

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Danger Of Disregarding Voice Of Religion

Knut Holdhus
June 14, 2024



From the panel during session 8 at the 2024 CESNUR conference in Bordeaux, France. From left: Dr. Eileen Barker (chair), Dr. Massimo Introvigne (founder and managing director of [CESNUR](#)), Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama



Dr. Michael Balcomb in 2017

Voice of religion as moral compass emphasized at international conference on minority faiths

Second part of a speech given by Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of the Europe and Middle East Region of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), at the 2024 CESNUR Conference. It was held from 12th to 15th June at the University of Bordeaux Montaigne in Bordeaux, France with the theme: "[The Contribution of Minority Religions to Society](#)".

The conference was co-organized by: [Center for Studies on New Religions](#) (CESNUR), Université Bordeaux Montaigne - CLIMAS (Cultures et littératures des mondes Anglophones), and [International Society for the Study of New Religions](#) (ISSNR).

Dr. Balcomb spoke on 13th June, the second day of the conference, during session 8 (plenary, chaired by Dr. Eileen Barker), which had the theme "The Unification Church and

Japan: What Is Exactly Happening?"

Part 2 of Dr. Balcomb's speech:

See [part 1](#)

I'd like to take one more step back from the problems facing us today in Japan to address the wider issue of this conference, the proper place, value and contribution of religion in democratic societies.

Too many nominally democratic nations are falling into the secular temptation to treat religion and religious views as distractions at best, and dangerous at worst.

Our Founders, [Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#), have taught that religion has a vital role to serve as the conscience of society, and a moral compass for government.

In the year 2000, speaking at the United Nations, [Father Moon](#) proposed the creation of an upper house at the UN composed of religious and spiritual, and even cultural leaders. With considerable foresight, he said that their knowledge and wisdom would be necessary to combat the rising tide of religiously motivated violence - and this was before 9/11, before Iraq and Afghanistan, ISIS and much more.

This Council, he said, would be tasked to make sure that the political leaders represented in the UN General Assembly and Security Council would not only speak to their own national self-interest. The

council would acknowledge the truth that most of the world's population is profoundly concerned about the religious and moral values that must undergird a world of justice and peace.



[Sun Myung Moon](#) speaking at the UN Headquarters in New York 18th Aug. 2000, proposing to reform the UN. On the left Mother Moon, [Hak Ja Han](#), at the rear Dr. Thomas G. Walsh

Less well known, among his other insights at that meeting was the thought that being in the United Nations would be good for improving the behavior of religious leaders too. In that egalitarian atmosphere, he hoped they would have to behave themselves, raise their game and work for the common purpose of peace.

That recommendation, which was supported at the time by the Philippines and some other nations, has not yet been adopted, but we remain hopeful.

It's not just the UN that badly needs to strengthen its conscience. There are just too many examples of declining government behavior all over the Democratic world.

I come here from the United Kingdom, where there have been so many recent government scandals that I've lost count. You may have heard of the post office scandal where a respected government agency charged and convicted thousands of innocent men and women - post office managers - for crimes that they simply did not commit. The real culprit - faulty software and corrupt management culture - was known but hidden for 20 years.



Person donating blood in Stockholm, Sweden in 2020. The photo is purely illustrative and not related to the UK tainted blood scandal

Another recent example is the tainted blood scandal of the 1980s which remained hidden for 30 years. Hundreds, thousands of people suffered catastrophic consequences and death because of poor controls on blood donations. The government and the National Health Service knew all about this but took no action to remediate the problem even though other nations, such as Canada, dealt with the matter right away.

Now we are in the middle of election season. We are sobered by the recent results in the European Parliament and the rise of extremist positions, even though we in the UK now only observe as spectators! The UK faces its own day of reckoning next month.

I'm a dual American/British citizen and when I look across the Atlantic, I'm deeply troubled by the choices facing the American people in November.

The voice of the conscience, indeed the voice of [God](#), is needed now more than ever in our families, our places of worship, our schools, our society, in politics and in government. We need religious men and women to be free to speak truth to power, and to lead the way by demonstrating and practicing compassion and humility.

[Mother Moon](#) uses the metaphor of a railway terminus, like the one we are staying near here in Bordeaux. Trains arrive from everywhere - but at the destination we all have to get off the train and move on.

