



Human Rights Leaders Await Word From Japanese Consulate On Meeting to Discuss Country's Abuses

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Top Image:

Religious freedom activists gathered in New York on Tuesday included the American Clergy Leadership Conference, the Universal Peace Federation-USA, the International Coalition for Religious Freedom, Survivors Against Forced Exit, and the Unification Church.

NEW YORK, Oct. 20 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Human rights leaders await word from Japan's Ambassador and Consul General in New York, Shinichi Nishimiya, who is due to confirm Oct. 21, 2010 whether he will meet to discuss his country's abuses of religious freedom. Last week, pleading on the steps outside Japan's Consulate, human rights leaders and Christian pastors rallied against Japan's inaction in stopping the abduction and deprogramming of religious minorities.



Rev. Michael Jenkins (left) presents letter to the Japanese Ambassador. Rev. Luonne Rouse looks on.

Dr. Luonne Rouse, United Methodist Church Pastor delivered remarks at the October 12 press briefing and was supported by Luke Higuchi, president of the Survivors Against Forced Exit, the Rev. Michael Jenkins, chairman of the American Clergy Leadership Conference, and the Rev. Jesse Edwards. Several victims of Japanese abduction and attempted deprogramming shared stories and images of their imprisonment. Numerous members of the Korean and Japanese media attended.

"I'm reminded of a time in America when the higher law forbade kidnapping, abduction and the destruction of life, and yet local authorities, driven by bigotry and hatred, allowed the lynching of black brothers and sisters to occur," Dr. Rouse told the crowd. "I am shocked that Japan, as a modern democratic society, would continue to allow the abduction and forced confinement of adult men and women going directly against the fundamental principles of

freedom of religion."

Dr. Rouse concluded the briefing with call to action. "Let my people go," he told the crowd—after which the clergy and supporters delivered a letter directly to an aid of the Ambassador Nishimiya. The letter requests a meeting between the Ambassador, human rights leaders, and several of the Japanese victims currently living in the U.S., to share stories of persecution and discuss a course of action to end the injustice.



Mitsuko Antal, current resident of Poughkeepsie, NY, said she was abducted and held for 52 days in 1996, then abducted again in 1998 and held for 72 days. She was wounded when she jumped from a second story window to escape in 1998.

The briefing was timely following an October 6 documentary titled "Kidnapping and Confinement in the Unification Church – Kiyomi Returns Home After 13 Years" that aired on Korean television station SBS. The documentary garnered a large amount of attention in Korea and is bringing the issue to light among the Korean-American community.

Over the past 40 years, an estimated 4,300 members of the Unification Church have been subjected to human rights violations of this nature. Between ten to 20 Unification Church members are currently abducted each year in Japan to undergo forced de-conversions.

In the U.S., American citizens are being encouraged to sign a petition encouraging Congress to hold hearings on human rights violations in Japan. Specifically, the hearing would be held by the Tom Lantos Commission on Human Rights, co-chaired by Rep. James McGovern (D-MA) and Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA). For more information on the Japan abduction issue:

<http://stopjapanabductions.org/>

About ICRF

The International Coalition for Religious Freedom is a non-profit, non-sectarian, educational organization dedicated to defending the religious freedom of all, regardless of creed, gender or ethnic origin. SOURCE International Coalition for Religious Freedom

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