

## Oral Statement

Human Rights Council 47<sup>th</sup> session

Item 3: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

2 July 2021

Delivered by Gloria Leccese

Thank you Madam President.

The World Evangelical Alliance welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur and her recommendations. We especially welcome the acknowledgment that ideological and identity-based disinformation has fomented violence and discrimination against minorities.

**In India**, since 2014, the rise of Hindutva nationalism has translated into exclusion and calls for discrimination against religious minorities such as Muslims and Christians.

Disinformation on social media is rife and used to further stigmatize religious minorities. In dozens of incidents, Christians are clearly identified in videos and photos online, and accused of “religious conversion” activities. As of March 2020, disinformation triggered rumours that Muslims were ‘intentionally’ infecting Hindus with COVID-19.

**In Nepal**, in April of this year, a falsified document attributed to our Christian member appeared on a Hindu nationalist leaders’ Facebook account, went viral, and was used to justify demands that registrations of Christian charities be cancelled. Such disinformation incidents take place in a context of increased harassment of Christians, following the enactment of a new criminal code in 2017, that has legitimized their mistreatment by police and judiciary.

We would like to ask the Special Rapporteur how can her mandate prompt States to take more swift action against disinformation attacks on minorities, while ensuring the freedom of expression?