



To the attention of the Human Rights Committee's
Country Report Task Force on Iraq

Iraq: Freedom of Religion and the Status of the Evangelical Churches [ICCPR Art. 18]

Submitted to the Human Rights Committee ahead of the consideration of the
List of Issues for Iraq during the Committee's 129th session in June 2020.

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The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) was founded in 1846 in London. Today, the WEA is a network of churches in 129 nations that have each formed an evangelical alliance and over 100 international organizations joining together to give a world-wide identity, voice, and platform to more than 600 million evangelical Christians worldwide. For additional information, please contact: Michael Mutzner, WEA Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva at geneva@worldea.org or +41.22.890.1030

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1. Iraq's sixth periodic report submitted to the Human Rights Committee on 5 August 2019 states the following in paragraph 233: *Article 43 (1) of the Constitution states: "The followers of all religions and religious communities shall be free to: (a) Practise their religious rites, including Hussaini rites; (b) Administer their religious endowments, institutions and affairs, as regulated by law."* Article 43 (2) reads: *"The State shall guarantee freedom of worship and the protection of places of worship."*
2. However, with the exception of the Presbyterian Evangelical Protestant church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Iraq's Evangelical churches are not legally recognized. Since

2003, the General Society for Iraqi National Evangelical Churches (GSINEC) has requested from the consecutive Iraqi governments the legal recognition of the Evangelical churches and affiliation with the Christians, Yezidi, and Sabaeen-Mandaean Religions Diwan (also known as *waqf*). However, these consecutive governments have denied the Evangelical churches legal registration and recognition.

3. The General Society for Iraqi National Evangelical Churches is the umbrella association for Iraqi Evangelical Churches, and is registered as a non-government organization. The GSINEC is affiliated with the World Evangelical Alliance.
4. The seven unrecognized Evangelical denominations that are member of the GSINEC are: Alliance Evangelical Church, New Life Church (Assembly of God), New Testament Baptist Church, Pentecostal Church, National Evangelical Baptist Church, Armenian Evangelical Church, and Nazarene Evangelical Church.
5. In Iraq, there are three diwans (chambers) responsible for administering matters for the recognized religious groups within the country: the Sunni Endowment Diwan, the Shia Endowment Diwan, and the Endowment of the Christians, Yezidi, and Sabaeen-Mandaean Religions Diwan. These three *waqfs* (religious endowment) operate under the authority of the prime minister's office.
6. The denial of recognition and affiliation with the Christian, Yezidi and Sabaeen-Mandaean *waqf* include the inability for the churches to open a bank account, the inability to own and register property, the denial of tax and customs exemption, the inability to produce religious publications, and the inability to operate charitable, social and educational institutions including kindergartens and clinics.
7. Since 2003, the refusal of consecutive Iraq governments to grant legal recognition to the Evangelical churches as well as affiliation with the *waqf* constitute a violation of the individual and collective rights of Iraqi Evangelicals to practice and to manifest their religion, as per article 18 of the ICCPR.
8. In light of the above, we respectfully call on the Human Rights Committee to submit the following question to Iraq:
 - Elaborate on the legal status of the Evangelical Churches in Iraq, and on the reasons why they have not been granted affiliation with the *waqf* - the Endowment of the Christians, Yezidi, and Sabaeen-Mandaean Religions.