Press conference with participation of Syrian hierarchs takes place in Moscow



On 11 October 2013, a press conference on ‘Syria: Christians in the Heat of War’ was held at the RIA Novosti news agency. Taking part in it were Bishop Isaac of Apameia, vicar of the Damascus diocese (Patriarchate of Antioch), and Archbishop Mor Silwanos Butros (Peter) al-Ni’meh (Syriac Orthodox Church), who are visiting Moscow at the invitation of the Moscow Patriarchate; as well as deacon Dimitry Safonov, head of the DECR Sector for Inter-Faith Contacts; and Ms. Elena Agapova, vice-chairman of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society.

According to Bishop Isaac of Apameia, people in Syria now feel acute shortage of baby food since a number of states have put an embargo on baby food deliveries to the country. The hierarch also told those present about the difficult situation in the village of Maaloula which had been attacked in early September: nuns and orphan children who are still living in Maaloula lack for water, food and

medicaments as it is difficult to deliver aid across the front line.

Archbishop Mor Silwanos Butros al-Ni'meh thanked the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state for their help and support. According to the Syrian archbishop, there are very serious problems with delivering aid to the needy. He told those present about the centuries-old Syria's experience of inter-religious and inter-confessional friendship. The Syrian hierarch noted that many people have lost their homes to become refugees. Blood is being shed in the country, but Syrian Christians do not wish to leave their homeland, even in the situation when many of them are being forced to do that.

Deacon Dimitry Safonov mentioned the meeting that the delegation of the Syrian hierarchs had with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on 8 October 2013. During that meeting, Patriarch Kirill particularly noted that the Russian Orthodox Church takes the sufferings and pain of the Syrian people as her own. The DECR representative emphasized the Russian Orthodox Church's concern over the fate of the Syrian Christian hierarchs abducted on 22 April 2013, and pointed out that the Moscow Patriarchate regards persecution against Christians in the world as the major problem.

Archbishop Mor Silwanos Butros (Peter) al-Ni'meh told the journalists that the Christian clergymen in Syria were doing their best to prevent their flock from fleeing the country and that they set great hopes for the results of the Geneva II Conference on Syria.

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