

Oral Statement

Human Rights Council 46th Session

Agenda Item 2: Oral update by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

25 February 2021

Read by: Wissam Al Saliby

Thank you, Madam president.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated religiously-motivated stigmatization and violence in many countries.

In India, our member reported that the pandemic has aggravated the environment of hate and intolerance toward religious minorities, primarily Christians and Muslims. In 2020, at least five Christians were killed by radicalized groups, with the investigations still ongoing, and at least six Churches were burnt or demolished by unknown perpetrators, with the inaction or maybe even the complicity of public officials.

The most alarming development has been the expansion of the notorious anti-conversion laws, broadly misused to justify violence against Christians and Muslims.

We call on the government of India to repeal anti-conversion laws, to take legal action against communal violence, and to protect Christians and other religious minorities.

In Sri Lanka, COVID-19 has exacerbated religious stigmatization and violence, which have persisted throughout the post-war years, despite the fact that the freedom of religion or belief is enshrined as a fundamental right in the nation's constitution. We echo the call of our member in Sri Lanka for the government to respect the rights of Muslims and Christians to perform the burial of the deceased in accordance with their respective traditions.