Joint-oral Statement | Human Rights Council 42nd session

Item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention
General Debate 18 September 2019 Speaker: Albert Hengelaar

M. President,

The World Evangelical Alliance, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, Christian Solidarity Worldwide and Jubilee Campaign, in association with l’Église Protestante d’Algérie, express grave concern at the ongoing closure of Protestant Churches in Algeria.

Over the last six weeks Protestant churches in Lekhmis, Ighzer Amokrane and Akbou have been sealed by the authorities, bringing the number of church buildings forcibly closed since November 2017 to seven. Church closure orders alternatively cited “lack of religious association permits” and “lack of compliance with safety regulations.”

However, authorities continue to refuse to recognise both the umbrella organisation of the Protestant Churches, l’Église Protestante d’Algérie, and churches which requested to be registered locally. In addition, the National Commission for Non-Muslim Religious Groups, which according to the 2006 Ordinance is in charge of approving church buildings, has not issued a single permit. The churches are therefore in a legal grey-zone of non-recognition, giving authorities the latitude to close one building after the other.

We call on the government of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to allow the forcibly closed church buildings to reopen, end the campaign against Protestant churches, and review the registration process.

Thank you.