

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: UN Report on Japan's Lawfare Against the Unification Church

Knut Holdhus
July 17, 2025



Attorney Patricia Duval speaking at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland June 16, 2025



Nazila Ghanea, one of the UN Special Rapporteurs [See editor's note below] who received the alarming report from Patricia Duval. Ghanea has already sent formal UN request to Japan, but has so far received no reply: Nazila Ghanea, UN Rapporteur on Religious Freedom since February 2023

Legal expert warns of religious freedom crisis in Japan as UN report alleges legal pretext and vague laws are used to dismantle Family Federation

Text: Knut Holdhus

Nazila Ghanea, one of the UN Special Rapporteurs of the United Nations, rings the alarm bells as she describes the current dissolution case against the [Family Federation](#) in Japan as a coordinated campaign to eliminate a [religious organization](#) through legal and political means. Duval points out serious violations of judicial independence and due process.

[Bitter Winter](#), the daily, multilingual leading online magazine on religious liberty and human rights, posted from [9th](#) to [14th](#) July a series of four articles on Patricia Duval report to the UN, and on 15th July an [executive summary](#).

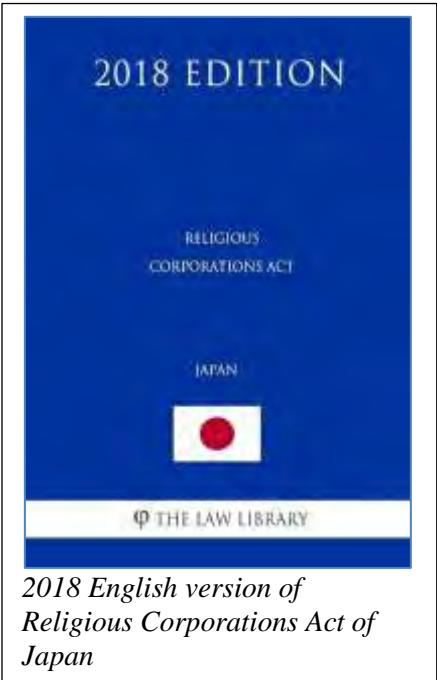
Patricia Duval's report to the United Nations is significant for several key reasons. It frames the Japanese government's actions against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Japan not just as a domestic legal issue, but as a serious international human rights concern - particularly one that involves the erosion of religious liberty, due

process, and judicial independence.

Freedom of Religion Undermined by Legal Manipulation

Duval argues that the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#) is being enabled through a reinterpretation of Japan's Religious Corporations Act, effectively weaponizing a law that was not originally intended to dissolve religious organizations based on alleged civil wrongdoings (torts taken to court in civil lawsuits).

The shift from requiring criminal wrongdoing to allowing civil disputes (like claims from former members) as a basis for dissolution is a dramatic change in legal practice. It risks setting a precedent whereby unpopular or politically targeted religions could be dismantled based on vague and non-criminal accusations.



2018 English version of Religious Corporations Act of Japan

Use of Vague Legal Standards to Justify State Action

The terms "social appropriateness" and "public welfare", as used by the courts and state in this case, are criticized in the report as vague and subjective. These standards can allow for arbitrary or discriminatory enforcement - particularly dangerous when applied to religious minorities.



The UN Human Rights Committee has already warned Japan about the misuse of these terms to restrict freedom of religion or belief, making this case a repetition of a known problem.

Violation of Due Process and Judicial Independence

The report accuses the Japanese judiciary of failing to act independently by conforming to political and public pressure:

Hearings were held behind closed doors, denying the [Family Federation](#) a public and transparent trial.

The government began liquidation planning before the appeal was heard, implying that the judiciary's decision was presumed or predetermined.



A demonstration in Ikebukuro, Tokyo on 8th June 2025 against Japan's state persecution against the [Family Federation](#)

A theory of "mind control" was used in court to deny time limits on accusations and invalidate current expressions of belief, painting active members as ongoing victims incapable of independent thought.

