met on various occasions and preserved friendship in spite of unfavourable external conditions. Now the reality is altogether

different in both Kyrgyzstan and Russia. Today, in a situation of religious freedom, we have an opportunity for developing the tradition of cooperation.

'The society's frame of mind and its attitude to Orthodoxy depend to a considerable extent on you as Mufti and on your clergy. Your beneficial attitude to Christians and your transmitting it to the others is an important factor of peace, and I would like to wholeheartedly thank you for this.

'Regrettably, we see tragic cases today linked with the use of religion by extremists. I do not use the phrases 'religious extremism' or 'religious radicalism', because there can be no such thing as religious extremism', His Holiness said. Speaking about the recent vicious attack made on Christians in Egypt, he noted that there can be no justification whatsoever of the killers of totally innocent people, who use religious rhetoric as a cover.

'Here, in Kyrgyzstan', he continued, 'you are doing much not to allow anybody to use religion for evil purposes. Therefore, I would like to express gratitude to you and say that Orthodox Christians are ready to work together with you to preserve peace in Kyrgyzstan and to see to it that nobody could cause a clash between our two communities', His Holiness said in conclusion.

In his response the Supreme Mufti said, 'Islam and Orthodoxy have lived from old times and will live in Kyrgyzstan, and there will be no confrontation. We have ensured the freedom of faith. As you can see, there is no oppression of either Orthodox or Muslims. We have a democratic secular state, and, certainly, we would like to see you in Kyrgyzstan every year.

'I keep saying that we should have not only a customs union (with Russia), but in the first place a spiritual union, so that common human values may develop', Mufti Toktomushev stressed.

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