



## **Syrian Church Representative in US Calls for End to Bloodshed**

MOSCOW, August 30 (RIA Novosti) – A Syrian Christian church representative in New York called on Friday for the world community to peacefully resolve the “endless war” in Syria, amid US talks of military intervention in the two-year civil war.

The entire world community needs “to sit down together and, through peaceful conversation, agree on a resolution instead of this endless war. That is my message,” Bishop Nicholas Ozone, who serves the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, whose patriarchal headquarters is in Damascus, told RIA Novosti.

Christians make up an estimated 10 percent of Syria's mostly Muslim population. The country's Orthodox Christians are represented by the Antiochian Orthodox Church, also known as the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch, and the Syriac Orthodox Church.

US President Barack Obama said Friday that he was considering a “limited” attack in Syria, where, according to the United Nations, more than 100,000 people have already been killed in the civil war. US Secretary of State John Kerry said in a speech the same day that there was “clear” evidence that the Syrian government had carried out toxic gas attacks on its own citizens.

Two Christian hierarchs – the Syriac Orthodox archbishop of Aleppo and the Greek Orthodox archbishop – were abducted by unidentified assailants in Syria in April, and their whereabouts are still unknown, the Syriac church said. About two weeks ago, unidentified gunmen killed a group of

Christians in central Syria, The Associated Press reported.

Bishop Nicholas said some 3 million Christians were living in Syria at the onset of the conflict, but many had since fled under asylum to France, Britain, the United States and Russia. He said he hoped they would return when the conflict was over.

In July, representatives of the world's Orthodox Churches gathered in Moscow for celebrations of the 1025th anniversary of the Christianization of Kievan Rus, a medieval state comprising parts of modern-day Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. They adopted a joint statement focusing on the position of Christians in the Middle East.

The document's authors paid attention to instances of persecution of Christians in the region and called for a moratorium on military actions in Syria.

The UN Security Council has so far not authorized any military intervention in the Syrian crisis. Moscow, along with Beijing, has previously vetoed three UN Security Council resolutions condemning Syrian President Bashar Assad's government. Russia has urged all parties to the conflict to use diplomatic means to resolve it.

Russia has been Syria's most important ally during the civil war. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said it is necessary to wait until UN experts finished their probe into claims that chemical weapons had been used in Syria before considering military action.

*Translated by RIA Novosti*

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