DECR chairman concludes his visit to Northern Iraq



DECR Communication Service, 02/10/2025

From 27th September to 2nd October 2025, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and at the invitation of His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III of the Assyrian Church of the East, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, visited Iraq.

It was the first visit of the DECR chairman to Iraq in 23 years. Previous visit to **Baghdad and Mosul** was undertaken on 25th – 29th March 2002 by Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, now Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'.

On 28th September, the DECR chairman **met** with His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III and members of the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East. At the invitation of His Holiness Mar Awa, Metropolitan Anthony attended the Divine Liturgy at the Church of St. John the Forerunner and Prophet in the Christian quarter of Ankawa in the city of Erbil.

Later, His Eminence took part in the International Conference of the Assyrian Church of the East marking the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, and **delivered an address**. The conference was held at the Catholic University in Erbil.

In the evening of the same day, Metropolitan Anthony met with **Mr. Safeen Dizayee, head of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Kurdistan Regional Government**, and **representatives of Christian communities of Iraq**.

On 29th September, the DECR chairman held meetings with **Sheikh Abdullah Saeed Waisi, head of the Union of Scholars and Religious Teachers**; **Mr Pshtiwan Sadq Abdullah, Minister of Endowment and Religious Affairs**; and **Mr. Maxim Rubin, Consul General of the Russian Federation in Erbil**.

On 30th September, Metropolitan Anthony met with **Mr Masoud Barzani, National Leader of Kurdistan**; **Mr Masrour Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq**, and attended **graduation ceremony** at the Catholic University in Erbil.

On 1st October, the DECR chairman met with **Mr Nechirvan Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region**.

At the conclusion of his trip, Metropolitan Anthony visited the Assyrian Culture Museum in Erbil, met with **Mr. Kaldo Ramzi, Director General for the Preservation of Assyrian Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture of the Kurdistan Region**, and **Archbishop Nicodemus Daoud Sharaf of**

Mosul, Kirkuk and Kurdistan. He also visited the Cathedral of the Most Holy Mother of God of the Syriac Orthodox Diocese in Erbil.

In the evening of 1st October, the DECR chairman had a meeting with His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III of the Assyrian Church of the East. The Primate of the Assyrian Church showed his guest around the Patriarchate Museum he had established, which houses unique exhibits associated with the history of the Church of the East. Metropolitan Anthony also visited the Cathedral of the Holy Apostles Thomas, Addai and Mari.

In the morning of 2nd October, His Eminence departed for Moscow.

Seeing His Eminence off at the Erbil airport were Mar Abrs Youkhanna, Bishop of Duhok and Nineveh; Mr Maxim Rubin, Consul General of the Russian Federation in Erbil; Mr Halgurd Salayi, adviser to the Director of Foreign Relations in the Kurdistan Regional Government; Mr Jamal Jalal, head of the Asia and Europe Division of the Department of Foreign Relations; Mr Danar Mustafa, Acting Representative of the Kurdistan Region in the Russian Federation; Mr V.V. Vavilin, Vice-Consul of the Russian Federation in Erbil; and Chorbishop Samano Odisho, Representative of the Assyrian Church of the East in Russia.

Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk was accompanied on his visit by Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; and Priest Nikolai Vasin, secretary to the DECR chairman.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/93629/