



## Primate of the Church of Antioch meets with members of the Russian parliamentary delegation



On 21 January 2014, the Divine Liturgy, celebrated at the church of the Moscow Patriarchate's Representation in Damascus after a long break, marked the conclusion of the Russian delegation's visit to Syria. The delegation includes the deputies of the State Duma, Mr. Sergei Gavrilov, Mr. Alexander Yuschenko, and Mr. Alexander Iltyakov; as well as Mr. Dmitry Sablin, member of the Council of the Federation; hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov), representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Great Antioch and All the East; and representatives of public and religious organizations.

The members of the delegation visited one of the hospitals which provide treatment to the people injured during the hostilities, and the orphanage which accommodated the orphans who had lived in the Convent of St Thecla in Maaloula before its seizure by the militants. The Russian delegation met with the President of Syria, Mr. Bashar al-Assad, and with the Prime-Minister, Mr. Wael Nadir Al-Halqi. Bishop Nicolas of Bloudan received the Russian delegation at the Patriarchate of Antioch.

After the liturgy the delegation left for Lebanon. In Balamand, they met with His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Great Antioch and All the East.

On behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov) greeted the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Antioch and noted that Patriarch Kirill and the whole Russian Church looked forward to his visit.

“The Russian Orthodox Church expresses her solidarity with Christians in Syria who are subjected to persecution in the areas captured by foreign terrorists,” hegumen Arseniy said.

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Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/51832/>