

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Ex-EU Envoy Jan Figel Warns of Japan's Crackdown on Religion

Knut Holdhus
September 27, 2025



Jan Figel delivering his video address in Geneva September 26, 2025

Former EU-Envoy Jan Figel’ slams Japan's faith ban at UN Human Rights Council side event in Geneva discussing the country's religious cleansing and elimination of an entire faith

A video message by Jan Figel, former EU Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion, delivered at a civil society side event September 26, organized by the NGO the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) in conjunction with the 60th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC60) in Geneva, and more specifically connected to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process or the human rights review of Japan from 8th September to 8th October 2025. The side event had as theme "Religious Cleansing in Japan: Eradication of an Entire Faith Community".



The head table at the side event September 26, in Room 11 in the UN Office in Geneva, Switzerland organized by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF).



Distinguished participants, greetings to all of you in Geneva.

In March 2025, the Tokyo District Court, under the Civil Code, [ordered the dissolution](#) of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), formerly known as [Unification Church](#).

Since this unprecedented decision, I am deeply concerned. The [order](#) lacks a constitutional legal basis and clearly violates Japan's obligations under the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR).

Such a measure endangers not only one minority faith, but also others, because injustice against one community always threatens others.

The [ruling](#) will have its implications for religious freedom in Japan. The [decision](#) is based on questionable evidence and accusations. It lacks substantive foundation and appears to have been driven more by political motives than by law.

What in particular troubles me about this [ruling](#)? The court's [decision](#) is arbitrary, unconstitutional and unlawful. It violates basic principles of due process.

For example, the hearings have been conducted behind closed doors. Article 81 of the Religious Corporations Act allows dissolution only when an organization commits illegal acts that seriously harm public welfare.

Yet the Tokyo District Court expanded this to include 32 civil cases spanning 40 years involving former members.



The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) even changed its interpretation of the law in order to request dissolution - something unprecedented.

Furthermore, missionary activity and donations were judged to violate social norms and social fairness.

But these concepts are far too vague, opening the door to arbitrary use of state and judicial power. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has already recommended that Japan refrain from restricting religious freedom on the basis of public welfare. Article 18 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) does not allow such restrictions.

On the contrary, states are obliged to protect minority religions against hostility from dominant groups. Instead, Japan tolerated forced deprogramming by Protestant pastors.

Many plaintiffs in this case were themselves subjected to coercion and confinement. Even worse, the Tokyo District Court adopted the unscientific mind control theory, assuming victimhood without evidence.

This is proof of bias and arbitrariness. Legitimate courts must not be swayed by political pressure or media campaigns.

The future of Japanese democracy depends on transparency, accountability, respect for human dignity, and the protection of fair justice for all.

Politically, I must say that the movement against the [Family Federation](#) has roots in the Japanese Communist Party's activities decades ago. Marxist atheism lies at the root of this long-standing hostility. Such ideology often inspires radical attempts to exclude faith in God and suppress religion because religion liberates people from the worship of secular values and authoritarian state power.

I know this from my experience. I lived half of my life under Communist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia. My young uncle Jan was killed by the secret police. The regime sought to crush both historic and new religions through many forms of coercion. But it ultimately failed and then peacefully collapsed in 1989.

In Slovakia, the main force behind the peaceful resistance and the fight for freedom was the Christian community, especially the Catholic Church in dissent.

If the District Court [decision](#) is confirmed, it will damage Japan's image and credibility as a democracy and may endanger other minority religions, including smaller and newer groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses.

Japan should learn from the harm caused worldwide by state-imposed ideologies and religious oppression, which have often led to deep internal divisions.

The state exists to serve all citizens, not just the majority or a favored group.

Ladies and gentlemen, religious freedom is a litmus test for all human rights. Why?

Freedom of religion is inseparable from freedom of thought and conscience. It belongs to everyone - believers, non-believers and atheists alike.

This inner freedom is guaranteed by Article 18 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#).

If this inner freedom is not respected, the outer freedoms, freedom of speech, press, assembly, association will also be endangered. It begins inside each person and is expressed outwardly through acts of faith, family and community.

Internal freedom is absolute and must be fully respected by state and institutions.

External expression can be regulated only if restrictions are legal, necessary and proportionate.

I opposed the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#) from the beginning. I wrote personally to Japan's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, but so far received no reply.

However, opposition abroad is growing. Japan has long been respected as a moderate democracy, but its reputation is now at risk. I hear concerns, shock and even protests from governments and civil society worldwide.

How a country treats minorities, not its majority, is the true measure of its democratic credibility.



Nazila Ghanea, UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom [See editor's note below]. Ghanea has sent formal UN request to Japan, but has so far received no reply. Nazila Ghanea holds the position since February 2023

Through the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief at the Human Rights Council, Nazila Ghanea, the UN should be able to lead dialogue with Japan.

The UN Special Rapporteur [See editor's note below] on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Nazila Ghanea, requested to visit Japan to investigate possible violations of minority rights. Unfortunately, the Japanese government has not allowed her a visit. Japan should engage in dialogue with her and with the United Nations.

The [Family Federation](#) appealed against the District Court [verdict](#) and the case is now before the Tokyo High Court. There is still hope for a fair and positive judicial resolution.

Ladies and gentlemen, even democratic countries are not fully immune against ideologies or abuse of power. Therefore, people, society must remain vigilant on protection of human dignity for all and human rights for all.

Thank you for your attention and support.

