

Orthodox Patriarch calls for reconciliation of Russia and Georgia

by [Sophia Kishkovsky](#)

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Moscow, July 29 (ENINews)--Patriarch Ilia II of the Georgian Orthodox Church has called on his Russian Orthodox counterpart to reconcile Russia and Georgia, which have remained at odds since a short, bloody war in August 2008.

"Your Holiness, those political relations that have taken shape between Russia and Georgia are completely unacceptable," he said to Patriarch Kirill I, after co-celebrating the liturgy with the Russian Orthodox leader. "We are close Orthodox peoples, and these relations were created by the envy of our foes."

The service to mark the Day of the Baptism of Rus, the event in 988 that brought Orthodoxy to Kievan Rusa and then Russia, was meant in particular as a show of unity among the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian Orthodox churches under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. Ukraine has experienced tensions between rival Orthodox churches since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Nonetheless, Russian and Georgian church leaders have maintained a close relationship and the Russian church staked out an independent stand from the Kremlin in speaking out against the 2008 war between the two countries.

Ilia's comments underscore the problems that mark relations between Russia and Georgia. "We must do everything possible to restore friendship and fraternity among our nations and states," said Ilia, according to the Interfax news agency. "You must go down in the history of Russia and Georgia as a peacekeeper, as a man who created peace between the two peoples."