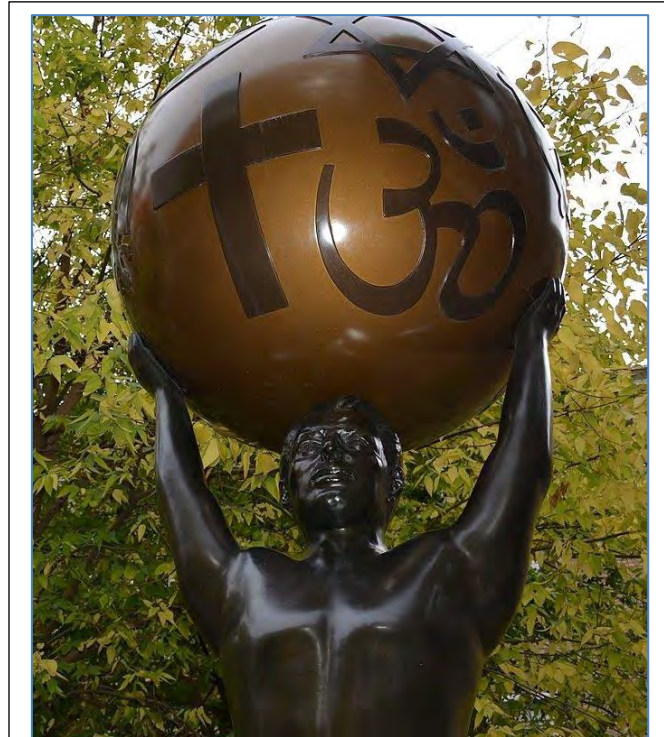


# FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: In Japan Religious Freedom is the Orphan Human Right

Knut Holdhus  
August 23, 2024



*Featured image above: Freedom of religion sculpture by Marlene Hilton Moore at the McMurtry Gardens of Justice in Toronto*

**Japan urged to improve on religious freedom at Tokyo conference**

## The Washington Times

"Japan urged to step up, lead the way on religious freedom in the Indo-Pacific" was the headline of a Washington Times article 21st August 2024. Andrew Salmon, the conservative paper's Asia editor, reported from a conference in Tokyo 22nd July, where a central theme was freedom of religion as the overlooked human right.

Salmon writes,

"Freedom of religion is the "orphaned" human right, as Western democracies instead furiously debate gender rights, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

That was a core message at the International Religious Freedom Summit Asia, held last month in Japan's capital city."



*Lai Ching-te speaking in June 2024*

The focus of the summit was on the often-neglected human right of religious freedom. Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te emphasized the growing threat of democratic backsliding and religious persecution, urging a renewed commitment to freedom and dignity.

Despite political polarization in the U.S., religious freedom remains a unifying issue. Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo highlighted that both major political parties in the U.S. recognize the importance of international religious freedoms, viewing it as

intrinsic to human dignity. Summit co-chair Katrina Lantos Swett noted that humans are unique in their quest for existential answers, and research shows that countries protecting religious freedom also excel in democracy and pluralism, with higher socioeconomic status for women.



*Mike Pompeo in 2013*



*Sam Brownback. Photo (2015)*



*Nathan Sales. Photo (2017)*

Freedom of worship is particularly despised by authoritarian regimes, as people of faith often stand up against oppression.

Co-chair Sam Brownback, former U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, described it as a cornerstone human right that supports other freedoms like assembly and speech. He argued that a united front of religious groups could prevent the feared "clash of civilizations" and wield significant influence, noting that 80% of the world's population practices some form of faith.

The summit saw participation from various religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Shintoism, as well as numerous human rights organizations. The Indo-Pacific region faces severe state assaults on religious minorities, such as Rohingya Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, underground North Korean Christians, and Uyghur Muslims.

Swett highlighted Japan's potential role in advancing religious freedom. As an economic powerhouse with a pacifist stance since World War II, Japan has recently strengthened its military and forged closer ties with democracies like Australia, the Philippines, and South Korea.

Nathan Sales, former ambassador-at-large and counterterrorism coordinator at the State Department, emphasized Japan's importance as the largest East Asian democracy with significant economic and potential moral power. He argued that Japan's leadership in this movement would benefit both the country and the global cause of religious freedom.