This raises serious concerns about whether the judiciary is operating impartially, or if it has been co-opted by a political and media campaign against a large [religious minority](#).

Religious Persecution Framed as "Victim Relief"

While the government claims to be acting on behalf of victims of coercive fundraising or "spiritual sales," the report suggests that this narrative masks an orchestrated campaign to dismantle a faith community. The draft liquidation guidelines would enable asset seizures even in the absence of current, verifiable claims - raising the specter of state confiscation of religious property without clear legal justification or representation of the accused.

International Implications: ICCPR Violations

Duval's report appeals to international law, particularly Article 18 (freedom of religion) and Article 14 (right to a fair trial) of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR). By bringing this to UN Special Rapporteurs, it signals that this is not merely a domestic matter, but one where Japan could be held accountable under international human rights frameworks.

Potential Chilling Effect on Other Religious Groups

The implications of this case extend beyond the [Family Federation](#). If the state is able to successfully:

Dissolve a religious organization based on vague, retroactively applied legal theories;

Seize its assets without a finalized verdict;

And do so under the pretense of protecting the public, then other minority or politically unpopular religious organizations in Japan may also be at risk. The fear of dissolution could cause religious groups to self-censor, limit outreach, or curtail faith-based fundraising activities.

Conclusion:

From a freedom of religion perspective, Duval's report is a serious alarm bell. It characterizes the actions of the Japanese state not as legitimate regulation of harmful religious conduct, but as a coordinated campaign to eliminate a [religious organization](#) through legal and political means. The use of civil claims, vague legal standards, non-public hearings, and prejudicial state behavior all point to a system that may be failing its constitutional and international obligations.

This report, therefore, seeks to place international pressure on Japan to halt what Duval describes as a judicially enabled dismantling of religious freedom, and to restore due process, judicial neutrality, and equal treatment under the law for all religious groups.

Text: Knut Holdhus

[Editor's note: 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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Issue Of Communism Reemerging As US-China Clash

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• Knut Holdhus

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From Cold War to China: The next front in the fight against communism is dominated by “inevitable clash” between USA and China



Logo of the
Sekai Nippo

Tokyo, 12th July 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

[Opinion & Commentary]


“Confronting China Is Not Just a Temporary Whim”

by Tatsuo Ikenaga (池永達夫)


The International Federation for Victory Over Communism (IFVOC), which




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has led a patriotic movement in Japan opposing communism, has recently published “How the Federation for Victory Over Communism Has Fought” (Sekai Nippo Publishing), a retrospective of its more than 50 years of activity.

We spoke with its current President, Yoshio Watanabe (渡邊芳雄), about what the essence of their struggle has been.



Yoshio Watanabe (渡邊芳雄), President of IFVOC Japan since May 2025. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

Post-Cold War: The

Ongoing Cultural Struggle

Part 2 of interview with Yoshio Watanabe, President of the International

Federation for Victory Over Communism

Interviewer: Tatsuo Ikenaga (池永達夫)

Continued from [part 1](#)

– What is the most pressing issue now?

The communist issue will likely reemerge as a U.S.-China clash. Whether that becomes a hot war or is settled diplomatically remains to be seen, but I believe it is unavoidable.

Yet neither Japan nor the wider world seems to grasp the seriousness of this. Former President Trump and his administration, however, are working under the premise of an inevitable U.S.-China clash, tackling issues like Ukraine, Gaza, and now Iran, with a strategic goal of stopping Chinese hegemonism.

While Japan’s media mostly criticizes Trump, his inaugural speech’s reference to a “revolution of common sense” was a response to cultural destruction. His tariff policy was a reaction to the hollowing out of U.S. manufacturing, caused by overreliance on China and third countries. There’s a crisis awareness: if conflict with China erupts, America won’t be able to procure critical materials without relying on China.

That’s why I’m very interested in how the Trump administration fights.

