



Human Rights Council 43rd session

Agenda Item 6: Universal Periodic Review

Adoption of the UPR outcome of Italy

Date: 12-13 March 2020

Speaker: Albert Hengelaar

Mr President

We would like to thank Italy for its constructive participation in the UPR and the open dialogue with civil society.

In 2014, WEA and the Italian Evangelical Alliance already submitted a UPR stakeholders report that requested from Italy to: "Repeal the provisions of the Law on territorial planning in Lombardia and Veneto which led to over 25 places of worship being forcibly closed down." In 2015, a new regional law "for the planning of equipment for religious services" was adopted in Lombardia, with vexatious urban planning regulations, creating a series of obstacles which made the construction or the reallocation of buildings as places of worship for religious minorities increasingly difficult, if not impossible. Despite partially successful appeals to the Constitutional Court in 2016 and 2019, the situation hasn't changed during the last UPR cycle, as more churches were closed in recent years. Muslim prayer houses have been affected as well. Besides in the meantime, two additional regions, Liguria and Veneto, have adopted similar laws.

One emblematic case is that of "Punto Luce" church in San Giuliano Milanese, with 60 to 80 attendees on Sunday. It was ordered to close in July 2019 and was only able to reopen recently, following a provisional decision of the Council of State on January 23 of this year. The case is still pending at the Administrative Regional Court of Lombardia and is expected to end up at the Constitutional Court.

In the context of its human rights commitments presented during this UPR, we ask Italy to modify or repeal these regional zoning laws and regulations in Lombardia, Liguria and Veneto and bring its legislation and practice in conformity with Freedom of religion or Belief as enshrined in international law and in the Italian Constitution.

Thank you Mr. President.