Metropolitan Hilarion: Today Christianity is the most persecuted religion on the planet



The case of a boy living in Kyrgyzstan, who was beaten by other children at the judo team's sports training camps for being Russian and Orthodox, reminded many people that even at our age a great number of Christians have to experience harassment, and sometimes persecution for their faith.

As Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, emphasized on the program *The Church and World*, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia had reacted to the incident.

The letter that the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church sent to this boy says: "Having shown courage and bravery, you were not afraid of impudent ridicule and bullying from your peers and resolutely defended your faith, defended what is dear and valuable to you. Your deed, courage and firmness are worthy of all support. Millions of your brothers and sisters in Christ in Russia and in other countries empathize with you at this difficult moment – none of those who learned about this situation remained indifferent". Further, His Holiness the Patriarch recalls that Christians have always been persecuted, that the true strength of the spirit lies in generosity, patience and the willingness to forgive those who have offended us, and recalls the words of the Gospel: "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

"I think that this reaction is quite consistent with how all the faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church feel

about this. We believe that everyone has the right to freedom of religion. Everyone, regardless of whether they live in Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Ukraine or any other country in the world, has the right not only to profess their faith, but also to express it publicly," the DECR Chairman stressed.

Metropolitan Hilarion reminded that today Christianity is the most persecuted religion on the planet, although it is still the most numerous. "Unfortunately, conflict situations often arise wh ere Christians co-exist with Muslims," the archpastor noted. – We must speak directly about this – not to cast a shadow on Islam, but to call on both political leaders and Islamic leaders to educate their flock, including young people, in the spirit of love and tolerance."

"This is happening in Russia: we have a very close and healthy interaction between Christians, Muslims and representatives of other religious traditions. I very much hope that the same mutual understanding and cooperation will be established in other countries." - concluded Metropolitan Hilarion

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