

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japan Turns Blind Eye to Illegal Faith Breaking

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On 25th September 2024, Norishige Kondo, director of UPF legal affairs department in Japan, reporting at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland

Report to UNHRC: How Japan has allowed illegal faith-breaking for decades and now uses cases in campaign to dissolve minority religion



Tokyo, 27th September 2024
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"Dissolution order is 'destruction of faith'; Japanese government 'silently permits' faith-breaking," says a Family Federation-affiliated

NGO at the UN Human Rights Council

by the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)



Norishige Kondo, here speaking in Tokyo 10th Sep. 2023



Forcibly [detained for 12 years](#), but not allowed by authorities to press criminal charges: Toru Goto, here in 2008 barely able to move after being held in [forcible detention](#) by faith-breakers for more than 12 years

At a meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 25th September 2024, Norishige Kondo (近藤徳茂), director of the legal affairs department of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) in Japan, a UN NGO affiliated with the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), claimed that the Japanese government has "turned a blind eye" to the forcible faith-breaking of [Family Federation](#) members by locking them up. Kondo called for an "end to discrimination and persecution".

Kondo mentioned the case of Toru Goto (後藤徹), a [Family Federation](#) member who was abducted, confined, and [pressured to renounce his faith](#). Norishige Kondo pointed out that in 2013, the court ruled that "faith-breaking - physical and psychological violence to coerce someone to abandon his or her faith - is illegal." Furthermore, he criticized the Japanese government's response, saying that despite "repeated international recommendations to Japan by UN human rights bodies and experts", the government has "used legal battles filed by lawyers representing former members who had left the [church](#) and become apostates, to "eliminate the [Unification Church](#) from Japan".

In October last year, the Japanese government submitted a request for the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#) to the Tokyo District Court, and the hearing is ongoing. Kondo claimed that the [Family Federation](#) faces threats such as dissolution as a worship society, violations of its rights defined by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, confiscation of all assets, and the introduction of a state-led new form of "faith destruction". He called for an end to all discrimination and persecution.

Additionally, French human rights lawyer Patricia Duval submitted a report titled "Japan: A Witch Hunt to Eradicate the [Unification Church](#)" to a UN agency on the same day, criticizing the Japanese government's actions which led to the request for a court order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#). According to the report, the government and the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales labeled "the activity of soliciting donations aimed at spreading the faith and maintaining the worship society organization" as "harmful to public welfare" and "antisocial". The government and those lawyers have begun the process of dissolving the [Family](#)

[Federation.](#)



Patricia Duval, French attorney and expert on international human rights law. She defended the rights of minorities of religion or belief in domestic and international fora, and before international institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Union

The report also expressed concern that the government's "theory of undue influence" has stripped believers of their "legal capacity", creating a "tragic situation" for both ordinary believers and second-generation members. Duval pointed out that such government actions resembled those of a "totalitarian state" and warned that unless measures were taken to stop these discriminatory and repressive actions by the Japanese authorities, believers would be "forced to abandon their faith".

According to the [Family Federation](#), forced de-conversions of believers have been carried out by Christian pastors and lawyers for decades with more than [4,300 victims](#). Additionally, after the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) two years ago, critical media reports about the [Family Federation](#) have increased, leading to continued discrimination and persecution of believers.

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In a Nutshell

Name: Unification Church

Founded: 1954 in Seoul, South Korea

Founder: Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012)

Faith: The **Unification Principles**, a series of revelations **Father Moon** received from 1935 to 1944.

See: [Brief about the teachings](#). See: [In a nutshell](#)

Goal: A **Kingdom of Heaven** on Earth, a harmonious world family, where everyone can experience peace, security, freedom and love.

Distribution: Largest in South Korea and Japan, but widespread throughout the free, democratic world. Representatives to 120 countries already in 1975

Europe: First representative here in 1965.

Discontinued: 1997. The **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** took over many of the tasks of the Unifications Church.

Frequently asked questions: See: [Faq](#)

History:

The Unification Church

The Unification Church was **founded** by **Sun Myung Moon** (1920-2012) and a handful of followers in 1954 in Seoul as the "Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity".

It was established based on **Sun Myung Moon's vision** of creating a big global family under **God**, where all people become like brothers and sisters in a world of freedom, peace, happiness and love.

The Unification Church was dissolved 43 years later, in 1997. The **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** took over many of the Unification Church's functions.

Father Moon first turned to the Christian world, which he believed should have a central role in the work to realize such a vision. Large parts of Christian teachings coincide with his own message. At that time, he explained what he was teaching, by frequent use of Bible quotations. Many Christians then also began to follow **Father Moon**.



The Unification Church logo



Sun Myung Moon with early followers in 1954

The movement began to be called the "Unification Church", which is far easier to say than the original long name. **Sun Myung Moon** himself also began to use this name, although he never intended to establish any church.

Those who opposed him, eventually began to call the movement a sect. However, a narrow-minded, introverted sect that believes it has a monopoly on the truth, is about as far from his vision as you can get.

Because the leaders of the Christian world in Korea were not open to his message and did not cooperate with him, he decided to create his own organization.

The Unification Church was the first of several organizations that came into being as the movement grew and became what we call the Unification Movement, of which the Unification Church was the central part.

However, the Unification Church was discontinued in 1997. Then **Father Moon**



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declared that it had served its purpose. He claimed that the age of the different religions was over, and that we therefore no



First meeting place in Seoul

longer needed a movement that had been founded for the unification of world christianity.

The required foundation had been laid for a much larger and universal movement more in line with his original **vision**. Therefore, from the end of the 90s, he started to set up many peace organizations. The **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** took over many of the tasks of the Unification Church. In many countries, e.g. in the USA and Japan, people continued, often for purely practical reasons, to use the name Unification Church long after 1997.

The **Family Federation** sees the family as the key to world peace. If there is harmony in the family, there can also be harmony in society and the world in general.

So the name, and also the times we live in, have changed, but the goal is still the same: to create a big global family under **God**, where all people become like brothers and sisters in a world of freedom, peace, happiness and love.

[More about the Unification Church](#)



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