

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: After 70 Years S Korea's Detention History Repeats Itself with the Moons

Knut Holdhus
September 28, 2025



From a spontaneous prayer vigil September 25, 2025 outside Seoul Detention Center, where [Mother Han](#) has been held since September 22



Kim Dong-yeon, Vice-President, [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) in South Korea

Echoes of 1955: Mother Han's detention makes hundreds of members gather in prayer every night in front of detention center

Déjà Vu 70 Years Ago

A briefing 28th September 2025 by Kim Dong-yeon (김동연), Vice-President, [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) in South Korea on the 6th day of [Mother Han's](#) detention at Seoul Detention Center. AI-translated from Korean, slightly edited.

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This weekend, members continue to make their way to Seoul Detention Center, where [True Mother](#) is being held. In front of the iron gates, under the sign that reads "Establishing Law and Order, Seoul Detention Center", our members stand weeping and praying without ceasing.

Seventy years ago

As I watch our members, I imagine the scene seventy years ago. In 1955, [True Father](#) was unjustly accused and imprisoned for three months as an unconvicted detainee at Seodaemun Prison. This prison, originally the Gyeongseong Prison under the Japanese occupation, was renamed Seoul Prison and later Seoul Penitentiary after the liberation, housing both those awaiting trial and convicted prisoners.

During [True Father's](#) confinement and trial, newspapers and magazines across the country published articles slandering the "[Unification Church](#)". Although social criticism poured down, members gathered daily at Seodaemun Prison, longing to see [True Father](#).

In 1967, with judicial reforms, Seoul Detention Center was established in Anyang as a facility specifically for pre-trial detainees. In 1987, Seodaemun Prison was closed, and Seoul Detention Center was fully relocated to its current site in [Uiwang](#) [satellite city to Seoul]. Now, seventy years later, in 2025, [True Mother](#) has been confined to Seoul Detention Center.



[Sun Myung Moon](#) being released from a 3-month detention under the Syngman Rhee regime and declared innocent October 4, 1955

We who live in 2025

It feels as though the history of suffering [True Father](#) endured is repeating itself, as the Republic of Korea once again condemns the "[Unification Church](#)". To see the [True Parents](#) walk the path of unjust imprisonment under the weight of religious prejudice fills our members only with sorrow and remorse.

In 1955, the [Unification Church](#) was a small, unknown church. Yet seventy years later, the [Family Federation](#) has grown into a worldwide religion, with [blessed](#) families across the globe attending the [True Parents](#). Nevertheless, many people still do not know the [True Parents](#), nor does everyone understand the [Family Federation](#). As we see people ridicule and scorn us, we realize all the more clearly that our mission is far from complete.



[Sun Myung Moon](#) and other members detained for 3 months in 1955 at Seodaemun Prison in Seoul. All were released 4th October, except Kim, who was kept until 25th December. They were all declared innocent. Rear from left: [Sun Myung Moon](#) (1920-2012), Eu Hyo-won (1914-1970). Front from left: Eu

Hyo-min, Kim Won-pil (1928-2010), Eu Hyo-yeong

Just as the trial in Seodaemun Prison became the foundation for deeper roots of faith in the Korean church, so too must we use this suffering as an opportunity to advance Heaven's [providence](#) even more firmly. Centered on the [True Parents'](#) words, "Forgive, Love, Unite," we must plant unshakable roots of faith, practice [true love](#), and reach out even to those who criticize and despise us.

When [True Father](#) was released from Seodaemun Prison, having been declared innocent, he came out with a face more radiant than anyone else's. I envision the day when [True Mother](#), too, will return to us with a smile brighter than that of any other. Let us offer our prayers and devotions together for that day to come quickly!

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Japan: Ex-EU Envoy Warns Of Religious Crackdown

- September 27, 2025
- Knut Holdhus



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



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

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A video message by Jan Figel, former EU Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion, and current president of [Forum for Religious Freedom Europe](#) (FOREF), delivered at a civil society side event 26th September 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”.

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.

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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.



Slovakia (in red). Together with its western neighbor Czechia they formed Czechoslovakia, which existed 1918-1939 and 1945-1992. Photo: TUBS / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp. Cropped

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.

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.



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. Photo: GiovannaKa / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC

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.

Featured image above: Jan Figel delivering his video address in Geneva 26th September 2025. Screenshot from video by UPF.

[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.

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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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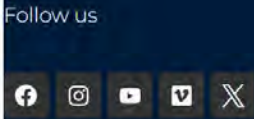
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