

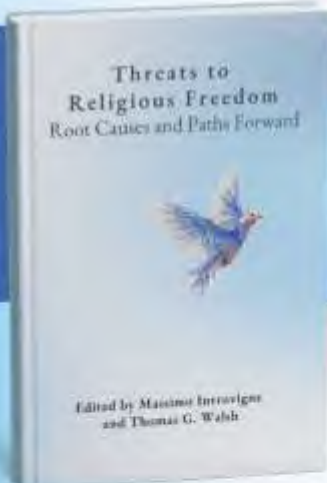
HJI: Book Launch - Threats to Religious Freedom: Root Causes & Paths Forward



Thomas G. Walsh
April 6, 2026



HJ International
GRADUATE SCHOOL for
PEACE and PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

Building Effectiveness in Ministry and Public Leadership



Introducing
**THREATS TO
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM:
ROOT CAUSES AND PATHS FORWARD**

Edited by Massimo Introvigne and Thomas Walsh
Published by HJI Press and CESNUR

THURSDAY, APRIL 16 - 10:00 AM EST
Register to Join!

From the Forward:

"There are many motives that can lie at the root of threats to religious freedoms—among them one can find fear, power, greed, and/or jealousy. It is through books such as this, raising awareness, reducing the ignorance, misinformation, and disinformation that at least some of the threats to religious freedom can be countered."

-Eileen Barker, *Professor Emerita of Sociology, London School of Economics*

From the Preface:

"Religious freedom is more than a legal protection... I invite you to read these pages with care. The questions raised here are not abstract."

-Demian Dunleavy, *President, Family Federation for World Peace and Unification USA*

“A timely and essential read.”
-Alessandro Amicarelli, *President, European Federation for Freedom of Belief*

“A must-have book for everyone dealing with contemporary FoRB-related subjects.”
-Mark Nemes, *Researcher, The Hungarian Academy of Arts*

“A significant contribution to global efforts to better defend what has often been called ‘The First Freedom.’”
-Katrina Lantos Swett, *President, Lantos Foundation, Co-Chair, International Religious Freedom Summit*

[Register Here](#)

We are pleased to invite you to a special event on **April 16, 2026 at 10:00 AM EST**, introducing the newly published volume:

Threats to Religious Freedom: Root Causes and Paths Forward

Edited by Massimo Introvigne and Thomas Walsh.

Published by HJI Press in collaboration with CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions)

This important work brings together leading scholars, practitioners, and advocates to examine the growing challenges to religious freedom around the world. Through diverse perspectives, the book explores how stigma, misinformation, legal pressures, and ideological forces contribute to the erosion of this fundamental human right.

As noted in the Foreword by Eileen Barker, threats to religious freedom often arise not only from overt hostility, but also from ignorance and misinformation—making awareness and education essential tools for change.

The volume also reminds us, as expressed in the Preface by Demian Dunkley, that religious freedom is not only a legal principle, but a reflection of a society's spiritual maturity and commitment to human dignity.

[View Table of Contents and Contributors here](#)

Event Details:

Date: April 16, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM EST (New York Time)

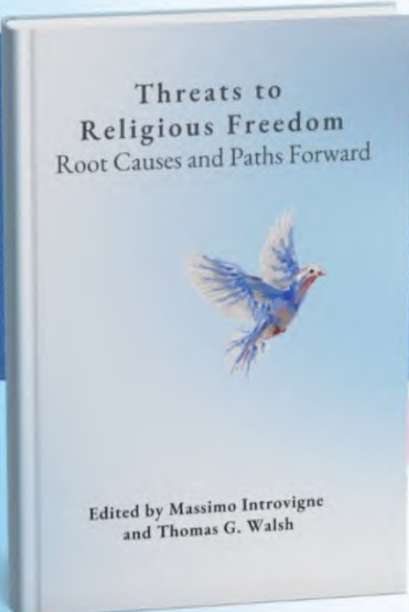
We warmly invite you to join us for this meaningful introduction and discussion. Your presence would greatly enrich the conversation as we reflect on the global and personal significance of protecting freedom of religion and belief.





