



## **Statement of the DECR Communication Service on violation of religious rights of Orthodox population in the occupied territory of Cyprus**

The Moscow Patriarchate's Department has been informed that on Easter, 15 April 2012, a hierarch of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, Bishop Christoforos of Karpasia was not allowed to celebrate Easter services for members of his congregation living in the enclave on the Carpassia peninsula in the occupied territory of Cyprus. On 12 March 2012, the occupation authorities placed his name on a "stop-list", meaning that he is banned from crossing the demarcation line between Northern Cyprus and the other part of the island.

Since November 2008, Bishop Christoforos has been consistently rejected visits to his congregation and celebration of the divine services. The persistent discrimination of Christians living in the Karpasia enclave has led to the dwindling of their number from 20,000 in 1974 to 447 today. The violation of religious freedom in the region was reaffirmed in the documents of the European and other international organizations.

The Russian Orthodox Church is deeply concerned about another violation of the rights of the Orthodox population of Cyprus. It is obvious that such actions not only run contrary to the norms of international law, but also create additional difficulties in the process of the settlement of the Cyprus problem.

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