



Human Rights Council 44<sup>th</sup> session

Agenda Item 6: Universal Periodic Review | Adoption of the UPR outcome of Spain

### **Joint Oral Statement**

Date: 16 July 2020 | Speaker: Markus Stefan Hofer

Madam President,

The World Evangelical Alliance and ADF International welcome Spain's acceptance of recommendation to bring the Catalanian legislation on places of worship in conformity with international human rights law. Our reporting has highlighted that regional laws in Catalonia have set unreasonably high safety standards for non-Catholic places of worship. Some municipalities, such as the city of l'Hospitalet de Llobregat, have even adopted harsher and more arbitrary regulations. The result is that most local congregations are unable to meet the requirements and face a risk of being closed. We call on Spain to fully implement this recommendation and refrain from any discriminatory provisions targeting religious minorities.

We also urge Spain to implement the recommendation that was accepted to ensure freedom of religion or belief, both in law and in practice, to members of religious minorities, with a view to realizing the right to social security for all including protestant ministers who do not have access to the pension system. Retired pastors and their family still suffer from the consequences of discriminatory regulations established during Franco's regime. Despite the European Court of Human Rights finding in 2012 that Spain was violating the right to property, in combination with the right to non-discrimination, this situation is still unresolved until today, leaving dozens of surviving retired protestant pastors outside the pension system. We call on the government of Spain to take rapid steps to definitively remedy to this situation.

Thank you Madam President.