No religion can be excluded. No religion can be persecuted or marginalised, and people of all faiths - and of none - have to be free to follow the conscience, honour [God](#) as they see fit, and hold those that are chosen to lead us to account.

Without a place for [God](#), the prospects for our future will remain dim. As the prophet Isaiah lamented over 3,000 years ago,

"They cry peace, peace, but there is no peace!"

Thank you.

See [part 1](#) of Dr. Balcomb's speech

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The panel during session 8 at the 2024 CESNUR conference in Bordeaux, France. Photo: [FOREF](#)

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Part 1 of Dr. Balcomb's speech:

See [part 2](#)

You've already heard from my colleagues about some of the painful consequences that the ongoing government persecution of our movement is causing in Japan.



Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

From Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama you've heard that the **Japanese government's dissolution order may well be unlawful as well as being manifestly unfair**. You have heard how [unscrupulous lawyers](#) have exploited the suffering of our members for financial gain.

From Moriko Hori you've heard of the **collateral damage suffered by those innocent and needy children that the Women's Federation for World Peace has been serving** around the world. You also heard how Japanese officials – for sure mostly men – have systematically trampled on the ordinary rights of Japanese citizens, judging that since they are "only" women, they can do this with impunity.

You've heard from Norishige Kondo about the background of the **political enemies** the [Family Federation](#) has made over the years, drawing the ire of the [Japanese Communist Party \(JCP\)](#) – yes, it still exists – and behind that the shadowy hand of the [Chinese Communist Party \(CCP\)](#).



Norishige Kondo speaking in Tokyo 10th Sep. 2023. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#)



Suzuko Hirschmann. Photo: [FOREF](#)

Suzuko Hirschmann shared about the harrowing and brutal experience of her own sister. Even though that was many years ago, this type of "deprogramming" – in reality, **kidnapping, coercion and mental, physical and even sexual abuse** – carried on for more than 40 years with [over 4,000 victims](#). Until quite recently the problem was simply **ignored by a disinterested and morally supine Japanese judiciary**

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and executive.

I would like to briefly comment on **one more threat of this campaign**, not just to [our movement](#) but potentially to Japan itself. That is the **looming demographic threat**.

You have probably heard that both Korea and Japan now have **critically low birth rates**. For example, Korea has now only 0.7 children per woman of childbearing age, the lowest in the world. That may not sound so bad, but when you run numbers, you find out that if nothing changes, **for every 100 Koreans alive today there will only be 4, a hundred years from now**.

In Japan the situation is a little better, but still there **will only be 15** Japanese for every 100 living today.

We don't have to wait that long to see the results. I myself married a beautiful Japanese girl 42 years ago and we have five children and two grandchildren with another one on the way. I already can already see the effects of depopulation in my wife's hometown with many rice fields lying fallow.

For many years **our Unification community**, like other immigrant communities, **has been a refreshing contrast to this decline**, with many of our families having three or more children.

These **intercultural and interracial marriages** have done wonders in breaking down barriers of suspicion and even hatred between nations that have fought each other in the past.

However, I worry that the campaign against [our community](#) in the Japanese media, now apparently approved by a cowardly Japanese government and likely to be confirmed by courts that lack true independence, is having a **serious effect on the morale of our second and third generations**.

They are already **confused enough in an era of fake news, AI-generated misinformation on social media, gender identity wars** and so much more. It is hard for them to ignore the barrage of propaganda of their national government, hard for them not to want to simply walk away from the **discrimination they now face in education, employment and access**.

Other immigrant and faith communities in Japan face similar pressures. Mixed race children born in Japan are often called by the pejorative "hafu" or half.

The result is that each year **fewer and fewer are keeping the strong marriage and family traditions of their faith community**. Fewer are getting married, either within their own tradition or even outside it. The number of children born to those who do marry is down as well, and for the first time, the birth rate is below the replacement rate.

If we cannot reverse this trend, then [our movement](#), like the nation itself, **may face extinction**. It is a hard thing to say, but it is the **iron law of demographics**.

The grey men of the **Japanese government seem to have no solutions of their own**. Instead, they continue to foster or at least permit religious and racial prejudice, by action and inaction, turning their backs on those communities that may be able to **lead the way out of this crisis**.

Continued in [part 2](#).

Featured image above: *Dr. Michael Balcomb addressing a conference in April 2017. Photo: [FFWPU](#)*

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