



DECR chairman expresses his condolence over terrorist attack at Christian church in Pakistan

Tens of people were killed and injured on September 22, as a result of the suicide bombing at the Church of All Saints in Peshawar, northwest Pakistan.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, sent a message to the Most Revd Samuel Robert Azariah, Bishop of Raiwind, Moderator of the Church of Pakistan, expressing his condolences over this tragedy. The text of the message is given below.

The Most Reverend Samuel Robert Azariah

Bishop of Raiwind

Moderator of the Church of Pakistan

Esteemed Bishop Samuel Azariah,

I express my sincere condolences to you over the dreadful double-tap terrorist attack committed in close proximity to the historical Church of All Saints in Peshawar. As a result of the tragedy, tens of people were killed and injured, many of them were women and children. Among those who fell victims to it were mainly Christians. This crime was directed against a Christian church and was the bloodiest attack to be committed against Christians in the history of Pakistan.

We are mourning for the innocent victims and praying for the repose of their souls. Our especially ardent prayers are for those who have been injured, who have lost their relatives and friends, and for those who are in fear and despair now, as *For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?* (Esther 8:6). May the Lord grant consolation to our Christian brothers and sisters in their ineffable sorrow.

The murderers have killed themselves intentionally. It means that they were obsessed by a false misanthropic idea and did not realize in their blindness that any action against peaceful life is a crime against God. Nothing can justify madmen who decide to commit a heinous crime. All traditional religions

consider such crimes inadmissible, no matter what motives may stand behind the evil deeds.

As it has come out, the Islamist Taliban movement has claimed responsibility for this terrorist attack. According to its spokesman, the Taliban has established a new sub-division which will kill foreigners and “infidels” (non-Muslims) in order to take vengeance for the American soldiers’ attacks on their fellow militants. In other words, they are planning to go on killing civilians and believers in Jesus Christ.

The new leadership of Pakistan was elected in May this year and immediately started efforts to stop violence in the country. But, regrettably, dreadful murders of civilians still go on and the malice of extremist organizations is not decreasing.

The people of the world must give their joint resolute response to all these crimes. It is necessary to stop the execution of this evil will, so that such tragedies may not happen again.

But most importantly, let this dreadful event and the threats uttered not lead to disagreements and discord, but urge us all to build a just and harmonious world order which will leave no place for violence and in which faith, culture and worldviews of all nations will have equal respect. It is only in this case that every basis of terrorism will be exterminated. God commanded people to live in peace, saying *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you* (John 14:27).

May the Lord grant you fortitude, patience and His help in overcoming the hardest trials that have befallen your flock.

With love in the Lord,

+Hilarion

Metropolitan of Volokolamsk

Chairman

Department for External Church Relations

Moscow Patriarchate