

Oral joint statement read by the World Evangelical Alliance on 3 March 2020 at the Human Rights Council during the Item 3 - Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

The World Evangelical Alliance, on behalf of 21 organizations*, takes note of the Special Rapporteur's report**, and fully support his view that violence, coercion and discrimination in the name of religion are never justified nor should they be condoned.

However, we express concern at the report's suggestion that religious individuals are engaging in harmful conduct by supporting policies and legislation that limit abortion. The report also appears to question the right to conscientious objection by health-care providers and institutions unwilling to perform abortions.

Indeed, we believe that the full recognition of religious freedom, as well as several other fundamental human rights, must include recognition of the right to protect life in the womb, and to advocate against its termination both in words and deeds.

Abortion will forever continue to shock the conscience of billions of people on this planet whom we represent, as well as non-religious people. No one should be forced to choose between joining the medical field to help the vulnerable and living by one's deeply-held moral, religious or philosophical convictions, or more simply by one's scientific ethics.

Recalling that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that all human beings "are endowed with reason and conscience," we call on all States to recognize the legal right to conscientious objection for health care professionals related to the performance or participation in abortion.

Finally, we are deeply concerned by the report's suggestion that international law may have some role in defining the doctrinal positions of religious groups regarding the role of its members. It is in fact unclear in what circumstances upholding the institutional autonomy of religious groups would "inordinately" discriminate on the basis of gender, just as it is unclear under what conditions the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights should authorize States to regulate the internal governance of religious organizations.

Thank you.

Signatory organizations with UN ECOSOC consultative status

1. Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF International)
2. Association Points-Cœur (Heart's Home Association)
3. Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23)
4. Campaign Life Coalition

5. Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam inc.)
6. Edmund Rice International
7. Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
8. European Centre for Law and Justice, The
9. Fundacion Abba Colombia
10. Hazteoir.org
11. IIMA – Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice
12. International Solidarity and Human Rights Institute, ISHRI
13. Jubilee Campaign
14. MIAMSI (Mouvement International d'Apostolat des Milieux Sociaux Indépendants)
15. Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture
16. Priests for Life
17. Real Women of Canada
18. Transatlantic Christian Council
19. VIDES International – International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development
20. World Evangelical Alliance
21. World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations

** The report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief is available at the following link:

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session43/Documents/A_HRC_43_48.docx