



Mr. Kalashnikov noted the unquestionable importance of the Syrian religious and historical sites for the world culture. Having expressed his sympathy to the members of the Syrian delegation over the ongoing hostilities, Mr. Kalashnikov assured them that Russia has been making every possible effort to stabilize the situation in Syria with the assistance of the United Nations and to prevent the war from growing into an international conflict. The deputy chairman of the Russian State Duma Committee on International Affairs wished Syrian hierarchs strength and courage.

On behalf of the Syrian people, Archbishop Mor Silwanos Butros al-Ni'meh expressed gratitude to the people of Russia and to the Russian Orthodox Church for their sympathy and support and emphasized that the war in Syria affected all its citizens. So far, sixty Christian churches have been destroyed in Homs, Aleppo, Maalula and other cities and towns. Many Christians in these cities have already died and die every day.

The Syrian archpastor expressed his hope that Syria would remain home for Christians and noted with regret that half a million Christians have already left their homeland.

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