Restoration work in Beirut Metropolis is discussed at the meeting at Russian House



On 2nd July 2021, a meeting took place at the Russian House in the Lebanese capital to discuss restoration work being done on the objects of the Metropolis of Beirut of the Orthodox Church of Antioch. The Russian Orthodox Church is playing an active role in the restoration.

Taking part in the meeting were H.E. Alexander Rudakov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Lebanese Republic; Archimandrite Filipp (Vasiltsev), rector of the Beirut Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church; Mr. Ghassan Hasbani, chairman of St. Porphyrios Association; Mr. Vadim Zaichikov, director of the Russian House in Beirut; and parishioners of the Russian representation church.

They saw a photo exhibition tracing the restoration work stages. The Russian Christian Culture and Heritage Foundation has rendered considerable financial assistance to the restoration.

Ambassador Rudakov noted in his welcome remarks that Russia had always helped Lebanon, and the Lebanese people are aware of it. “Russia has not stood back fr om the last year catastrophe – the explosion at the sea port of Beirut. Russian President Vladimir Putin responded immediately and, not waiting for any bilateral consultations, sent a team from the Ministry of Emergency Situations, mobile hospital and necessary aid to the victims in Lebanon. The Russian Orthodox Church has also provided a timely and effective help, and one can see its results today.”

Mr. Ghassan Hasbani, an Orthodox politician and a former Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon, reminded the participants that the history of Christianity had begun in the land of Lebanon at the time of the apostles and that in the early medieval period the Metropolis of the Orthodox Church of Antioch was located at the centre of Beirut near the Cathedral of St. George. “The city was developing; churches, schools and hospitals were being built, and the Metropolis was transferred to its present location in the Ashrafieh district. After the Civil War of 1975-1990, an extensive reconstruction work had been done on the ruined churches, apartment houses, schools, healthcare centers and social institutions. Last August, after the explosion in Beirut, St. Porphyrios Association again had to restore everything that had been ruined in Christian quarters.” Mr. Hasbani added that residential areas, educational institutions, church buildings, cultural and historical monuments, hospitals and clinic were a high priority.”It was at this crucial moment that we have received aid from Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church,” he said, underscoring the importance of the Russian Orthodox Church’s care “for the preservation of cultural heritage of Lebanon, including Christian objects. It will have a positive impact on the social and interreligious balance, taking into account the multiconfessional nature of Lebanon.

“We sincerely thank the Russian Orthodox Church, the Russian state and Russian people for support given to Lebanon in its current trying circumstances, and we wish our productive relationship to continue.”

Mr. Hasbani added that one hundred and fifty years ago, one hundred and fifty schools were built in Lebanon thanks to Russia. “This cultural and educational work has attained affection and gratitude to Russia that will last forever.

“The Russian Orthodox Church has granted assistance necessary for the repair of the most significant Orthodox sites, such as the Church of St. Demetrios suffered from the explosion, and the Bishara school wh ere eight hundred children studied. This school, built near the Church of St. Catherine the Great Martyr in the early 20th century, is preserving good traditions and ranks high among the educational institutions of the city.”

Archimandrite Filipp (Vasiltsev) noted: “Taking into account the extent of the destruction caused by the explosion in August 2020, it was not possible to take responsibility for all the ruined churches and

diocesan institutions. Therefore, on agreement with Metropolitan Elias of Beirut and after working contacts with Mr. Hasbani, we have chosen three objects for restoration, namely, the building of the Metropolis of Beirut, the diocesan Annunciation Orthodox college, and the Church of St. Demetrios the Great Martyr in Ashrafieh. Financial means has been received, and a heavy volume of work has been carried out."

In conclusion of the working meeting, Ms. Pia Abdo, an executive secretary of St. Porphyrios Assocation, delivered a presentation on the restoration work being done in the Metropolis of Beirut.

DECR Communication Service/

Source: website of Beirut Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church

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