



Human Rights Council 39th session

Agenda item 4 | General Debate

Speaker: Wissam al-Saliby

Date: 18 September 2018

Thank you, Mr. President.

In August 2018, Nepal's new Criminal Code came into effect. This new legislation, together with Nepal's constitution, put disproportionate restrictions on the freedom of religion or belief, criminalize "attempts to convert one's religion", and thus violate the right of religious communities to share the tenets of their belief.

In India, several states have passed and implemented anti-conversion laws, violating the right to Freedom of Religion despite the Indian constitution granting Freedom of Religion to all its citizens.

Our member national alliance in Sri Lanka informed us last month that the Sri Lankan Supreme Court decided that the right, I quote, "to propagate" one's religion is not protected by the Constitution.

We appeal to the governments of Sri Lanka, Nepal and India to repeal legislation and jurisprudence that violate religious freedom.

Our member alliances are experiencing more and more restrictions on freedom of religion or belief that reflect a paternalist understanding of the State, which feels it has a role to protect adherents to the majority religion from "the danger" of changing their beliefs and adhering to other worldviews. Therefore, we appeal to the the Human Rights Council and to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to keep the right to freedom of belief high on their agenda, and to promote a more inclusive understanding of the State.

Thank you, Mr. President.