



Reports on release of Christian hierarchs abducted in Syria prove to be false

In the evening of April 22, 2013, the alarming news spread all over the world that two Christian hierarchs, Metropolitan Boulos Yazigi of Aleppo (Patriarchate of Antioch) and Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, head of the Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo, had been abducted by unknown armed men in Syria.

The next day, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia expressed his sympathy and support to His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Great Antioch and All the East and to the head of the Syriac Orthodox Church, Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, also sent them messages of condolences.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church sent a letter to the Russian President, requesting him to exert every effort for the soonest possible release of the Syrian hierarchs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation made a statement denouncing the abduction of the Christian leaders of Aleppo.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill sent messages to Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States; Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations; and to Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey.

Meanwhile, that same day, first *Agence France-Presse* and *Reuters*, and then other foreign news agencies and broadcasting companies reported that the kidnapped Christian hierarchs had been released and were on their way to or had just returned to Aleppo. Those reports were cited by the mass media in various countries, including Russia.

However, authoritative sources in the Patriarchate of Antioch and in the Syriac Orthodox Church have informed that those reports were false. Metropolitan Mor Dionysius Jean Kawak, Director of the Syriac Jacobite Patriarchal Office, has informed the DECR that Metropolitan Boulos of Aleppo and Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim are still being held in captivity and that talks are under way to free them.

The DECR has received the same information from diplomatic sources.

The faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church are praying for the release of the kidnapped archpastors.

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