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Historic First Meeting for Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill

By The Moscow Times

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Head of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis will meet in Cuba on Feb. 12, the Gazeta.ru website reported Friday.

"A decision has been made on the upcoming meeting between Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis," a spokesman for Moscow patriarchate head Hilarion announced at a press briefing, Gazeta.ru reported.

This historic meeting will be the first papal meeting with a Russian Church head since the Western and Eastern branches of Christianity split in the 11th century.

The main topic of discussion will be the persecution of Christians in the Middle East.

The Russian Orthodox Church hopes that the event will begin a new chapter in the relationship between the denominations, according to the spokesman.

The patriarch will also visit Paraguay and Brazil. Meetings have been scheduled with the

presidents of both countries.

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