However, the summit saw minimal participation from Japanese politicians and media, raising doubts about Japan's willingness to be vocal on human rights issues. Despite praise for Japan's democratic credentials, there was concern over Tokyo's political and media assault on the [Family Federation](#), a relatively small religious group founded in South Korea in the 1950s.

Andrew Salmon, the writer of the Washington Times article, describes how the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the [Family Federation](#) found together for decades,

"What began with a tiny church founded in South Korea in the 1950s has evolved over decades into a global spiritual movement and affiliated commercial empire comprising hundreds of ventures, including The Washington Times.

It has a strong anti-communist stance, and Japanese members have a history of assisting the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, a conservative machine, with electioneering."

However, the current prime minister Fumio Kishida, more concerned about his own image and that of the party, in 2022 suddenly decided to have nothing more to do with this loyal ally. Salmon writes,

"Ties between the LDP and the church were torn apart in 2022 when Shinzo Abe, Japan's longest-serving postwar prime minister and a key LDP figure, was assassinated."



*Yoshinobu Miyake. Photo (2015)*

The assassin was infuriated by Abe's association with the [Family Federation](#), claiming that his mother's significant financial contributions to the religious organization had driven her to bankruptcy. It is however less known that his mother, who remains a member, along with other family members, signed a statement absolving the [Family Federation](#) of any blame, and half of her donations were refunded. Nonetheless, the disclosure of ties dating back to 1978 between an anti-communist organization also founded by [Sun Myung Moon](#), the co-founder of the [Family Federation](#), caused a major uproar, largely orchestrated by left-wing forces.

Salmon writes,

"Though ties between Japanese politics and religions are not unusual. The LDP's coalition partner in the Diet is Komeito, a Buddhist party. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, in damage-control mode, requires party members to sever ties with the church."

The Washington Times article points out that speakers at the Tokyo summit in July concurred that the [Family Federation](#) has been unfairly blamed by politicians and vilified by the media. The paper quotes Rev. Yoshinobu Miyake, chair of the board of the International Shinto Studies Association. He says that it is regrettable that even members of the national assembly, the very foundation of democratic authority, have ignored the systematic persecution of certain new religions out of fear of being linked to one of

them. Miyake claims that the mass media has assumed the role of dispensing justice.

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## Family Federation

### The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification

The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification is a global federation of individuals and families who aim to create a world of peace and unity beyond national, cultural, religious and ideological barriers, a world where everyone may live together in peace and harmony.

#### In a nutshell

**Name:** Family Federation for World Peace and Unification

**Founded:** 1996

**Founders:** Rev. [Sun Myung Moon](#) (1920-2012) and Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#)

**Teachings:** [Unificationism](#), a long series of revelations received by [Sun Myung Moon](#). See: [Brief about the Teachings](#) of the Family Federation

**Goal:** The [Kingdom of Heaven](#) on Earth. A harmonious world family, where everyone may experience peace, security, freedom and love.

**Strategy:** Unite all good forces

**Distribution:** Largest in South Korea and Japan, but found in most nations.

**Background:** The Family Federation took over many of the functions of the [Unification Church](#) and its basic teachings.

**Frequently asked questions:** See: [FAQ](#)



Father and Mother Moon 1st August 1996.

#### Three ideals

As the name indicates, the Family Federation is based on three ideals – family, world peace, and unification.

- **The family ideal.** Most religions focus on the individual and its spirituality. The Family Federation teaches a broader concept of spirituality, where your [relationships](#) to your loved ones are of decisive importance for your eternal life. As [God](#) is the source of love, [marriages](#) blessed by [God](#) and families full of [true love](#) are the very foundation for the [Kingdom of Heaven](#) that [God](#) longs for. It is a love kingdom, and the family is a [school of love](#).
- **World peace.** If there is love and peace in the home, there is hope that we may also create societies and nations with peace. The family is the fundamental social institution. If we can learn to love our fellow human beings on micro-level, in a family, we may also do so on macro-level, i.e. in the society around us and in the big world we live in. Well-functioning families are the very key to reducing crime, alcohol and drug abuse, the number of suicides and many other social problems.
- **Unification.** We talk about unification on all levels, from the individual to the global level. [God](#) is the source of unity, evil the source of division. Therefore, the goal of the Family Federation is to remove the barriers and create a world of unity, a social unity, such as that between husband and wife, between parents and children, different social groups, nations and religions, but also unity between the inner world and the outer, between mind and body, spirit and matter, religion and science.

