



DECR chairman meets with leaders of Iran's Center for Interreligious Dialogue

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On October 21, 2011, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, met with representatives of the Center for Interreligious Dialogue under Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, Dr. Mohammad Hossein Mouzaffari, director of the Center, and his deputy, Dr. Mohsen Shojahani.

Welcoming the guests, Metropolitan Hilarion noted that for Russia, relations with the Islamic world were always exceptionally important since Russian lived at the joint of East and West for centuries while Muslims comprised the second largest community in the country.

The discussion focused on preparations for the next meeting of the Orthodoxy-Islam joint Russian-Iranian commission for dialogue. It was agreed to hold the event in 2012 in Moscow. It was also agreed that the theme of the meeting will concern the notions of human dignity, freedom and right in the two religious traditions. Metropolitan Hilarion told the guests that the Russian Orthodox Church adopted in 2008 a Basic Teaching of Human Freedom, Dignity and Rights. This document reflects the basic Orthodox theology concerning the understanding of these notions and offers possible ways of harmonizing them with the secular doctrine of human rights. The meeting of Russian and Iranian theologians to take place in 2012 will consider a set of problems involved in the understanding of human rights in secular and religious cultures.

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During his visit to Iran on September 4-8, 1995, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad (Now Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia) reached an agreement with Ayatollah Mohammad-Ali Taskhiri, chairman of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) on the establishment of a Joint Russian-Iranian Commission for Dialogue 'Orthodoxy-Islam'. The basic principles chosen for the dialogue were sincere faith in God, love of the neighbour, mutual respect, clear goals and fruitfulness.

The Commission met for the first time from December 20 to 25, 1997, in Teheran. Both sides presented papers on mission and proselytism, war and peace, relations between religions, the state and society. The second meeting took place on May 4-7, 1999, in Moscow.

The third colloquium took place on January 24-25, 2001, in the Iranian capital under the theme 'The Role of Interreligious Dialogue in International Relations'.

The fourth meeting was held in April 2004 in Moscow. The participants considered the theme 'Relations between the two great religions to problems of the globalization from the point of view of religious ethics, culture and religious beliefs'.

The fifth meeting took place from February 28 to March 4, in Teheran under the theme 'Eschatology and its impact on today's life'.

The sixth meeting was held on July 16-17 in Moscow. The participants discussed the theme 'The teachings on God and man in Orthodoxy and Islam'.

From October 6 to 9, 2010, a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church took place in the seventh meeting of the Commission, which took place in Teheran. It was devoted to the theme 'The role of religion of the life of the individual and society'. The delegation was led by Bishop Feofilakt of Smolensk and Vyazma. It included Hegumen Philip Riabykh, Hegumen Alexander Zarkeshev, the Rev. Sergiy Zvonarev and Mr. D. Safonov. The final communiqué stated that the 8th meeting of the Orthodoxy-Islam Commission was planned to take place in 2012 in Moscow.

DECR Communication Service