First consignment of humanitarian aid from Russia is delivered to Damascus



Humanitarian aid for the Syrian people was collected in Moscow from March 31-April 12 2013, by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, with the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church, upon the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. The aid collected will be handed over to His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East and to the Grand Mufti of Syria, Sheikh Ahmad Badr Al-Din Hassoun.

The Organizing Committee, headed by Ms. Elena Agapova, deputy chairman of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, also includes Mr. Sergei Baidakov, chairman of the Palestine Society's Moscow Regional Branch; Mr. Oleg Fomin, co-chairman of the Russian Committee for Solidarity with the Syrian People; representatives of prefecture of the Moscow Central Administrative District, business corporations and of charity foundations. Representing the Department for External Church Relations in the Organizing Committee was deacon Dimitry Safonov, head of the Sector for Inter-Faith Contacts, and DECR staff members, Ms. Margarita Nelyubova and Mr. Oleg Kalimullin.

On April 12, at its concluding meeting, the Organizing Committee summed up the aid-raising campaign. In two weeks, there were collected around seventy tons of cargo, including over twenty tons of flour, sugar, salt, and cereals to the sum of around one million rubles, as well as around thirty tons of medicaments and bandaging materials supplied mainly by the Pharmstandard and Veropharm companies. Transferred to the account opened for donations was around two and a half million rubles; in addition, almost seven hundred and fifty rubles, collected at the Community of Ss Martha and Mary and at the Novospassky Monastery, were donated from private individuals. These monetary donations will go to purchasing medicaments and medical equipment for administering first aid.

On the night of April 14, a plane with the first consignment of cargo, weighing one ton six hundred kilograms, departed for Syria. Accompanying the humanitarian aid were hieromonk Ephrem (Pashkov), who was appointed by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia an acting representative of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Patriarchate of Antioch; Mr. Oleg Fomin, co-chairman of the Russian Committee for Solidarity with the Syrian People; and Ms. Nelly Kuskova, a member of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society.

They were met at the airport in Damascus by Bishop Isaak of Apameia who was appointed representative of His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East to receive and distribute the humanitarian aid collected under the aegis of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society.

The Grand Mufti of Syria, Ahmad Badr Al-Din Hassoun, and the Director of the General Iftaa Department of the Ministry of Awqaf, Alaa-Eddin al-Za*'a*tari, as well as representatives of the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also arrived at the airport for meeting the cargo with humanitarian aid.

All humanitarian aid will be delivered to Syria by the end of April 2013.

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