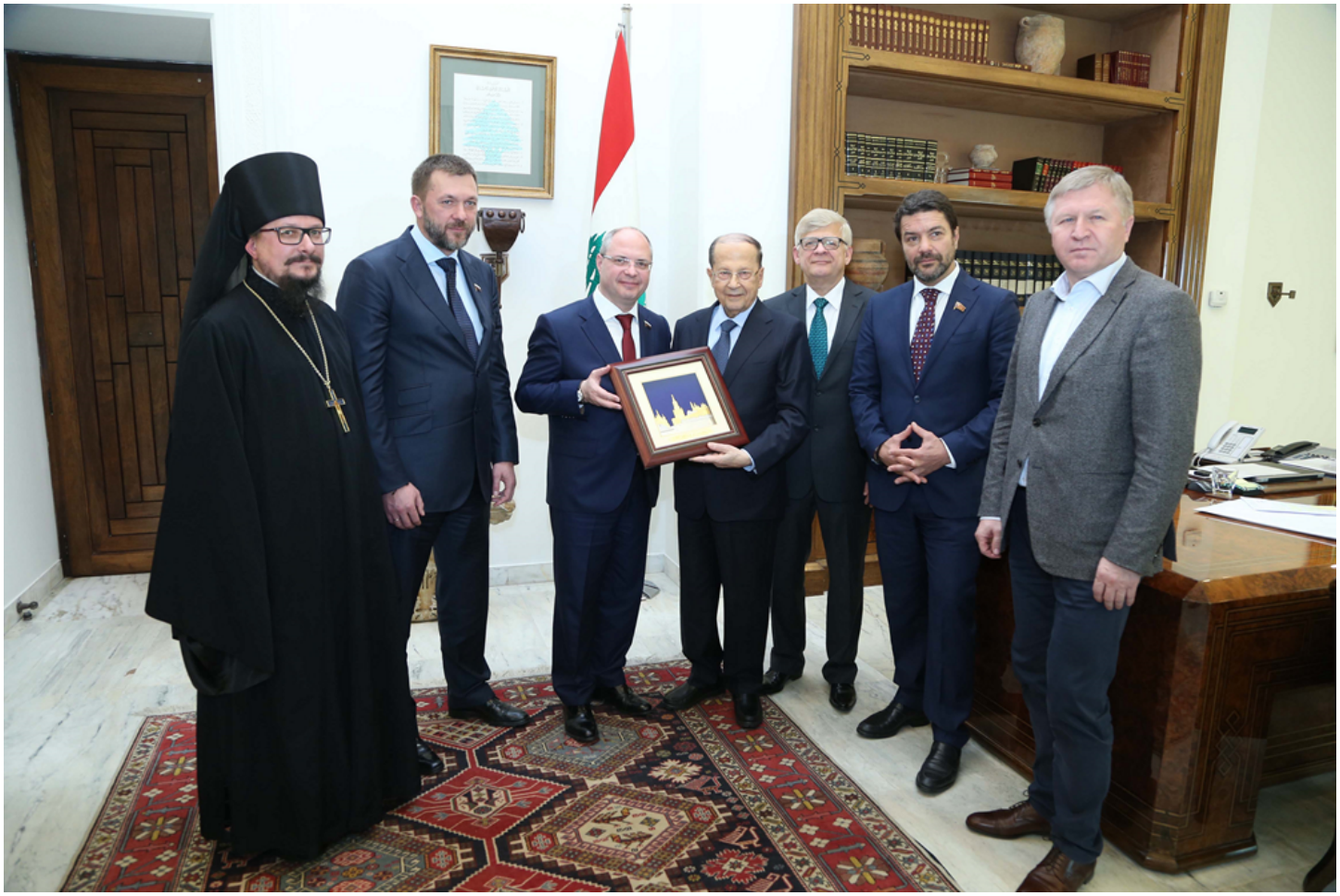
Representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Antioch takes part in Russian delegation's meeting with the President of Lebanon



On 10 February 2017, Mr. Michel Aoun, President of Lebanon, received in his residence in Baabda the Russian delegation that included Hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov), representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Antioch; deputies of the State Duma, Mr. S.A. Gavrilov, Mr. D.V. Sablin and Mr. A.A. Yuschenko; and Mr. O.G. Konkov, representative of the Russian business circles.

The participants in the meeting focused on the defence of Christians in the Middle East. The President of Lebanon expressed his concern over the outflow of the Christian population from the country and from the Middle East in general, caused by a difficult political and economic situation in the region and by the war in Syria.

In his address, Mr. Sergei Gavrilov, coordinator of the Inter-Factional Parliamentary Group for the

Protection of Christian Values, dwelt on the efforts of the Russian Federation aimed at defending the Christian population in the war-torn Syria.

Hegumen Arseniy congratulated Mr. Michel Aoun on his election as President of the Lebanese Republic on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and said in particular, “We are witnessing today a tragedy of the civilization – Christians are fleeing the Middle East, their homeland. Christianity came to the land of the Middle East six centuries before Islam. It is the home for both Christians and Muslims. If Christians leave it, the Middle East will lose an essential part of its identity, and its religious landscape will become bleak and monotonous. It is the most urgent task for Christians and all people of good will to stop this process. Mr. President, you are the only Christian head of state in the Middle East. All your brothers in faith have fixed their eyes on you in the hope that the Christians of Lebanon, as well as the Christians of the whole Middle East will find in you a reliable protector.”

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Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/48717/