

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: UN Watching Japan for Religious Hate Crimes

Knut Holdhus
July 7, 2024



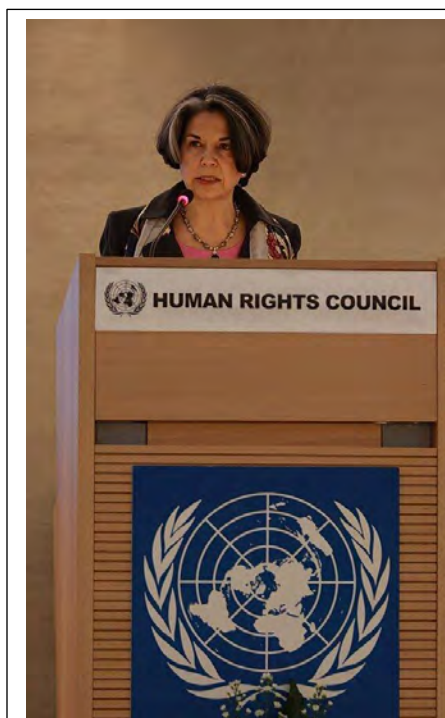
UN Human Rights Council has expressed its concern over Japan triggering hate crimes against religious minorities

Tokyo, 4th July 2024 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

UN Human Rights Council expresses concern over "Q and A on abuse of second-generation members of religions" and urges the Japanese government to reconsider it.

by the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

In December 2022, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare formulated and announced the "Q and A on Response to Child Abuse Related to Religious Beliefs" (Q and A on abuse of second-generation members of religions). Prefectural governors and municipal mayors were notified about it. It has recently come to light that four special rapporteurs from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) have raised concerns with the Japanese government in four areas related to this issue, including "freedom of religion or belief" and "the right to upbringing".



From a UNHRC meeting. Here Maria Otero, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Addresses the Human Rights Council, March 1, 2010, Geneva, Switzerland

The notification, sent to the government in April this year following a resolution by the UNHRC, has been made public after a 60-day confidential period. The notification points out that the Q and A was formulated through repeated consultations with the Japan Anti-Cult Association - led by President Kimiaki Nishida (西田公昭) - which had publicly made defamatory statements about Jehovah's Witnesses and other religious minorities. However, it was developed without any consultation with the religious organizations that may be targeted.

The report also points out that the Q and A was formulated in the wake of the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe amid growing "surveillance and stigma" against some religious groups in Japanese society. The notification also highlights the lack of independent expert review and the extremely short period of 18 days taken to formulate the Q and A. It criticizes the imbalance of the document, which emphasizes the rights of children, but lacks reference to the rights and obligations of parents and legal guardians to provide appropriate guidance to children.

The special rapporteurs also mention the increase in hate crimes targeting Jehovah's Witnesses following the nationwide distribution of the Q and A. Overall, the special rapporteurs have urged the government to reconsider the Q and A, arguing that it risks violating international treaties that Japan has ratified, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In response, the government replied in

June, stating that it would "take note" of the concerns.

In February of this year, associate professor Kazuko Ikeya (池谷和子) of Nagasaki University's Faculty of Education, who specializes in constitutional law and the protection of minors, also expressed concern that the Q and A threatens religious freedom.

A Special Rapporteur (or Independent Expert) is an independent human rights expert appointed by the United Nations (UN) to provide reports or advice on human rights issues from either a thematic or country-specific perspective. These experts are selected by the UN Human Rights Council and operate independently of any government, playing a crucial role in monitoring the actions of sovereign nations and democratically elected governments.



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Special Rapporteurs do not receive financial compensation from the United Nations for their work. However, they receive support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and are often funded by charities and corporations. Annually, they convene in Geneva to discuss common issues, coordinate their efforts, and engage with various stakeholders, including states and civil society organizations.

These experts frequently conduct fact-finding missions to investigate human rights violation allegations in different countries. In addition to these missions, they regularly review complaints from alleged victims of human rights abuses. If a complaint is verified, they send an urgent letter or appeal to the concerned government. Even without a specific complaint, Special Rapporteurs can intervene on behalf of individuals or groups at their discretion.

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State And Media Creating “Today’s Non-Citizens”

January 8, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Japanese journalist exposes how government, media and public opinion effectively have made members into “non-citizens”

Tokyo, 5th January 2024 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

Believers Who Became “Today’s Non-Citizens”







Part 6 of an interview with Masaki Kubota (窪田 順生), author of “Infiltrating the Former Unification Church”

by Seisaku Morita (森田 清策)

[Part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4](#), [part 5](#), [part 7](#)

– The government, media, and public opinion are creating a synergistic effect (相乗効果) [producing a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects], resulting in a “control of

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thought and religion" (思想・宗教統制) we are not aware of.



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

I sense the beginning of fascism. First, they take away freedom of religion, then they take away freedom of speech. They don't suddenly impose a strict control, but gradually tighten it. After publishing the book, I realized that some people will be silenced if they are slammed by those around them. Then, the state will control them more and more. If the state decides, "Anything in this direction is good," then anything other than what the state has decided becomes "anti-social". I think this is the first step towards such a society.

