Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk expresses concern over sufferings of Christians in Syria during the meeting with representatives of Syrian opposition

On 5 February 2014, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, received representatives of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. The meeting took place at the request of the representatives of the Syrian opposition, who visited Moscow on 3-5 February 2014. Taking part in the meeting were Mr. Michel Kilo, member of the Political Committee of the National Coalition; Mr. Salah Darwish, member of the Kurdish National Council; Mr. Burhan Ghalioun, former chairman of the Syrian National Council; Mr. Mohammad Farouk Tayfour, deputy chairman of the National Coalition; and Mr. Badr Jamous, secretary general of the National Coalition.

Representing the DECR at the meeting were archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, secretary for far abroad countries; Rev. Dimitry Safonov, head of the sector for inter-religious contacts; and Mr. Miguel Palacio and Ms. Olga Mazur.

As Metropolitan Hilarion noted, the fate of the Christian population of Syria causes particular concern. "We are deeply worried over the radicalism which leads to numerous deaths, to the abduction of Christians and destruction of Christian churches. We see the full-scale persecution of Christians in Syria. Many Christians had to leave the country, many have been displaced within Syria. What is going on is a humanitarian catastrophe of the enormous scale," the DECR chairman said

Metropolitan Hilarion emphasizes that the whereabouts of two Christian hierarchs, Metropolitan Paul of Aleppo and Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, abducted last April, remain unknown. The DECR chairman also noted that the mother superior and sisters of the Convent of St Thecla in Maaloula, abducted in December 2013, have not been released.

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