

## **Oral Statement**

Human Rights Council 48<sup>th</sup> Session

Agenda Item 2: Interactive dialogue on the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

14 September 2021

Delivered by Wissam Al Saliby

Thank you, Madam president.

The World Evangelical Alliance welcomes the oral update of the High Commissioner.

In Sri Lanka, between January and August 2021, we documented 62 incidents of religious violence and intolerance against Protestant Christians. A majority of these incidents were actively perpetrated by state officials including law enforcement personnel. They include demands for church closures, arbitrary questioning of clergy by intelligence officials, and failure to address incidents perpetrated by non-state actors.

The Hindu community in Sri Lanka continues to face discrimination over land issues and contested archaeological sites of the Hindu community.

Further, human rights lawyer Hejaaz Hizbullah and poet Ahnaf Jazeem continue to languish in detention, and face unfair charges and trial.

In Afghanistan, religious minorities, including Afghans who espoused the Christian faith, are in need of attention and protection. Many local church leaders have left the country - temporarily or permanently - or are attempting to leave.

We urge the High Commissioner to include Christian and other religious minorities in her reporting on Sri Lanka and on Afghanistan. These groups are a vulnerable minority and, at the same time, active and potent civil society actors.