

Orthodox hierarchs offer condolences for terrorist attack in Vienna



20-year-old Kujtim Fejzulai opened fire on innocent civilians near Vienna's main synagogue on Monday night, killing at least four and wounding at least 14 others, seven with life-threatening injuries. Fejzulai himself was shot and killed by police. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack the next day.

Orthodox hierarchs from various jurisdictions have begun to respond to the senseless tragedy.

Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia offered his condolences to Sabastian Kurz, the Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria, yesterday:

Your Excellency,

I am deeply grieved over the killing and wounding of peaceful people as a result of a series of attacks which have happened in various places in Vienna, including near a synagogue.

Sharing the pain of the tragedy with the Austrian people, I ask you to convey to the relatives and loved ones of the victims my words of support and my wishes of a speedy recovery to all those who have been affected.

May the merciful God give strength to those who have been touched by this terrible disaster and send peace and consolation to people's hearts.

The Patriarch also offered his condolences in connection with the earlier attack in Nice, France.

And Metropolitan Arsenios of Austria of the Patriarchate of Constantinople made the following statement:

We live in Austria, a beautiful and multifaceted country rich in blessings. Vienna is a hospitable city with the highest level of quality of life, full of harmony...

The Orthodox Church in Austria, deeply shocked by last night's terrorist attack, is praying for the victims and their families, as well as for the staff of the emergency services.

May the Lord and God support them and give them health and strength in these difficult times.

The perpetrators of such attacks absolutely do not follow the will of God, but they spread fear and disbelief and destroy the mutual trust of the people.

This is precisely the kind of phenomenon that we do not want and will not allow to happen.

Our faith in God and our love for Austria and its people strengthen us to overcome fear and continue to live freely.

We desire, with all our might, to protect and further transmit the values and valuable ideals of Austria.

All together, with the help of God, we will try to continue the path of peace and harmonious coexistence in order to thereby overcome this crisis.

We express our gratitude to all those responsible for yesterday's immediate response to the attacks and in particular to the government, the police forces, and the rescue and first aid staff, for the immediate and effective response that prevented the worst, as well as for the unceasing and tireless efforts of the welfare and protection of our country and its inhabitants.

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