



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority

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On 10 November 2012, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church met with H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority, at the President's residence in Bethlehem. Participating in the meeting on the part of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem were His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, Metropolitan Isyhios of Capitoliad, and Archimandrite Stephanos (Dispirakis), representative of the Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

Taking part in the meeting were also members of the official delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church: Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's administrative secretariat; Mr. Vladimir Legoida, chairman of the Synodal Information Department; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, assistant to the DECR chairman; and Mr. Mikhail Kuksov, acting head of the patriarchal personal secretariat.

Present at the meeting were Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain, first deputy President of the ROCOR's Synod of Bishops; Archimandrite Isidor (Minayev), head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem; and Mr. Alexander Rudakov, Russia's representative to the Palestinian National Authority.

The participants discussed the ways for establishing just and lasting peace in the Middle East and the role of religious communities in it. Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority, thanked His Holiness Kirill for visiting Palestine.

The Primate of the Russian Church mentioned that he had met with Mr. Mahmoud Abbas on numerous occasions and expressed his satisfaction with meeting him in Bethlehem. Among the discussed issues was the situation in the Middle East, which is getting more strained in some of the Middle East countries and makes Christians leave this territory. Patriarch Kirill noted the Russian Orthodox Church's concern over this situation.

Patriarch Kirill noted that the Moscow Patriarchate and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem have had truly fraternal relations confirmed in the course of this visit and, in particular, at the meeting of the Primates of the two Local Orthodox Churches the day before.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill told Mr. Mahmoud Abbas that His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos noted peaceful and fraternal character of Christian-Muslim relations in Palestine. The Primate of the Russian Church regrets that the situation is not the same in all Middle East countries. “We are grieved to see the exodus of the Christian Arabs from the Middle East. They are facing threats, forced to leave and sometimes die in civil conflicts. It cannot leave us indifferent”, – His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said and emphasized the solidarity of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Orthodox Churches of the Middle East – the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill appreciated the work that the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society carries out in the Holy Land.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas presented the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church with the highest award of Palestine – the Order of the Star of Bethlehem, in respect to his high rank and in appreciation of his efforts for achieving peace and stability in the Holy Land and strengthening spiritual and religious ties between the Russian and Palestinian people.

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/53462/>