

Oral Statement

Human Rights Council 48th session | Item 3: General Debate

Delivered by Wissam Al Saliby | 22 September 2021

Thank you, Madam President.

The World Evangelical Alliance draws attention to the well-being of minorities in nations at every Human Rights Council session. The treatment of minorities is the litmus test for Sustainable Development Goal No. 16.¹

Unfortunately, over the past years, we have witnessed increasing restrictions on, and stigmatization of, religious minorities.

In India, false narratives of religious conversion by force, fraud or marriage have led to anti-conversion legislation, as well as violence against Christians and Muslims.

In France, religious minorities are looked upon with suspicion. The recent anti-separatism legislation promotes enhanced control by the state on all religious activities and organizations. The current interpretation of *laïcité* creates undue tension with religious minorities.

The plight of religious minorities is under-reported in the UN system. For example, the 16 August 2021 statement by UN Experts on Afghanistan², and their subsequent statements on Afghanistan³, failed to include a mention of religious minorities.

Therefore, we urge the High Commissioner, the Human Rights Council, and Special Procedures to include Christians and other religious minorities, when warranted, in your statements and reporting, and to highlight not only the vulnerability of these groups, but also their active and potent civil society contributions.

1 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>

2 Afghanistan: UN experts urge swift global action to protect human rights and prevent 'civilian slaughter', 16-08-2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27384&LangID=E>

3 Afghanistan: UN experts deplore women sports ban, call for vigorous response, 14-09-2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27454&LangID=E>;
Afghanistan: Journalists at risk of persecution need urgent protection – UN experts, 03-09-2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27426&LangID=E>;
Afghanistan: Authorities must prohibit torture in any circumstances - UN torture prevention body, 02-09-2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27424&LangID=E>;
Afghanistan: UN committees urge Taliban to honour their promises to protect women and girls, 30-08-2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27414&LangID=E>;
OHCHR Briefing notes on Afghanistan, 17-08-2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27388&LangID=E>;
Afghanistan: UN expert warns of "cultural disaster", urges visas for the vulnerable, 17-08-2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27389&LangID=E>