If Prime Minister Fumio Kishida says that from now on he will have no relations

with socially problematic organisations, those taking a stance against the Liberal Democrats can continue to point out the social problems of other religious organisations, such as the Soka Gakkai [創価学会 – the new Buddhist movement on which the political party Komeito is based, the governing Liberal Democratic Party's coalition partner]. They can say, "Why do you declare you have cut ties with the former Unification Church (Family Federation for World Peace and Unification), but not with other religious groups?" It would not be a situation where they could form a coalition. It can be said that Prime Minister Kishida without thinking has destroyed the identity of the Liberal Democratic Party.



The Soka Gakkai International flag. Photo: QueerMichael / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int

Moreover, if we tamper with freedom of thought and religion, our society will become dreadful. They probably did it because they didn't think that far ahead and were afraid their approval ratings would drop. In addition, the officials of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (文化庁) had no choice but to file a request for a dissolution order because it was the Prime Minister's order, and the remaining part of their careers would be in jeopardy should they not obey.

What they did was to accumulate the stories of "victims" by going back in time. On the other hand, they did not listen to the stories of active believers. Normally, if there is a problem, one must first listen to the believers of the group that is thought to have a problem.

Instead of doing that, if they only listen to the stories of former believers who quit 20 years ago, and pile up all of that, saying "there is so much damage," Soka Gakkai [創価学会 – the new Buddhist movement on which the political party Komeito is based, the governing Liberal Democratic Party's coalition partner] will also be in danger. The story is so far-fetched that it should be pointed out by the media. But on the contrary, they are pleased that "support" is overwhelming in public opinion polls. It's a terrifying situation where even extrajudicial matters are approved as long as everyone agrees.

– In your book, the situation of the believers surrounded on all sides (四面楚歌), is described as "today's non-citizens" (令和の非国民).



From Japanese history: Flag used by the Righteous Army during the February 26, 1936 coup attempt. The four characters reading "Revere the Emperor, Destroy the Traitors" (尊皇討奸) are placed in the corners of a standard Japanese flag. Photo: Cckerberos / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image

Believers might feel bad, but the term "today's non-citizens" which I used, means they have become the same as renegades during wartime.

Those who were said to be non-citizens then, were not beaten up because of laws such as a "Non-Citizens Exclusion Act" (非国民排斥法). At that time, the media frequently wrote articles about the war at a time when the fate of the Japanese people was at stake. As the stories of the soldiers were published in newspapers and broadcast on radio, the word "non-citizen"

was spread, and ordinary people lynched those who opposed the war.

Indeed, now, believers from the former Unification Church are not lynched these days. However, they can't rent a hall, and they are told not to come to summer festivals, and they are treated like non-citizens. This is deeply related to the media reports and Prime Minister Kishida's declaration of cutting all ties.

– Even media people are afraid to meet today's non-citizens.

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After I interviewed Masayoshi Kajikuri (梶栗正義), chairman of *International Federation for Victory over Communism* (国際勝共連合), I suggested to my media acquaintances, "I'm going to introduce you, so why don't you interview him and listen to his story?" However, they refused out of fear what he would do. They even said no to just meeting him and listen to his story.



Masayoshi Kajikuri (梶栗正義). Photo: IFVOC

The image that has been created is scarier than the reality. Many people think they can't communicate with members. By publishing a book, I wanted to shatter that image. Followers might be talkative and have different values from you in some areas, but they are people with whom you can have a dialogue.

Continued in [part 7](#).

[Part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4](#), [part 5](#), [part 7](#)

Featured image above: Masaki Kubota, Japanese author and journalist.
Photo / graphics: Sekai Nippo.

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Masaki Kubota (窪田順生) is a non-fiction writer who has contributed to weekly and monthly magazines. He has also worked first as a producer, then as an advisor for TV-documentaries. He is journalist for a weekly magazine and a newspaper, and editor of a monthly magazine. In addition, he works as a media consultant, having conducted over 200 public relations consultations and media training sessions (training on how to handle interviews).



The front cover of 'Infiltrating the Former Unification Church' (潜入旧統一教会「解散命令請求」取材NG最深部の全貌 - Tankobon Softcover, Nov. 2023), by Masaki Kubota (窪田順生).

His books include

- "Spin Doctor – Techniques of Information Manipulation Used by Professionals Who 'Hush up Bad Information'" (Kodansha Alpha Bunko – 2009), which deals with Japan's political and corporate public relations strategies, and
- "14 Stairs – Reportage on the Niigata Girl's 9 Years and 2 Months Confinement Case" (Shogakukan – 2006), which won the 12th Shogakukan Non-fiction Award for Excellence.
- His new book, "Infiltrating the Former Unification Church – the Complete Story of the Request for a Dissolution Order and the Deepest Secrets of the 'No Good Coverage'", is currently on sale.

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