



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with French President Francois Hollande

On 5 December 2016, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia currently on a visit to the Korsun diocese met with the President of the French Republic Francois Hollande.

Attending the meeting were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Nestor of Korsun; and Bishop Antony of Bogorodsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administration for Institutions Abroad.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and the President of the French Republic discussed the situation of Christian minorities in the Middle East. His Holiness expressed his profound concern over the unceasing extermination of Christians in the region and underscored: 'Human destiny and human life are the most important thing. It was the subject of our talks with Pope Francis in Havana.'

His Holiness said that the Russian Orthodox Church was prepared to cooperate with everyone in the cause of defending Christian population in the Middle East.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church explained the position of the Russian Orthodox Church on the conflict in Ukraine and emphasized that it has been a peaceful one from the very beginning unlike the positions of certain religious communities in Ukraine. 'We believe that the peacemaking efforts of the Church are the only mechanism capable of reconciling people in the country at present, and that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's peace mission plays a special role in it.'

His Holiness thanked the French President for an opportunity to build the Orthodox Religious and Cultural centre in Paris. He is confident that it will be a place for launching religious and humanitarian initiatives in the relations between Russia and France.

President Hollande noted that France supported Christian minorities in Syria and Iraq and welcomed any initiative, including religious ones, for the settlement of the situation of Christian population in the Middle East. As to the armed conflict in the southeast of Ukraine, he noted the particular importance of the Minsk Agreements.

President Hollande also noted the great importance of the meeting of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill with

Pope Francis in Havana and the importance of the Orthodox Religious and Cultural Center opened in Paris which will promote further development of cultural relations between Russia and France.

Later His Holiness Patriarch Kirill resumed the meeting, saying: 'It was a good talk. We discussed the most important issues of today. I believe that this meeting with the French President, the head of the secular state, shows that secular authorities are prepared for a dialogue with representatives of the Church on the topical issues which concern all of us.'

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