

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Masaichi Hori on Religious Persecution in Asia

Knut Holdhus
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Rev. Masaichi Hori delivering his speech in Washington DC February 2, 2026



Rev. Masaichi Hori delivering his speech in Washington DC 2nd February 2, 2026

As the left-leaning Lee administration in South Korea is looking for ways to copy measures in Japan praised by China, a domino effect can be observed

A speech by Rev. Masaichi Hori, President of the [Family Federation](#) (FFWPU) in Japan, delivered at the special dinner program on 2nd February during the [International Religious Freedom \(IRF\) Summit 2026](#) at the Hilton Hotel, Washington DC.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests. It is an honor to speak on behalf of [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)-Japan at the [IRF Summit 2026](#). I sincerely thank Ambassador Sam Brownback and Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett for this wonderful [IRF Summit](#).



UN Special Rapporteur: Farida Shaheed



UN Special Rapporteur: Nina Romero



UN Special Rapporteur: Nicolas Levrat

Last year, my predecessor, Rev. Tomihiro Tanaka, said that the [Family Federation](#) in Japan was in danger of being dissolved by the government, and called for support of religious freedom in Japan.

Unfortunately, that crisis became a reality. On 25th March last year, the Tokyo District Court [issued a ruling](#) ordering the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#). This decision is [being appealed](#) to the High Court.



UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom: Nazila Ghanea



Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, here speaking at International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington January 31, 2024

The High Court ruling is expected to be made in March at the latest. If we lose in the High Court, the [religious corporation](#) will be liquidated. This is not just a revocation of tax exemption, but the [corporation](#) will cease to exist and will [lose all rights to its assets](#).

Historically, dissolution of a religious corporation required the breaking of a "criminal law" and the [Family Federation](#) has never committed any criminal offenses.

However, the [ruling of the Tokyo District Court](#) was based on civil tort judgments that invoked the vague concept of "public welfare" and "social appropriateness," which is not accepted by the United Nations.

On 1st October last year, the United Nations forcefully [spoke out](#) about the escalating discrimination against religious minorities in Japan. Four UN Special Rapporteurs [See editor's note below], including Dr. Nazila Ghanea, Rapporteur on religious freedom, [warned](#) against the dissolution of [Family Federation](#).

The [UN Press Release](#) clearly states,

"The civil tort rulings on which the dissolution decision was based on relies on the violation of 'social appropriateness' which were deemed to constitute a serious harm to 'public welfare'.

As previously noted by the Human Rights Committee, the concept of 'public welfare' is vague and open-ended and may permit restrictions exceeding those permissible under the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)."

Two of these four UN Special Rapporteurs have expressed their desire to visit Japan but are unable to enter the country as the Japanese government continues to ignore their requests.

What I want to emphasize here today is that this is not simply an issue for the [Family Federation](#) or for Japan alone. It is the downfall of a model democratic country in Asia, and it is the start of a domino effect of religious persecution that is spreading to other democracies and nations throughout Asia, and ultimately to the world.

Dr. Katrina Lantos-Swett, the co-chair of this IRF Summit, wrote an [article in RealClear Politics](#), entitled "Democracies in Asia risk failing on Religious Freedom." She stated,

"Dissolving a religious organization that has not been found guilty of any crime would taint the image of Japan as a country committed to democratic principles."

There are clear facts that show that other democracies are copying Japan. Now South Korea is trying to copy Japan. In last December, President Lee Jae-myung in his cabinet meeting called for the Minister of Legislative Affairs to study Japan's efforts to dissolve a religion to see if they can apply it in Korea.

Who is supporting this domino effect? Renowned scholar of religious freedom, Dr. Massimo Introvigne, found that it is China. On 18th April 2025, the China Anti-Cult Association, which is directly under the Chinese Communist Party, released a public statement celebrating the [decision by the Tokyo District Court](#) to dissolve the [Family Federation](#). The CCP-controlled association clearly stated that the [Tokyo District Court decision](#) will "become an example for other countries to deal with cult issues."

Who can stop the religious persecution that is spreading across Asia and the world? I believe it is the United States and its allies. Currently, we have been in a situation like a prisoner waiting for the death sentence that will be carried out in a few weeks.

I sincerely urge you to sound the alarm before it's too late. We have faith, and we believe that [God](#) and people of faith will prevail in Japan, South Korea, and all over the world.

