



Mr. Putin expressed the conviction that the Pilgrims House will always be open to all those who cross its doorsteps with good intentions and that peace, harmony and mutual understanding will always prevail in it.

Patriarch Theophilos, who spoke next, noted that the holy place of Christ's Baptism is visited by a growing number of pilgrims from various countries. Russians make up a considerable part of them. He assured the gathering that he will always pray for the Orthodox people of Russia.

In the course of the ceremony, Mr. Putin conferred on Prince Bin Talal Ghazi Muhammad the Order of Friendship in recognition of 'his great contribution to the development and consolidation of friendship and cooperation between Russia and Jordan'.

The prince warmly thanked the Russian president for the high award. He made a high appraisal of the courage and devotion of pilgrims from the Russian Orthodox Church who come to the Holy Land despite the tense political situation in the Middle East. In conclusion, the prince expressed hope that with the opening of the Pilgrims House the flow of pilgrims from countries under the jurisdiction of the Russian Church would grow.

On behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Archbishop Mark warmly thanked Vladimir Putin, Patriarch Theophilos and Prince Bin Talal Ghazi Bin Muhammad for the active support they gave to the implementation of the project for building a Russian Pilgrims House at the place of the Baptism of Jesus Christ.

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The construction of the compound began on the initiative of Mr. Putin when a 1-hectare plot of land was given by the King of Jordan Abdullah II in 2006 to the Russian Orthodox Church for limitless and free use. In 2012, the land was transferred to the possession of the Russian Federation.

*DECR Communication Service*

*Source: Website of the President of the Russian Federation*

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