



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Elders



DECR Communication Service, 19.06.2025.

On June 19, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' met with Judge Mohamed Abdelsalam, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Elders, at the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in the Danilov Monastery in Moscow.

Attending the meeting from the Russian Orthodox Church were also Archpriest Nikolai Lishchenyuk, Deputy Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, and Hieromonk Grigory (Matrusov) of the DECR Secretariat for Interreligious Relations.

The Muslim Council of Elders was also represented by Mr. Hamad Ali Bin Alwan Alhebsi, deputy head of the UAE Mission in Moscow; Mr. Mansour Abdullah Al Hammadi of the protocol office; and Mr. Mohamed Elamin Atta Mohamed, the program director.

Welcoming the guests, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church mentioned that Orthodox Christians and Muslims have lived together peacefully and without conflict for many years in Russia. "This experience of interaction shows that representatives of these two monotheistic religions can live in peace and work for achieving common goals. On the basis of the experience we have gained in Russia, it is rather easy for us to establish and develop relations with Muslims all over the world."

His Holiness pointed out that Orthodox Christians and Muslims have common understanding of a whole range of major issues related to human life. This is especially important now, when moral and other fundamental principles, such as attitude toward family, marriage and the purpose of man, are being revised or even derailed in many countries of the so-called civilized Western world.

Patriarch Kirill also noted that the Muslim Council of Elders has for many years carried out extensive peacekeeping activity that is promoting ideas of brotherhood among people and coexistence of different traditions. His Holiness expressed gratitude for inviting the Russian Orthodox Church to participate in discussions at the interreligious forums held by the Council.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church mentioned that in some Protestant communities adhering to radically liberal positions, there is an increasingly frequent departure from traditional views on such important subjects as personal morality, family relations, etc. Patriarch Kirill noted that sometimes we can see a paradoxical situation where Orthodox Christians have more in common with Muslims on issues of ethics and morality than with the groups supporting such forms of human coexistence that run contrary to Christian morality.

"It seems to us that current developments in certain religious circles in the West are in a sense a reflection of moral crisis of modern Western society. All that is happening is a dagger to our heart. We believe that our Christian brothers must remain faithful to the commandments and principles of interpersonal relations determined by our religion; a departure from these principles makes our hearts ache," Patriarch Kirill said.

Against the background of current events, it is important to develop relations between Orthodoxy and representatives of Islam, His Holiness believes. He noted that this dialogue should be about areas where unanimity and common attitude can be found, first of all, to the human person and such values as family, the upbringing of children, etc.

Speaking about Orthodox-Muslim relations in Russia, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill focused on the experience of peaceful life and friendly understanding in such regions as the Republic of Tatarstan with roughly the same number of Orthodox and Muslims living there. "This shows how easy it is to live

together without enmity and fighting. I regard this experience of cooperation and common life of Orthodox and Muslims as a good example to many people."

His Holiness proposed to establish close contacts between Al-Azhar University and the Kazan Theological Seminary, including exchange of professors and students and study aids. "I believe that our dialogue developed at a high intellectual and theological level can be very useful for both Muslims and Orthodox," Patriarch Kirill underscored.

Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Elders said he is very thankful for an opportunity to meet with the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and highly appreciates the work being done by His Holiness for the development of dialogue and good relations with representatives of Islam and for promoting traditional values in the life of Russian society.

He conveyed an invitation from Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders to visit Al-Azhar University in Egypt and the Council's headquarters in Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the United Arab Emirates.

"It is very important for people living both in the West and in the East to hear your message of peace and peaceful coexistence. This is of great value for all of us," said Judge Mohamed Abdelsalam. "It is very important for people to hear your message on the upholding of moral principles; it is of great importance for all the faithful, especially in the light of very serious challenges facing humanity today."

Also, he emphasized the importance of the viewpoint of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, who named the calls for confrontation among representatives of different cultures and traditions under a seemingly plausible pretext a provocation. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said at a meeting with the clergy on June 14 correctly, "A very important factor of preserving the unity of our people is good relations between Orthodox and Muslims, as, indeed, between all religions and confessions."

Judge Mohamed Abdelsalam continued to say, "The experience of coexistence of religious communities in Russia, which you mentioned, is an important foundation of your life. However, we also have such an experience in our region, where, as we know, Christians often welcomed and protected Muslims in the early years of Islam. At Al-Azhar University, we study a story of Muhammad sending his followers to the King of Ethiopia, telling them that this noble ruler would receive and protect them. This is a very important example to follow today," the guest continued.

Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Elders supported Patriarch Kirill's proposal for broad cooperation between Al-Azhar University and the Kazan Theological Seminary and expressed confidence in the developing of this initiative.

He offered an idea of establishing a permanent working group on dialogue among the Russian Orthodox Church, Al-Azhar University and the Muslim Council of Elders.

Also, he suggested to hold a world conference on peaceful coexistence and countering contemporary challenges and threats as a part of this group's work and under the aegis of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar.

Judge Mohamed Abdelsalam touched on a subject of common work of Christians and Muslims on the appraisal of the development and use of artificial intelligence in moral terms. For example, interaction is being conducted with the Roman Catholic Church. "Of course, artificial intelligence as such is a great achievement, but it can also pose a threat to human dignity, and it is necessary to take into account the opinion of representatives of the major world religions in order to preserve the moral component in decisions on artificial intelligence. And, of course, we need the support of such a wise and influential leader as you, so that our children could use this technology correctly," the guest emphasized.

Also, he acquainted His Holiness Patriarch Kirill with the activities of the Muslim Council of Elders, which includes prominent Islamic leaders from over twenty countries, and mentioned humanitarian initiatives of the Council aimed at the strengthening of dialogue and brotherhood among people.

Having thanked the guest for ideas and proposals and noting that they deserve great attention, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill expressed his interest in developing relations with the Muslim community and its leaders who are ready to work together with the Russian Orthodox Church. He said, "We consider this work very useful for the development of theological dialogue between Islam and Orthodoxy. Also, I believe it to be helpful for the development of relations between our countries and peoples."

His Holiness believes that the first practical step could be the establishment of a joint working group.

Patriarch Kirill also noted the importance of discussing artificial intelligence at the interfaith level. "Many people are enthusiastic about this subject and link it with a completely new development of human society. However, we must never forget that such projects might pose a threat to the human race. I believe that they need religious expertise," His Holiness said and added that such a discussion could become a good platform for further broadening and deepening of interreligious dialogue and developing mutual understanding.

This idea was warmly approved by Judge Mohamed Abdelsalam. He is confident that common actions of the working group could contribute to further strengthening of relations between Muslims and the Russian Orthodox Church, "which is very important for all Muslims and has great influence over the

world.”

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/93349/>