– Do you believe Trump is truly serious about confronting China?

I’m convinced it’s not just a temporary whim. While it’s difficult to fully grasp Trump’s core thinking, I feel inclined to believe in his intentions.

– In a way, there are no other viable options besides Trump.



The **CRINK nations** – China, Russia, Iran, North Korea. Map: [Hwi.padam / Wikimedia Commons](#). [Public domain](#) image. Cropped. Images of heads of state: Grok xAI, 15th July 2025

Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran are forming a new axis, challenging the world order centered on the West. Among them, the U.S. sees China as the final, greatest threat.

A Vital Need for an Anti-Spy Law



The front cover page of “How the Federation for Victory Over Communism Has Fought” (Sekai Nippo Publishing, 2025)

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– Ensuring security in East Asia will require deepening the Japan-U.S. alliance.

To make that alliance real, Japan must revise its Constitution. As long as Article 9, Paragraph 2 says, “land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will not be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized,” Japan cannot exercise full-spectrum collective self-defense.

Before constitutional revision, however, we absolutely must enact an anti-espionage law. Such a law is also critical for strengthening Japan-U.S. solidarity.

– How did the IFVOC contribute to the fall of the Soviet Union?



Official portrait photograph of **Ronald Reagan**, 7th Feb. 1981. Photo (retouched): Michael Evans (1944-2005) / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

The IFVOC had friendly organizations and media globally. We collaborated with others in Europe who sought to expose the flaws of communism and supported the movement that brought President Reagan to power in the U.S.

Reagan, who boldly declared the USSR an “evil empire”, was a pivotal figure. That statement forced the Soviet Union to face its limits and helped end the Cold War. Reagan also launched the SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative), known as the “Star Wars” program. Without that seriousness, the USSR wouldn’t have recognized that continued competition would lead to economic collapse.

In Japan, the IFVOC worked to prevent a Democratic coalition government from forming, to qualitatively strengthen the U.S.-Japan security treaty, and to foster strong cooperation with the U.S. in various ways.

– After the fall of the Soviet Union, many Russian pensioners suffered due to hyperinflation and currency collapse. This resentment arguably gave rise to today’s President Putin.

The end of the Cold War didn’t mean communism was defeated. The Eastern Bloc centered on the USSR simply collapsed.

Masamichi Inoki (猪木正道), former professor at Kyoto University, wrote in “*The Genealogy of Communism*” that “Marx posed a life-or-death question to humanity.” Marx saw war and social conflict as arising from selfish human desires.

He concluded that alienation – humans losing their humanity and becoming selfish – was caused by institutional factors like Christianity and Judaism at the time. That’s what Marx meant by “*religion is the opium of the people.*”

As long as religion and private property (which is central to capitalism) exist, humans can’t be freed from selfish desire. That’s the revolutionary motivation.

Kyoto University’s former professor Kichitarō Katsuda (勝田吉太郎) once asked during a discussion with IFVOC,

“You say you want to defeat communism – but what kind of person can defeat a communist?”

At the time, our Secretary-General replied,

“Only a true Christian can defeat a Marxist.”

Katsuda struck his knee and said,

Exactly! Without understanding that, you can’t win against communism.”



Masamichi Inoki (猪木正道), Principal of the National Defense Academy and former professor at University of Kyoto: Photo (2021): 防衛大学校ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 int.](#) Cropped





Gentarō Kajikuri (梶栗玄太郎 – 1937–2012), former President of IFVOC Japan, with [Father Moon](#) and [Mother Han](#). Photo: Kogensha

So when former president Kajikuri said “we haven’t fully won,” it wasn’t just about political or ideological battles. It meant we had not yet fully transcended the core issue Marx raised – whether we can overcome selfishness.

See part 1: [50 Years of Evolving Anti-Communism Struggle](#)

Featured image above: From President Donald J. Trump’s visit to China in 2017. Photo: PAS China / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image

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