

*Human Rights Council – 28<sup>th</sup> session*

*Item 4 – General debate Human rights situations that require the Council's attention*

*Speaker: Albert Hengelaar*

*Tuesday 17 March 2015*

Mr. President,

The World Evangelical Alliance, representing 600 million Christians worldwide, would like to raise two situations in Asia.

First Sri Lanka. We have often made statements on the position of its Evangelical Christians and the other small minorities. Their position is typical for many minority groups in the region. Let us cite the report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief: “Sometimes, even very small minorities are demonized as allegedly posing a dangerous threat to the long-term survival of the nation.” In that context we welcome the new government appointing a special coordinator for Evangelical affairs. This indicates that the government accepts responsibility and the need to offer better protection to Evangelical communities. Further steps are necessary: Cancellation of the Circular 2008 issued by the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs and eradicate discrimination of churches and Christian citizens which are not affiliated with the National Council of Churches or the Roman Catholic church.

The second situation concerns Malaysia. We note with concern that in a decision on January 21 the Federal Court ruled that an earlier decision of the court was proper and could not be challenged. This bans the use of the word “Allah” from a non-Muslim newspaper despite the fact that this generic word for “God” in Arabic has been used for centuries in Malay-language literature to refer also to the Christian God. The word actually predates Islam and the court now rules that it belongs to Muslims only. What can we expect of human rights if the court wants to prevent the tongue and pen using respectful language?

We thank you Mr. President