Beat: Politics

Obama extends best wishes to Orthodox Christians on Easter

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USPA News - U.S. President Barack Obama on Saturday called for the protection of freedom of religion and extended his best wishes to Eastern Orthodox Christians who are celebrating Easter this Sunday, about a month after Western Christian denominations. "This weekend, [First Lady] Michelle and I extend our best wishes to members of the Orthodox Christian community here in America and around the world as they observe Holy Friday and the Feast of the Resurrection," Obama said in a statement issued by the White House.

"For millions of Orthodox Christians, this is a joyful time." The Eastern Orthodox Church is the second largest Christian Church in the world and has an estimated 300 million adherents, primarily in eastern and southeastern Europe. Eastern Orthodox Christians use the Julian calendar to decide the date of Easter while Western churches use the Gregorian calender, resulting in different dates for the day Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. "It`s also a reminder of the sacrifice Christ made so that we might have eternal life," Obama said in Saturday`s statement. "His decision to choose love in the face of hate; hope in the face of despair is an example we should always strive to follow. But it`s especially important to remember this year, as members of the Orthodox community have been confronted with persecution and violence, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa." As such, Obama reaffirmed his commitment to protect universal human rights, including the freedom of religion. "For centuries, the region and the world has been enriched by the contributions of Orthodox communities in countries like Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq," he said. "And in this season of hope and restoration, we celebrate the transformational power of sacrificial love."

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