

Oral Statement

Human Rights Council 47th Session

Agenda Item 2: Interactive dialogue on the report of the High Commissioner on the central role of the State in responding to pandemics and other health emergencies, and the socioeconomic consequences thereof (HRC res. 44/2)

21 June 2021

Delivered by Kateryna Shynkaruk

Thank you, Madam president.

The World Evangelical Alliance welcomes the report by the High Commissioner and her emphasis on non-discriminatory health response to COVID-19 pandemic.

In many countries, we have seen governments' health responses lacking dialogue with and further stigmatization and discrimination of their religious minorities.

In Turkey, Christian citizens were overlooked and uninformed when Covid-related decisions were taken, and put in greater disadvantage due to Sunday lock-downs. Unlike mosques, Churches were subject to the same restrictions as non-religious associations.¹ We appeal to the the government of Turkey to respect the freedom of Christian and other minorities to practice their faith, when deciding on pandemic-related restrictions.

In Sri Lanka, after reversing the course on COVID-19 victims' mandatory cremation, the government chose a remote island for minority Muslim and Christian communities to hold the victims burials. Following strong opposition, another remote place of Ottamavadi was designated, which still requires long distance commuting.

We call on States to hold a dialogue with their religious minorities to prevent discrimination and rights violation in their pandemic response.

And we ask the High Commissioner what good practices of States' inclusive treatment of religious minorities in their pandemic response has she identified?

1 See: Stakeholders Report of 7 May 2021, Submitted to the Human Rights Committee ahead of the consideration of the List of Issues Prior to Reporting for Turkey during the Committee's 132nd session by: the Protestan Kiliseler Derneği (Association of Protestant Churches – Turkey), Middle East Concern, the European Evangelical Alliance, and the World Evangelical Alliance. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCCPR%2fICS%2fTUR%2f44853&Lang=en