



## Metropolitan Hilarion meets with Patriarch Ignatios of Antioch

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On August 20, 2011, His Beatitude Ignatios IV, Patriarch of Great Antioch and All the East, received in audience Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, who came to Syria for a working visit with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

In a warm and cordial talk, which took place at the Patriarchate of Antioch, they discussed the bilateral relations between the two Patriarchates and some topical problems concerning the life of Universal Orthodoxy.

Metropolitan Hilarion pointed to a deep concern of the Russian Orthodox Church for the situation of Christians in some Middle East countries, which tends to deteriorate because of the political instability in the region. He conveyed to Patriarch of Antioch an Arabic version of the statement made by the Russian Orthodox Church Holy Synod on the growing Christianophobia in the world. Patriarch Ignatios thanked the Moscow Patriarchate for its concern for this problem and underscored the importance of Christian solidarity. He also assured the metropolitan that the statement would be distributed to the mass media in Syria and Lebanon.

In conclusion of the talk, which lasted over an hour and a half, Patriarch Ignatios asked Metropolitan Hilarion to convey best wishes to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and expressed hope to meet with him soon.

Participating in the meeting were also Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, Archimandrite Alexander (Yelisov), representative of the Patriarch of Moscow to the Patriarch of Antioch, Hierodeacon Ioann (Kopeikin), assistant to the DECR chairman, and Mr. L. Sevastyanov, executive director of the St. John the Theologian Charity, which had given its support for preparing the trip.

After the meeting, Metropolitan Hilarion and his party visited the Patriarchate of Antioch's Cathedral of the Assumption, the cathedral of the Melkite Church and the house of St. Ananias where, according to tradition, St. Paul was baptized.

Later that day, DECR chairman left for Istanbul to meet with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople.

*DECR Communication Service*

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