



## **World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians begins its work in Washington**



On 10 May 2017, the World Summit of Christian Leaders in Defense of Persecuted Christians opened in Washington, USA. The conference organized by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association brought together representatives of various Christian confessions from over 135 countries.

The meeting was arranged to address the problem of mass persecutions of Christians in the Middle East, Africa and other regions, unprecedented in modern history and compared to the persecutions of early Christians and the mass repressions initiated by the atheistic regimes in the 20th century. Such large-scale atrocities cannot be passed over in silence by the Christian community. The Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians is organized to provide a platform for a thorough discussion of this problem with the view of changing the situation for the better.

With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church is represented at the meeting by a delegation led by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk,

chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations. The delegation also includes Bishop John of Naro-Fominsk, administrator of the Patriarchal parishes in the USA; Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Nikolai Danilevich, vice-chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church; Hegumen Arseny (Sokolov), representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; Hieromonk Ioann (Kopeykin), vice-rector for education of Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute of Postgraduate Studies; Rev. Dimitry Safonov, DECR secretary for inter-religious relations; Mr. Philip Champion, a staff member of the DECR Secretariat for Inter-Christian Relations; and Mr. A. Izotov, a postgraduate student of Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute of Postgraduate Studies.

The delegations of other Local Orthodox Churches attending the summit are led by His Beatitude Tikhon, Archbishop of Washington, Metropolitan of All America and Canada (Orthodox Church in America); Archbishop Demetrios of America (Patriarchate of Constantinople); and Archbishop Joseph of New York, Metropolitan of All North America (Patriarchate of Antioch).

Taking part in the conference are also representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, various Protestant denominations, and the Oriental Churches – the Coptic Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East.

Franklin Graham, President of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, opened the summit, emphasizing that the goal of the meeting is not to unite confessions, but to express solidarity with the Christians persecuted in various regions of the world.

The World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christian will continue its work until May 13.

*DECR Communication Service*

*Photo by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association*

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