Delegation from Russia delivers humanitarian aid to Syria

A delegation consisting of Russian parliamentarians and representatives of public organizations arrived in Syria to deliver humanitarian aid, such as food stuffs and medical supplies, to this war-torn country.

Hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov), representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Antioch, was accompanying the delegation.

On the first day of the visit, members of the Russian delegation met with Bishop Ephrem of Seleucia and Bishop Nicolas of Bloudan at the premises of the Patriarchate of Antioch in Damask.

“We are especially glad to see you here on these days of hardships which bring us sorrow and tears, but at the same time show fortitude of our people and their love for homeland. Our people have been subjected to hard ordeals for over four years now; and yet, they have not been broken. Syria is our homeland,” Bishop Ephrem said, greeting the guests from Russia. The archpastor reminded them the

words of His Beatitude Patriarch John of Antioch who had said, “We are now in our land and will stay here, like an olive tree growing in Syria.”

“Your visit is an evidence of fraternal unity of our Churches and our nations,” Bishop Ephrem added.

Bishop Nicolas of Bloudan asked the members of the delegation to convey to Russia the message of peace, love and respect.

Hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov) emphasized that the Russian Church was doing everything she could to support the Church of Antioch and the suffering Syrian people. “The Russian Orthodox Church led by her Primate, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, will continue to raise her voice in defence of the persecuted Christians of the Middle East and will always be with you in prayer and deeds,” he said.

The head of the delegation Mr. Dmitry Sablin, member of the Council of the Federation, expressed condolences over the mass execution of almost four hundred civilians, including women and children, in Palmyra seized by militants. “Russia and her people have been supporting and will continue to support the people of Syria in their struggle for the right to determine their own destiny,” he said.

The members of the delegation handed over humanitarian aid to the representatives of the Patriarchate of Antioch and visited two orphanages named after St Gregory the Theologian and the Holy Great Martyr Panteleimon, which had been established by the Patriarchate of Antioch. The members of the Russian delegation rendered financial aid to the orphanages and delivered sweets for the children.

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