



## **His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia meets with President of the Palestinian National Authority Mr. Mahmoud Abbas**

[gallery]

On 23 March 2011, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church met with Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority, at the Patriarch's residence, Chisty side-street, Moscow.

They were joined in the meeting by Archbishop Mark of Yegorievsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administration for Institutions Abroad, and Rev. Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far abroad countries. The Palestinian side was represented by Mr. Saeb Erikat, head of the Palestine Liberation Organization's Negotiations Affairs Department; H. E. Faed Mustafa, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Palestine to the Russian Federation; Mr. Nabil Abu Rudeina, minister and official representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); Mr. Majdi Al Khaledi, advisor for international affairs of the Palestinian National Authority; and Mr. Avad Zaul, minister-counsellor of the Embassy of Palestine in the Russian Federation. Mr. A. Rudakov, representative of the Russian Federation at the Palestine National Authority, attended the meeting on behalf of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill welcomed the guests and noted that the contacts between people for whom the Russian Orthodox Church cares and the people of Palestine have been maintained for centuries.

His Holiness said: "In our dialogue we discuss important problems of the Holy Land, peace and justice in this particular region of the world, where people belonging to the three monotheist religions have lived in accord for centuries and where, unfortunately, there is no peace and tranquility at present."

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill underscored that the presence of Christians, including the Orthodox, in the Holy Land, is an important topic of the dialogue and thanked Mahmoud Abbas for constant attention to the life of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Holy Land, adding that "good relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Palestine National Authority is an important factor that facilitates the development of relations between our nations."

His Holiness expressed his deep concern over disturbances in some Arab countries where both the Muslims and Christians live.

President of the Palestinian National Authority Mahmoud Abbas said that he was glad to talk with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and added that relations between the Russians and the Palestinians are based on sincerity and mutual respect. He expressed his hope for more pilgrims to come to the Holy Land as the people of Palestine are happy to welcome the pilgrims from Russia.

Mr. Abbas informed His Holiness about restoration works in Bethlehem carried on with mutual consent of Christian Churches and coordinated by the Palestinian National Authority. He hopes that His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia will visit Bethlehem at Christmas.

Mr. Abbas mentioned the museum opened on the plot of land given to Russia in Jordan as a symbol of the Russian presence in the Holy Land and assured His Holiness that the Palestinian National Authority attaches great importance and pays special attention to the solution of problems of the church property in Palestine.

He also spoke about the efforts taken for the settlement of the Middle East conflict and for the unity of the Palestinians. He emphasized an important part of Russia in the peace process in the Middle East.

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