

*Human Rights Council – 37th session
Item 3 – General Debate*

Speaker: Albert Hengelaar

Friday 9 March 2018



Mr. President,

The World Evangelical Alliance draws attention to the wellbeing of minorities in nations at every HRC. Restricting minorities shows that the government is unwilling to exercise its mandate in a peaceful way. In Kazakhstan, a 2011 law reduced the number of Protestant religious communities from 1300 to 495. But a new draft law reduces freedom of religion even much more. In Bolivia a draft law on terrorism included a provision that would have outlawed sharing beliefs in the public space. The president stated that the intention was to prevent “destabilization of the country by the political right”. It was later put on hold after protests.

The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief reported on religion and the state: “Respect for freedom of religion or belief is closely related to the degree of tolerance and respect for diversity within a society”. What insecurity drives these governments? Why are they policing the minds of minority citizens?

Don't these governments see that curtailing the human potential of citizens obstructs creativity and progress? When governments try to model their citizens into subjects their potential is seriously constrained. That's why the treatment of minorities is the litmus test for Sustainable Development Goal No. 16.

We thank you Mr. President.