



## **Statement by DECR Communication Service on kidnapping of Christian leaders of Aleppo**

On 22 April 2013, leaders of Christian communities of Aleppo, Metropolitan Boulos of Aleppo (Orthodox Church of Antioch) and Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim (Syriac Orthodox Church), were abducted in northeast Syria.

As the mass media report, the car with the hierarchs was stopped by an armed group on the Antakya-Aleppo road. The hierarchs were heading to Aleppo to meet with their parishioners at the threshold of Holy Week and the Feast of Pascha. There is still no information on the place where the hierarchs are now and on the identities of the abductors.

The abducted hierarchs are the highly respected religious figures in Syria. Metropolitan Boulos is a brother of the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Antioch, His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Great Antioch and All the East.

The Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate expresses its deep concern over this tragic event which affects feelings of the faithful and is aimed at the escalation of the armed conflict in Syria to which tens of thousands of victims have already fallen.

We call Christians to unite in prayer for the kidnapped hierarchs and call all sides of the civil confrontation in Syria and representatives of the world community to exert every effort for immediate release of the hierarchs, for putting an end to the Syrian people's sufferings as soon as possible and for re-establishing peace in the Syrian land.