40th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Agenda Item 6, General Debate


Speaker: Claire Denman

Thank you Mr President,

CSW together with the World Evangelical Alliance and seven other organisations with consultative status wishes to take this opportunity to highlight the fact that the situation of freedom of religion or belief continues to receive insufficient attention during Universal Periodic Review cycles.

While we welcome UPR-info’s statistics which show that 78 states have so far raised the right to FoRB during the third cycle, we call on member states to ensure that recommendations given are SMART - specific, measurable, and time-bound enough to enable an assessment of implementation over the four and a half year reporting period.

While it would not be expected that recommendations relating to FoRB would be made for every country, the World Evangelical Alliance estimates that SMART recommendations relating to FoRB only account for 1.6% of all recommendations made to 47 states of particular concern where violations of, and restrictions on FoRB persist.

For example, despite evidence of continuing violations, during the last UPR cycle Cuba only received four recommendations pertaining to FoRB, none of which were meaningful or specific. Somalia, Yemen, Turkmenistan, Libya and Belarus received either one or no meaningful FoRB recommendations.

We call on member states to pay greater attention to the situation of FoRB around the world and to ensure recommendations are formulated to adequately address violations.

2 World Evangelical Alliance, “UPR Responsiveness to Violations of the Right to Freedom of Religion”, 8 February 2019
We also remain concerned that states continue to fail to implement accepted recommendations relating to FoRB. We urge member states to ensure the UPR process is not undermined by states that accept recommendations only to defer implementation indefinitely. Accountability is key to ensuring the process retains its integrity.

Thank you.

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1 Final list of signatories (NGOs with ECOSOC Consultative Status):

- Alliance Defending Freedom
- Centre for Inquiry
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide
- Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience (CAP Freedom of Conscience)
- Jubilee Campaign
- National Council of Jewish Women
- The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
- VIVAT International
- World Evangelical Alliance