

Oral Statement

Human Rights Council 53rd Session
Agenda Item 6: Universal Periodic Review
Adoption of the UPR outcome of Sri Lanka
10 July 2023
Delivered by Naomi Tchesse

Mr President,

The World Evangelical Alliance welcomes Sri Lanka's acceptance of recommendations on repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act. We look forward to seeing the implementation of these recommendations, including the release of those detained under the Act.

We call on the Government of Sri Lanka to repeal the circulars on the registration of places of worship in order to comply with constitutional protections of freedom of religion. These circulars are not based on any parliamentary legislation and are used to restrict the religious activities of minority places of worship.

We also call on the Government to desist from enacting new legislation on religious freedom, as recently announced by the Minister of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs.

The real challenge to religious harmony is not the absence of adequate legislation but the lack of good faith implementation of existing laws preventing incitement and violence against religious minorities.

We express concern about the newly established special police unit, part of the Criminal Investigation Department's Cyber Crime Division. This unit investigates attempts to cause religious disharmony and takes action against individuals under the ICCPR Act.

Finally, we call on the Government to ensure that elections are conducted without delay and emphasize the importance of elections for the stability and economic recovery of the country. This is particularly crucial considering the repeated postponements of the local government elections that were initially scheduled to be held in March 2022.

Thank you.