



## Statement of the Interreligious Council of Russia



*The statement was adopted on December 7th 2023 following the results of the jubilee meeting of the ICR.*

The Interreligious Council of Russia has been serving for 25 years to establish peace and harmony between religions and peoples inhabiting our country. Over these years, Russian religious communities have made a significant contribution to fostering a high culture of interreligious and interethnic relations in the society. This has enabled our people to successfully overcome numerous challenges and to maintain their commitment to the traditional personal and family morality, mutual respect and harmony.

The broad public and State support for traditional values was confirmed by the inclusion in the Constitution of the Russian Federation of a reference to God and the testimony to the family as a union of a man and a woman. We welcome the signing by the President of Russia, Mr Vladimir Putin, of the Decree No. 809 of 09.11.2022 "On Approval of the Principles of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values".

We express our support for Russia's state policy aimed at affirming the values of family and marriage, the protection of human life and dignity, respect for elders and assistance to those in need. The family is the foundation of social stability and development. It is in the family that a person learns the values on the basis of which he or she will build his or her future life. We fully support the announcement by the President of Russia of the forthcoming year 2024 as the Year of the Family. We consider particularly

important the measures being taken to support young families and increase the birth rate.

In this good endeavour, traditional religions not only support the actions of the State, but also actively carry out their own social and educational work in their communities. Despite a clear downward trend in the number of induced abortions over the past five years (*the number of abortions fell by about a third between 2017 and 2022*), these figures are still very high (*according to Rosstat data, in 2022, about 506,000 abortion procedures were carried out in Russia, of which 401,000 were performed in state clinics*), which shows the importance of taking further urgent measures to protect motherhood and childhood and to promote the image of a healthy and strong family as the foundation of society.

Our country consistently opposes those forces that seek to establish among people a dictatorship of permissiveness and self-centredness, to revise the millennia-old spiritual and moral values of the peoples of our Motherland. Members of the Interreligious Council of Russia consider it their duty to remind that religious motivation in life is one of the strongest for a human being, and any careless actions in matters concerning faith can lead to tragic consequences.

The religious communities of Russia pray for the speedy restoration of peace in Ukraine, for the soldiers who are shedding blood on the battlefield for the safety and well-being of the Russian people, for the right of our country to be a sovereign and independent state, to freely preserve the values handed down by our ancestors, including peace between religions and ethnicities. We empathise with all those affected by the military actions in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine. All major religious communities in Russia are actively assisting those affected by the hostilities.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict could not leave Russian believers indifferent, for their main sanctuaries are located in this long-suffering land. At the same time, it created an informational occasion for speculation on the subject of relations between religions and peoples. At a meeting with the President of Russia on 25 October 2023, the religious leaders of our country had the opportunity to express their position on this topic and reaffirm their desire for peace.

We agree with the opinion of the President of Russia V. Putin, who in his address to the participants of the XXV World Russian People's Council on the 28th of November 2023 stressed that "any interference from the outside, provocations to cause interethnic or interreligious conflicts are perceived by us as aggressive actions against our country, as an attempt to throw terrorism and extremism back to Russia as a tool to fight us".

The provocative events of the 29th of October 2023 in Dagestan, when a group of radicals committed unlawful acts under the slogans of ethnic intolerance, only confirm this thesis. Extremism and nationalism are uncharacteristic of today's Russian society, and the religious communities of our country unanimously condemned this provocation.

The Interreligious Council of Russia, realising the need to combat extremism, calls on the authorities and law enforcement agencies to treat believers and religious buildings with respect when carrying out their legitimate functions of maintaining public order. We categorically reject attempts to desecrate religious shrines, sacred books and symbols.

We call all believers of traditional religions - Christians, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists - for prudence, sobriety of mind, patience and preserving themselves in peace and love for our neighbours, regardless of their nationality and religious denomination. Responsibility before God and people, mutual respect, adherence to traditions - that is what distinguishes us from destructive sects and movements.

We call on all religious organisations of the Russian Federation to suppress any provocations and

attempts to sow interreligious discord. The Interreligious Council of Russia notes the importance of the consolidation of compatriots living abroad and highly appreciates their efforts to preserve their own religious, national and cultural identity. Maintaining and multiplying the achieved level of civil accord is a guarantee of a peaceful future for us and our descendants. Our strength lies in unity and preservation of the identity and diversity of religions, languages and cultures.

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