

*Human Rights Council – 33rd session
Item 4 – General Debate*

Speaker: David van der Maas

Monday, 19 September 2016



Mr. President.

The World Evangelical Alliance together with Christian Solidarity Worldwide would like to draw the Human Rights Council's attention to legislation that restricts religious freedom and freedom of expression in Nepal.

The Muluki Ain, the constitution of Nepal and a bill currently being reviewed by parliament all restrict it.

Although the government of Nepal at the UPR review last year stated that 'full' religious freedom is guaranteed in the new constitution, Section 26(3) of the Constitution and other legislation are inconsistent with international human rights law as it limits the freedom of the individual to convert from one faith to another and the freedom to peacefully express and share one's faith with others.

The right to freedom of religion or belief is of particular importance in Nepal as the country makes the transition from a Hindu monarchy to a secular democratic republic.

Last June eight Christians including two school principals and a pastor from Charikot in Dolakha district were arrested and imprisoned for nine days during which two of the men faced physical assault by the police officers. They were released on bail but all still face charges of attempting to convert children to Christianity, simply by handing out a pamphlet which explains the story of Jesus.

This case is an early indicator of how legal provisions may be invoked to restrict peaceful expressions of religious faith and the very basis of a secular state and society where human rights reign.

- 1) We urge Nepal to Amend Section 26 of the new constitution and ensure that it along with the draft penal code reflects in full the requirements of the ICCPR and of Nepal's own Treaty Act 1991 and to guarantee the right to choose and change one's religion or belief, and the right to choose not to believe in a religion.
- 2) We urge Nepal to drop the charges against the 8 Christians in the Charikot case.
- 3) We also encourage Nepal to extend standing invitations to the UN special procedures.

We thank you Mr. President.