« All Events

Threats to Religious Freedom: Root Causes and Paths Forward

April 16 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 am



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Eileen Barker is Professor Emerita of Sociology at the London School of Economics. She is widely regarded as one of leading contemporary sociologists of religion and a founder of the academic subfield of new religious movements studies. In 1988, she founded INFORM, the Information Network Focus on Religious Movements, with the aim of offering unbiased information to the media and the public. She is a past president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Association for the Sociology of Religion.	
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Franco Famularo is the President of Universal Peace Federation, Canada and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership where he earned his Doctorate in Ministry. He is also the Canadian representative of the International Sunhak Institute of History. He is the author of "A History of the Unification Church in Canada" and has a strong interest in religious history, interfaith dialogue, and peace activism.	

the FWF-funded research project Gender and the Bible. Her research focuses on contemporary religion, with particular emphasis on exorcism, possession, religious authority, and the therapeutic transformation of the religious field. She works at the intersection of Religious Studies, sociology of religion, psychology, and gender studies, and critically examines religious freedom in relation to contested religious practices and media.

Demian Dunkley serves as the President and Chairman of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, USA. He has worked closely with the American Clergy Leadership Conference as the executive producer of the popular Peace Starts With Me Rallies, filling stadiums across America and hosting online rallies with hundreds of thousands in attendance. In 2020, Rev. Dunkley was appointed as the Family Federation Regional President of Asia Pacific 1, which includes 20 nations, and is home to 3.7 billion people. After completing three years in that position, he was asked by the Co-Founder, Dr. Moon, to return to America to serve in the dual roles of Chairman and President of Family Federation USA. He holds a bachelor's degree in Multimedia Arts and Communications, and a Master's Degree in Religious Studies from HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership, New York, NY.



Willy Raule is former charge de mission at the Cabinet of the Belgian Ministry of Education and at the Belgian Parliament. He is the Founder and Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers, an NGO based in Brussels that he founded in 1988. His organization defends human rights in general but also the rights of persons belonging to historical religions, non-traditional and new religious movements. It is apolitical and independent from any religion. He has carried out fact-finding missions on human rights and religious freedom in more than 25 countries. He is a lecturer in universities in the field of religious freedom and human rights. He has published many articles in university journals about relations between state and religions. He organizes conferences at the European Parliament, including on freedom of religion or belief in China. For years, he has developed religious freedom advocacy in European institutions, at the OSCE and at the UN.

Ján Figel' is the President of Forum for Religious Freedom and a former EU Commissioner and Deputy Prime Minister of Slovakia. In 2016-19 he was the first ever Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU. He is a member of the International Council of Experts of the Int'l Religious Freedom and Belief Alliance and also a member of the IRF Summit Global Leadership Council. Dr. Figel' has been active in promoting marriage, family, and the "culture of human dignity."



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Massimo Introvigne is the founder and managing director of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), an international network of scholars who study new religious movements. Introvigne is the author of some 70 books and more than 100 articles in the field of sociology of religion. He served the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in monitoring religious freedom and is Editor-in-Chief of *Bitter Winter*, an online magazine on religious liberty and human rights.

Michael Mickler is Distinguished Professor of Historical Studies at HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership and Director of the Sunhak Institute of History USA which documents Family Federation activities in the United States. His teaching and research interests include the history of Christianity, the American religious experience, the Unification movement, and interreligious peace-building. He is the author of *The Unification Church Movement* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) among other works.

