

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: International Protests Against Japan's Suppression Of Religion

Knut Holdhus
July 21, 2024



Some of the participants protesting in front of the Japanese Embassy in Mexico City 16th July 2024, against the authorities' request for a court order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#) in Japan

The many protests in Japan recently against state persecution of minority religion have started spreading to other countries



Tokyo, 20th July 2024 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

Family Federation Members Protest in Front of Japanese Embassy in Mexico, Demanding Freedom of Religion

by the foreign news department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

On 16th July, a protest was held in front of the Japanese Embassy in Mexico City, the capital of Mexico, against the Japanese government's request for a court order to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#).

Members of the [Family Federation](#) in Mexico City marched with slogans such as "Protect Freedom of Religion and Human Rights in Japan". They emphasized freedom of religion as a fundamental human right and called for support for [Family Federation](#) members in Japan, as well as demanding that the Japanese government withdraw its request for a dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#).



Fernandez, the president of the Mexican [Family Federation](#), stated, "We were born in freedom. We have the right to choose what to believe in. Deciding on religion and beliefs in life is completely free. That is why we demand the right to freedom of religion in Japan." He also mentioned, "We have issued a

statement. Many people are interested in our actions here," and called for the voices of the protest participants to be taken seriously.



Protests were also held at the national park in the city of Puebla de Zaragoza on 7th July. From now on, more protests will be held in other cities across Mexico.

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UN Body Watching: Japan Triggering Hate Crimes

July 7, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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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&A on abuse of second-generation members of religions” and urges the Japanese government to reconsider it.

by the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*



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In December 2022, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare formulated and announced the “Q&A on Response to Child Abuse Related to Religious Beliefs” (Q&A on abuse of second-

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From a UNHRC meeting. Here Maria Ótera, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Addresses the Human Rights Council, March 1, 2010, Geneva, Switzerland. Photo: Eric Bridiers from US Mission Geneva. License: CC Attr 2.0 Gen

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”.**

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&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&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&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&A.** Overall, the special rapporteurs have urged the government to reconsider the Q&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.



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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&A threatens religious freedom.**

Featured image above: Japan being watched. Illustration generated by Microsoft Designer Image Creator 6th July 2024.

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.

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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