[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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Communist Strategy Against Religion And Family

• September 26, 2025
• Knut Holdhus



Japanese dissolution order seen as part of global anti-religious strategy orchestrated by Chinese Communist Party allied with anti-cultists in Japan and Korea

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From the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CCP), 11th November 2012. Photo: Dong Fang / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image

messages by Tomihiro Tanaka (田中富広), President of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan, one originally delivered in Sapporo 21st August and one in Fukuoka 15th September. The excerpts were presented in a video message 26th September at a large prayer vigil held by the [Family Federation](#) in Gapyeong, South Korea. Tanaka argues that the [dissolution order](#) against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) in Japan is part of a broader communist strategy, orchestrated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), to destroy religion and the family unit globally.

Communism was born out of Christianity under the declaration that it hates all gods. Its primary goal is the destruction of religion and how to destroy its breeding ground – the family. I will introduce one clear example beyond this current tide: a communist force across the sea from Japan.

Right after the 8th July 2022 incident [the assassination of Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三), former Prime Minister of Japan] the media began reporting that a certain religious organization was involved. Reports started to say that the perpetrator’s mother was a member of the [Family Federation](#). Our own investigation confirmed that the mother was indeed a member. Rather than let the matter simply be sensationalized, we thought it better to state the facts clearly ourselves, so on 11th July we held our first press conference.

Early the next morning, *Global Times* (环球时报, *Huánqíú Shíbào*) was the first to report about it. It is a newspaper that is published under the auspices of the *People’s Daily* (the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party). [\[See editor’s note 1 below\]](#)



Front page of Global Times 12th July 2022. Screenshot from video by [FFWPU](#)

The piece positioned the suspect Yamagami – who should be seen as a criminal – as a victim and framed our [organization](#) as destroyers of the family. This was in the morning edition on 12th July 2022.

That afternoon a nationwide group of lawyers for alleged victims held a press conference. Even at a stage when the situation’s true nature was not understood, they used public media to demand the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#).

This was the start of all the reporting. You could even say it grew from that root. In the sequence of events that followed I believe Prime Minister Kishida’s soul was captured by communist thought. Then, on 25th March of this year, the *Tokyo District Court* [decided to dissolve](#) the [Family Federation](#). Immediately after that [decision](#), an organization under the control of the *Chinese Communist Party* – the *China Anti-Cult Association* (中国反蛇行協会) – issued a statement.

What did it say? First, that this *Tokyo District Court* [verdict](#) shows that Japan is beginning to view religion in the same way that China does in its religious policy, which aligns with China’s national interests. Second, it paved the way for the eradication of anti-communist forces and for future measures regarding religion. Third, it would become a model for other countries’ anti-cult measures. Fourth, it created a path to cut off funding for the [Family Federation](#) and to completely sever the financial support of anti-communist forces.

The Japanese media, increasingly explicit in its communist-minded thinking, evaluated the *Tokyo District Court* decision accordingly. And just recently, the *China Anti-Cult Association*, taking the lead in a targeted offensive in South Korea and held a secret event there.

In the name of that anti-cult association, Chinese public security officials – what in Japan would be called the public security police – along with Chinese legal officials entered Korea. At that gathering, Korean participants included the anti-cult faction within Christianity.

From Japan those invited were people who earnestly hope for the dissolution of our [Federation](#): Yoshihide Sakurai (櫻井義秀), together with Hiroko Nakanishi (中西博子). They always speak in unison. People like these were assembled in Korea and a



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meeting was held.


Yoshihide Sakurai. Photo:
[Bitter Winter](#)

Right now, China, South Korea, and Japan – this fanatical anti-religious coalition – are colluding, and they are trying to build a new transnational network to root out religion not only in Japan but across the world. China is taking the lead in all of this.

It is now clear that the issue concerning the [Family Federation](#) is by no means merely an internal organizational matter. It is directly connected to Japanese democracy itself.

As cultural Marxists [[See editor's note 2 below](#)], they are using art, film, and print media to change culture over time – a slow, deliberate strategy – and finally to settle things through seizing power. We have understood that their long-term, deliberate strategy has begun to work.

We believe that the pillars of the nation are religion and [family values](#); we hold that conviction, it has been taught to us by Rev. [Sun Myung Moon](#) and Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#).

No matter what happens, if we praise world peace we must also be determined to resist communist regimes that seek to destroy our foundation. We are resolved to take on that struggle with conviction as a last bulwark of democracy. Let us proceed with that commitment.

Featured image above: Tomihiro Tanaka (田中富広) speaking 15th September 2025. Screenshot from video by [FFWPU](#).

[Editor's note 1: The People's Daily is the Chinese Communist Party's central mouthpiece. **The Global Times** is its more outward-facing, nationalistic tabloid-style subsidiary, often publishing in both Chinese and English. While the *People's Daily* is usually more formal and ideological, the *Global Times* is known for provocative commentary and international coverage, but both ultimately operate under the Chinese Communist Party's Propaganda Department.]

[Editor's note 2: The phrase “**cultural Marxism**” originally referred to a school of thought influenced by Marxist theory, especially the Frankfurt School (e.g., Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse). These thinkers adapted Marxist analysis of power and oppression to culture rather than just economics.

Instead of focusing only on workers vs. capitalists, they examined how culture, media, education, and ideology reproduce social hierarchies (class, race, gender, etc.).

In academia it developed into critical theory, cultural studies, and post-Marxist thought.]

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