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ANTIOCHIAN CHURCH NOT SENDING ANY REPRESENTATIVES TO FRATERNAL GATHERING IN JORDAN



Neither His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch nor any other hierarchs of the Antiochian Patriarchate will attend the upcoming fraternal gathering in Amman, Jordan, according to a statement issued by the Antiochian Orthodox Media Center on Friday, February 22.

The Antiochian Church is the last of the invited Churches to publicly respond to the invitation from His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem.

Barring the unlikely event that any Churches will change their minds at the last minute, 6 Churches will be represented: Jerusalem, Moscow, Serbia, Romania, Poland, and Czech-Slovak, and 8 will not be represented: Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Cyprus, Georgia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Albania.

The Orthodox Church in America was not invited as its autocephaly is not recognized by several Local Churches, including the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

While certain outlets in various languages and from various perspectives had assumed the Antiochian Church would be represented, its attendance was always unlikely and there was never any real consideration given to the Patriarch himself attending.

On Thursday, February 21, the Jerusalem Patriarchate issued a prematurely optimistic statement declaring that “concrete understandings have been reached with Antioch for a resolution to [the] matter” of the Qatar territorial dispute. The statement gave the impression that Pat. John would thus attend the fraternal gathering in Amman.

The Antiochian Patriarchate broke communion with the Jerusalem Patriarchate in 2014 after the latter consecrated a bishop for Qatar, which the Antiochian Church counts as its canonical territory.

Sources close to the Antiochian Church informed OrthoChristian that while there have been discussions on the matter since the two primates met in Cyprus in April, there have been no concrete resolutions.

In fact, the Jerusalem Patriarchate issued its statement after it was already aware of the Antiochian Church’s decision not to attend. The Jerusalem statement is being interpreted as an attempt to pressure Pat. John into attending, by claiming that the Qatar issue was no longer a serious obstacle in relations between the two Churches.

However, the statement from the Antiochian Church demonstrates that it has its own concerns and its own mind on the current problems of Church unity, which neither the Greek nor Russian side seem to have taken into account.

The Antiochian statement reads in full:

Following the generous invitation of His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem to His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch, to participate in a consultative meeting of Church leaders in Amman, Jordan, on the twenty-fifth of this month, the Antiochian Church declares that She will not participate in this meeting.

The Church of Antioch acknowledges the concern of the Orthodox Churches' Primates and their initiatives to what could contribute to finding solutions for the grave crisis that the Orthodox Church is witnessing today. However, She has decided not to participate in this meeting, based on the information that has been provided, and for Her care to avoid whatever increases divergence and deepens the rift between brothers. Her position does not mean that She is not eager to expedite necessary solutions for the reasons that led to the severance of communion between the Church of Antioch and the Church of Jerusalem, even after the Church of Antioch has showed readiness for everything that facilitates these solutions.

On this occasion, the Church of Antioch reiterates Her firm position that the "unanimous consensus" between the Churches, based on the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, is the essential rule in the Orthodox Church, with regards to general decisions on the universal Orthodox level, as well as in resolving outstanding issues. She also affirms Her endeavor, through the continuous communication with the Churches, to what yields an atmosphere of love and to a return to the mutual consultation and unanimity between the brothers, in order for Her to be faithful to the mission of joy, peace, and unity that the Lord wants from His Church.

The Church of Antioch calls upon all of Her children to join together in prayer and work for peace in the Church and the whole world.
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