Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church meets with Prime Minister of Syria Adel Safar

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On 12 November 2011, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with H. E. Adel Safar, head of the government of the Syrian Arab Republic, at his residence.

The were joined in the meeting by His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius IV of the Great Antioch and All the East, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, archpriest Nikolai Balashov, and acting head of the Patriarch's personal secretariat M. Kuksov. Attending the meeting were Archbishop Nifon of Philippopolis, archimandrite Alexander (Yelisov), and the Minister of Awquf of the Syrian Arab Republic Dr. Mohammad Abdul-Sattar al-Sayyed..

"We are happy to welcome His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. His presence among us is a great joy to Syria, and it was a privilege to me to invite You to our country," the Prime Minister said.

His Holiness cordially thanked Adel Safar for the invitation received together with the invitation from His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatios. 'I accepted them at once and am happy to be in Syria,' he said and added: 'I was deeply moved by a warm welcome extended to me by people in Damascus.'

The Patriarch and the Prime Minister discussed the situation in the Middle East and the difficulties that the minorities in the region, including Christians, encounter.

His Holiness underscored that the Orthodox Church in Syria was the oldest religious community with deep roots and called for peaceful solution of all problems of the people in Syria through dialogue. He said that tomorrow His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius and he would pray for peace in Syria and for overcoming of difficulties in a fraternal way.

His Holiness spoke of brotherly relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Orthodox Church of Antioch and mentioned the Order of Friendship with which Russian President awarded Patriarch Ignatius in 2010, saying that this award has shown respect and love of the Russian people to the Primate of the Church of Antioch.

The Prime Minister of Syria said that people in his country respect Russian people and the Russian Orthodox Church. He also talked about actions of his government aimed at the meeting of people'

demands and shared his understanding of the recent events in the Republic. He highly appreciated the considerate position of Russia on public crisis in Syria and also noted peaceful cooperation between religious leaders of Syria. At the same time, Adel Safar expressed his profound concern over religious extremism in the Middle East countries and underscored the importance of common holding out against extremism under religious banners.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill wished the Prime Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic successful reforms aimed at the achievement of civil peace and consolidation of society.

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