

Oral Statement

Human Rights Council 52nd Session

Agenda Item 3: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

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The World Evangelical Alliance welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur.

The freedom to manifest one's religion includes the freedom for members of religious communities to establish and maintain religious, charitable or humanitarian institutions.

In some countries, the government or the parliament is the authority that recognizes new religious communities, and in other countries, legal recognition is an administrative procedure. And in some countries, the law puts conditions on the size or territorial spread or length of existence of religious communities to allow for recognition.

In many countries, registration procedures are proving lengthy and onerous – even prohibitive. Restrictions to the legal recognition of religious institutions are depriving religious communities, including our Evangelical churches, of benefits such as opening a bank account, owning a church building, establishing a school or owning a burial ground.

In some countries, legal recognition can be conditioned on adherence to national or political values, which could undermine the right of religious communities to self-define and self-govern.

We invite the Special Rapporteur to further explore registration procedures, and to share best practices in the legal recognition and registration of religious communities in her thematic reports and country visit reports.