#### The inauguration

The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification was first founded in the USA 31st July 1996 by [Sun Myung Moon](#) and his wife [Hak Ja Han](#), and in many European nations soon after that.

As co-founder, [Mother Moon](#) gave the inaugural address titled "View of the Principle of the Providential History of Salvation", reading a prepared text. [Father Moon](#) spoke without a script at the closing banquet the following day, 1st August, at the Sheraton Washington Hotel. His speech was titled "In Search of the Origin of the Universe".

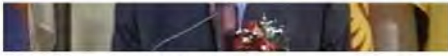
Gerald Ford, U.S. President 1974-1977, spoke at the inauguration 31<sup>st</sup> July 1996. He said,



"While the world's finest athletes test themselves in Atlanta, this gathering is sort of a spiritual Olympics. Like the Olympians, you have assembled from all over the world to further the cause of peace among nations.



The Inaugural World Convention of the Family Federation 31st July 1996



Gerald Ford 31st July 1996

But while those Olympians are dedicated to gold and glory, you in this room pursue other objectives. The glory you seek, comes from God, not gold.

If at times I sound a bit like an Old Testament prophet, it's because there is nothing about which I feel more strongly, more deeply, than the survival and the strengthening of the family. No civilization that neglects the family, can be called civilized for long, and no political philosophy that takes the family for granted, will be taken seriously by anyone who values morality, compassion and peace."

The chronicle "40 Years in America" describes the event,



Mother and Father Moon 31st July 1996

"The movement's most spectacular world convention was held in Washington, D.C. from July 30-August 1, 1996, inaugurating the Family Federation for World Peace (FFWP).

This event included a cast of luminaries rivaling anything the movement had yet undertaken: two former Presidents of the United States, Gerald Ford and George Bush; former President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias of Costa Rica; former Prime Ministers Edward Heath of Great Britain and Brian Mulroney of Canada; thirty-six one-time heads of state or governments; university presidents including Boston University's John Silber; Christian television personality Robert Schuller; Christian Coalition Executive Director Ralph Reed; Coretta Scott King, the widow of Martin Luther King, Jr.; Maureen Reagan, the daughter of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan; well-known comedian Bill Cosby; and Christian singer-actor Pat Boone. In addition, the main proceedings were covered live by C-SPAN television network. (p.443) [...]

The establishment of the FFWP represented a new stage in the movement's development. Rev. Chung Hwan Kwak, who was appointed International President, maintained that the FFWP was more important than the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) or [Unification Church](#). HSA-UWC, he noted, was "not [True Parents'](#) ultimate organization".

The rationale for this assertion was connected to the historic shift that underlay the emergence of the [Completed Testament Age](#). As noted previously, Rev. Kwak explained,

'Religious organizations have always been centered upon the salvation of the individual, but we have now progressed to the salvation of the family. [...] Such an organization is not a church; it is the Family Federation for World Peace.'



From the Inaugural Convention 31st July 1996.

Given this understanding, it wasn't surprising that the FFWP rather than the [Unification Church](#) was the main sponsor of the World Culture and Sports Festivals and International [Marriage Blessings](#) after 1996." (p.444) (From the section "Federations for World Peace and Unification", in "40 Years in America – 1959-1999 – An Intimate History of the Unification Movement", by Michael Inglis and Michael L. Mickler, published by HSA Publications Oct. 2000, 624 pages.)

The Family Federation was launched on the foundation of the [Unification Church](#), a spiritual movement [founded](#) in South Korea in 1954. The original intention was neither to establish a church nor a new religion.

The Family Federation took over many of the activities and tasks of the [Unification Church](#) and the same basic teachings, but has a pronounced goal of creating a world of peace and unity based on well-functioning families.

[More about the Family Federation](#)

Text: Knut Holdhus



National Building Museum, Washington DC. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped



Sun Myung Moon 1st August 1996



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