

Patriarch of Jerusalem received by Russia's Putin; situation of Christians in Mideast repeatedly cited



The Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Most Godly Beatitude Theophilos III, was greeted by Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday at the Kremlin, in the presence of the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Kirill.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarch traveled to Russia to receive the Prize of Patriarch Alexy II, which will be bestowed by the Unity of Orthodox Nations Foundation.

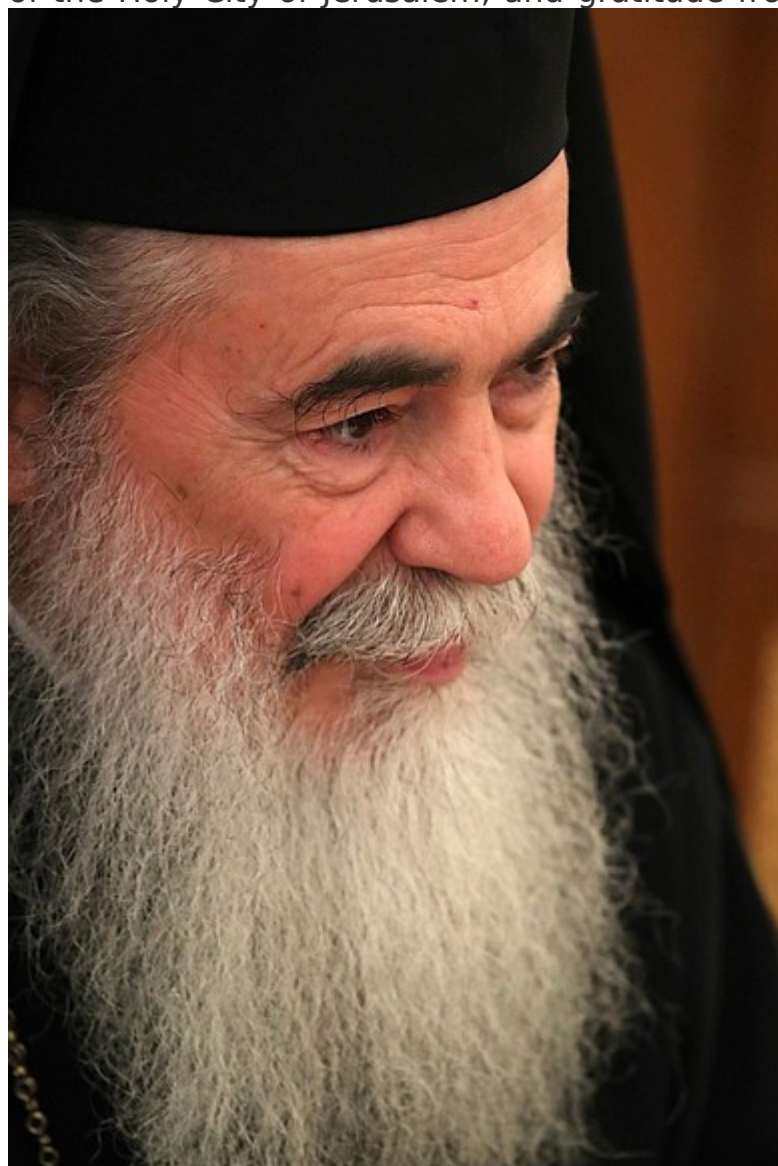
In his initial greeting, the Russian president noted that "... Our churches have always maintained a special and benign relationship, which of course, benefits the Orthodox faith, as well as the Orthodox world in general, by enhancing mutual understanding among the congregations of our countries. I would like to thank you for this."

Vladimir Putin also made a special reference to the situation of Christians and

Christian Churches in the Middle East, underling that "...We are well aware of the hardships that Christians are facing in the Middle East, the cradle of the Christian faith. In this context, we need to join our efforts in order to protect the interests of Christians there. Any lack of unity is always extremely damaging for the Christian world, in general, including to Christians in the Middle East."

He also invited the Patriarch of Jerusalem to again officially return to Moscow in January for the annual commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day

On his part, Theophilos III replied that "... I would like to convey to you the blessing of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and gratitude from the Christians in the Middle East,



... I would like to thank you, on my personal behalf, for the interest in and the protection of the Holy Sepulchre, which mattered a great deal, especially for the Holy Sepulchre."