Rebecca Moore is Emerita Professor of Religion at San Diego State University. She has written and edited numerous books and articles on Peoples Temple and the Jonestown tragedy. Publications include *Beyond Brainwashing: Perspectives on Cultic Violence* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) and *Peoples Temple and Jonestown in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2022). She is Editor of the Cambridge University Press series Elements in New Religious Movements. She also serves as review editor for *Nova Religio*, the quarterly journal on new and emergent religions published by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hans Noot is a retired religious educator and human-rights practitioner with extensive leadership and governance experience across Europe and Central Asia. He holds a triple-major bachelor's degree and an M.S. in organizational development, leadership, and global strategy from Brigham Young University. He co-founded EuroSeminar, a forum for emerging European scholars, leads three Dutch human-rights organizations, and serves as Deputy Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers. His work



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and research focus on organizational anthropology, religion, and human-rights advocacy in contemporary and historical contexts.

Marco Respinti is a member of the International Federation of Journalists serving as Director-in-Charge of the academic publication *The Journal of CESNUR* and *Bitter Winter: A Magazine on Religious Liberty and Human Rights*. Author of books and chapters in books, he has translated and/or edited works by different writers. A Senior Fellow at the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal (Mecosta, Michigan), a founding member of the Center for European Renewal (The Hague, The Netherlands), and a member of the Advisory Council of the European Federation for Freedom of Belief (Rome-Turin, Italy), in December 2022, the Universal Peace Federation Italy bestowed on him, among others, the title of Ambassador for Peace.

Aaron Rhodes is an international human rights activist and author. He was educated at Reed College and at The University of Chicago, where he earned a PhD. He worked in local and state politics and government in Illinois, then at Boston University, and at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna before serving as executive director of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (1993-2007). He was subsequently a co-founder of the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, and president of the Forum for Religious Freedom-Europe. He is the author of two books and numerous articles in leading American and European publications.

Richard N. Swett is a Member of the Board of Directors, Tom Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice; CEO and Co-Founder of Climate PROSPERITY Enterprise Solutions LLC. He served as U.S. Ambassador to Denmark from 1998 to 2001, appointed by President Clinton. During his tenure, he was awarded the Grand Croix of the Order of the Dannebrog by H.M. Queen Margrethe II. Prior to his diplomatic post, he represented New Hampshire's 2nd Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives (1991-1995), serving on key committees including Public Works and Transportation, and Science, Space and Technology. He was also



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Contributors

a member of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and the U.S. Delegation for Relations with the European Parliament.

Shunsuke Uotani is the Secretary General of Universal Peace Federation-Japan. He studied chemical engineering at the Tokyo Institute of Technology and theology at the Unification Theological Seminary. He has held important positions since the founding of IIFWP, the predecessor of UPF. At the same time, he is one of Japan's leading experts on the issues of brainwashing, mind control, and deprogramming, and has written books such as *Mind Control as Pseudoscience* (2023) and *Rebuttal to Yoshihide Sakurai and Hiroko Nakanishi's book "The Unification Church"* (2024).

Thomas G. Walsh is the President of the HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership, based in New York City. He also serves at HJ International as Professor of Religion and Peace. He is the recent past Chairman of the Universal Peace Federation, and currently serves as Chair of the Committee of the Sunhak Peace Prize, and Chair of the Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations. He earned his Ph.D. at Vanderbilt University. He is Executive Editor of the *International Journal for Peace and Public Leadership*.

Thomas Ward is Professor of Peace and Development Studies at HJ International Graduate School (HJI) and served as the sixth president of Unification Theological Seminary (now HJI) from 2019-2022. Ward's writings and research have been published in the *Washington Times*, *World and I Magazine*, the *International Journal of World Peace*, *East Asia Quarterly*, *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, the *Journal of Unification Studies*, Unification Thought Institute (Japan), Paragon House, and E-International Relations. He has been a Fulbright Scholar, a Taiwan Foreign Ministry Research Fellow, and a guest lecturer at the Academy of Social Science in Beijing and at Academia Sinica's Institute of Modern History in Taipei.



 Add to calendar 

DETAILS

Date:

April 16

Time:
10:00 am - 11:00 am

[← HJI Celebrates World Interfaith Harmony Week](#)



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