



Oral Statement

Human Rights Council 57th Session

Agenda Item 2: Interactive dialogue on the report of OHCHR on promoting reconciliation, accountability, and human rights in Sri Lanka

9 September 2024

Delivered by Markus Hofer

Mister President,

The World Evangelical Alliance welcomes the High Commissioner's report.

We remain concerned by the situation for religious minorities in Sri Lanka. Local authorities obstruct worship activities, often citing the need for mandatory registration, while disputes over sacred sites and land in the North and East persist. The recently passed Online Safety Act also poses a serious threat to freedom of expression in the country.

We urge the Sri Lankan government and the incoming president to uphold their obligations to protect the freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all citizens. State involvement in FoRB violations must end, and there should be accountability for violence and discrimination, including a thorough and impartial investigation into the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks to bring the perpetrators to justice. The arbitrary obstruction of worship and the appropriation of lands belonging to minorities must cease immediately.

We call for the repeal of the Online Safety Act and strongly urge the government to refrain from mandating registration for places of worship. As Sri Lanka continues to navigate its economic challenges, it is essential that issues relating to human rights and accountability are not neglected. The international community must continue to monitor the situation and hold the government accountable.

Thank you.