



Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk meets with Ambassador of France to Russia



On 4 March 2015, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR) met with H.E. Jean-Maurice Ripert, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the French Republic to the Russian Federation. Participating in the meeting were also archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far abroad countries; Ms. Olga Mazur of the same secretariat; Mr. Nicolas de Lacoste, first counselor of the French Embassy; Ms Sophie Caussemille, attaché of the Embassy; and Mr. Michel Necessian, an interpreter.

Metropolitan Hilarion warmly greeted the high guest at the Synodal department responsible for international contacts of the Russian Church.

Discussed at the meeting was freedom of conscience and expression and the right of believers to defend their religious feelings in connection with the terrorist attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris.

Metropolitan Hilarion underscored extreme concern of the Russian Orthodox Church over the situation of Christians persecuted by extremist organizations in the Middle East. He believes that the world community should pay thorough attention to the trials of the persecuted Christians.

Speaking about the situation in the southeast Ukraine, the DECR chairman expressed his hope for the establishment of a lasting peace in the region, noting that France is among those promoting the achievement of peace.

Certain practical matters of mutual interest were also discussed.

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