

Oral Statement

Human Rights Council 55th Session

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

5 March 2024

Delivered by Wissam al-Saliby

Mr. President,

The World Evangelical Alliance welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur and her contribution to protecting freedom of religion, advancing dialogue and understanding, and upholding human rights while combating hate speech.

We echo the Special Rapporteur's observation that "laws alone are not sufficient."

Indeed, our members, National Evangelical Alliances in more than 140 countries, engage with religious leaders and communities through multi-faith action. Evangelicals seek relationships that foster a better understanding of each other and mutual empathy and prevent hateful or disrespectful speech.

Evangelicals engage in various multi-faith councils and forums such as the Inter-religious Council of Kenya, the Interfaith Peace Platform in the Central African Republic, the Council of Confessions in Uzbekistan, and the Swiss Council of Religions in Switzerland.

Our communities do face challenges in engaging with other faith groups, and one of the barriers is laws and regulations that undermine the right to freedom of religion or belief.

So we ask the Special Rapporteur to what extent anti-blasphemy, anti-conversion, and anti-apostasy laws hinder the ability of religious communities to work together to counter hate speech.

Thank you.