Personally, I arrived here the day after my mother's funeral to deliver this speech. It was a bit tough for

me. But I am certain my mother who was part of the first generation of [this movement](#), would be pleased. Thank you to IRF and the White House Faith Office for leading the way.



Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Italian sociologist of religion, founder of [CESNUR](#), specializing in new religious movements and religious liberty. A prolific author, he has advised governments and international bodies, and served as OSCE Representative on combating racism, xenophobia, and intolerance against Christians worldwide and comments on contemporary religious controversies. Here speaking at the UN Office at Geneva on 16th June 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.

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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Gingrich Warns Against State Control Of Faith

- February 9, 2026
- Knut Holdhus



Newt Gingrich sends message to conference defending religious freedom in South Korea at a critical moment, “Rights come from God, not the state”

A speech by senior American politician Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the US House of Representatives 1995-1998. His message was delivered as a pre-recorded video at a Special Dinner on 2nd February during the [The International Religious Freedom \(IRF\) Summit 2026](#) at the Hilton Hotel in Washington DC.

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I want to thank everyone for allowing me to address this [International Religious Freedom Summit](#) from Bern, Switzerland, where, as you know, my wife Callista, is serving as ambassador.

When Callista was the ambassador to the Vatican, religious liberty was one of the most important topics that she worked on. And we both have a deep commitment to religious liberty.

It's particularly important this year because we're celebrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the [Declaration of Independence](#) in which Thomas Jefferson



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Declaration of Independence in which Thomas Jefferson wrote that our rights come from our Creator. Remember, it says we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights.

To me, that's central to the crisis that we're seeing grow in both Japan and South Korea, a crisis in which politicians are asserting that they have the right to come between [God](#) and the citizens. They have the right to determine whether or not a citizen is allowed to worship as they believe.

This is a terrible problem because it goes to the very heart of our system. We believe that rights come from [God](#), not from bureaucrats, not from lawyers, not from politicians, but from [God](#).

And if politicians think that they have the power to come between [God](#) and the people, then you've just undermined the entire process.

That's why your summit is so important, because this is a crucial moment. I'm very encouraged that Prime Minister Takaichi is taking a new look at the way in which the [Church](#) has been mishandled in Japan. She's taking a new look at this whole issue of whether or not people can be forced to go to [God](#) only as the state allows it.

And I encourage her to continue to show that courage and to continue to raise that issue.

But I'm even more concerned about what I see happening in South Korea, a country which I feel very close to because my father fought there in [1953](#) and served again later in the 60s. And we've had a long family tie to watching the growth, the prosperity, the freedom and the safety of South Korea.

And it's very painful to me to imagine that you could have a governor of South Korea that would have an 83-year-old woman, Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#), going blind, with really difficult problems with her leg. So she's literally crawling and sleeping on the floor.

This is such a violent abuse of power to do this to somebody who has spent her entire life fighting Communism, encouraging religion and working worldwide in well over 150 countries for freedom and peace.

So I would encourage the government of South Korea to take a serious look at releasing her and recognizing that putting an 83-year-old woman in [those kinds of circumstances](#) is very inhumane and goes against everything those of us who believe in religious liberty stand for.

I'm delighted you're meeting. It's a very important topic. It's at the heart of our entire system.

For this reason, if our rights don't come from [God](#), then they're not rights. They're just temporary grants by somebody who's powerful.

But if, in fact, our rights come from [God](#), then we can stand firm knowing that we are free, that we have the right to approach [God](#) the way we believe, that we can seek salvation, and that no government can come between us and religious liberty.

The work you're doing is very, very important, and I thank you for allowing me to share this with you.

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Featured image above: Newt Gingrich delivering his speech via video on 2nd Feb. 2026 in Washington DC. Photo: Screenshot from video by [FFWPU](#)

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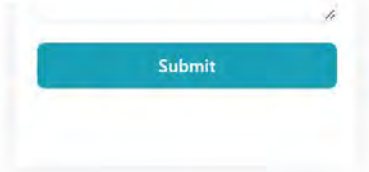
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Portrait of Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), painting from 1805 by Rembrandt Peale (1778-1860). Photo: New York Historical Society / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#)



Ailing and frail, legally blind Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#) (soon 83) falling several times recently during detention, injuring herself. Illustration: Chat GPT, 5th February 2026.

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