



Exhibition devoted to Christian holy places in Syria opens at Church of Christ the Saviour

[gallery]

On May 17, a photo exhibition 'Christian Holy Places in Syria' was opened at the narthex of the Church of Christ the Saviour. The opening was attended by Presidential Envoy to the Middle East M. Bogdanov, Syrian Ambassador Riyad Mohammed Haddad and other Syrian diplomats, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East's representative to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Archbishop Niphon of Philippopolis, and Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, a vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations.

Opening the exhibition, Ambassador Riyad Haddad thanked the Moscow Patriarchate for assistance in arranging the exhibition devoted to Christian holy places in the Middle Eastern 'land of the first Christians'.

'The language of Christ is spoken in Syria and prayers are said in Aramaic and this language of Christianity, which was firmly established in Damascus, spread to the whole world', the ambassador said, adding that Christianity became one of the basic cultural values and a significant part of the Syrians' mentality and their importance for the world history. He also recalled that 'Arab Christians played an important role in the Arab renaissance and in the revival of Arab heritage'.

Archpriest Nikolay Balashov in his remarks to mass media reporters noted that the Russian Church was following with concern the situation in the Middle East, where there are many threats and challenges to the peace and safety of the Christian minority. Speaking about the visit made by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to Syria last November, he stated that the Syrian people welcomed the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church with sincere joy, great gratitude and trust. 'We hope that the message of peace and love that Patriarch Kirill brought to the Syrian land will not remain without response', he said and expressed hope that the difficult time would be over, and peace and safety would come again to the Syrian land, and pilgrims from Russia and other countries would be able to venerate Syria's great old shrines.

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