Human Rights Council 37th session
Agenda item 6
Universal Periodic Review: Sri Lanka
Speaker: Wissam al-Saliby
Date: 19 March 2018

Mr. President,

The World Evangelical Alliance, together with Christian Solidarity Worldwide, would like to highlight our concerns regarding freedom of religion or belief in Sri Lanka.

In this UPR cycle, the Government of Sri Lanka has accepted many recommendations to effectively combat, prevent and punish hate speech and incitement of violent attacks against ethnic and religious minorities.[1]

However, since the date of Sri Lanka's UPR dialogue in 2017, the Sri Lankan Evangelical Alliance has documented over 20 incidents of threats to Christians, including attacks on places of worship and inter-community incidents, where the police have failed to take action.[2] This reflects a pattern of incidents that has not changed over the past years.

Muslim minorities are also being attacked in Sri Lanka. We condemn the recent communal tensions in Digana, Kandy, which also reflects a pattern of incidents over the past months and years.

Notwithstanding, we commend the actions of local-level government officials and law enforcement officials who intervened on behalf of persecuted Christians in Batticaloa District who were denied public cemetery burial this year and took concrete steps to redress the violations.

We renew our call for the formal recognition of Evangelical Christian communities in Sri Lanka, who are often sidelined in discussions pertaining to religious rights and interreligious dialogue.

We also reiterate our call for the Ministry of Buddhasasana and Religious Affairs to withdraw the Circular issued in September 2008 pertaining to the construction of places of worship.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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[1] Recommendations 116.42 (Namibia), 116.43 (Australia), 116.94 (Holy See), 116,97 (Italy), 116.98 (Madagascar), 116.99 (Belgium), 116.101 (Poland), 116,102 (United States of America), 116.103 (Netherlands), 116.100 (Netherlands), and 116.172 (Guatemala)
[2] Source: https://slchurchattacks.crowdmap.com/