

*Human Rights Council – 31st session
Item 4 –Human rights situations that require the
Council’s attention
Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on
freedom of religion or belief*



Speaker: Arie de Pater

Wednesday 9 March 2016

Mr. Vice- President,

On behalf of the World Evangelical Alliance, I would like to thank the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief for his reports and for the passion and dedication with which he accomplished his mandate. I trust that many victims from whatever religion or believe or none, have found some encouragement in the way professor Bielefeldt fulfilled his task.

We thank the SR for reminding us today that freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief are mutually reinforcing. We believe they are like twin rights, born from the same mother namely, Freedom of Thought and Conscience.

We would like to pose the following questions to the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief:

1. The World Evangelical Alliance witnessed in different contexts that states may have a tendency to side with the opinions and beliefs of the majority at the expense of those who constitute a numerical minority. Could the Special Rapporteur share some best practices to counter this tendency?
2. We welcome the useful reminder that when confronted with a statement perceived as offensive, there are other responses possible than violence or legislative measures to suppress that voice.

Could the Special Rapporteur share some best practices on how states can stimulate favourable conditions for respectful ways to express and receive dissenting opinions?

3. Last but not least, we wonder what the Special Rapporteur, based on his six years in office, would regard the most important lesson learned concerning the defence and promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief.

We thank you Mr. President.