



Oral Statement

Human Rights Council 47th session

Agenda Item 6: Universal Periodic Review; Adoption of the UPR outcome of Nepal

8 July 2021 - Delivered by Wissam Al Saliby

Madam President,

We thank the Government of Nepal for engaging in the Universal Periodic Review.

We regret that key recommendations related to Freedom of Religion or Belief were not accepted.

The Government of Nepal stated in its response to the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review that religious “conversion by force or undue influence or inducement is prohibited to ensure full enjoyment of religious freedom by every religious denomination.”

However, it is our observation that the opposite is taking place: criminal charges of conversion by force or inducement are used to *hinder* the enjoyment of religious freedom. More than 30 Christians were arrested and taken to court on charges of “conversion” during 2018 and 2019.

The criminal code states that no one should encourage religious conversion, and that no one should convert a person by disturbing the religion or belief of any ethnic group. This wording is vague and has been conducive to arbitrary application and misuse.

We, therefore, reiterate our appeal to the Government of Nepal to repeal or amend sections 155, 156, 158 and 159 of the Penal Code so it is consistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Freedom of religion and of conscience is a precondition for human development and flourishing societies.

Thank you.