

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: World Leaders Concerned - No Religious Freedom in Japan

Knut Holdhus
December 9, 2024



Paula White delivering her video message at the conference on religious freedom in Tokyo December 8, 2024

American Christian leader reveals how a steadily increasing number of important leaders around the world have become seriously concerned about Japan and its appalling record on violations of freedom of religion



The ICRF [conference on religious freedom](#) December 8, 2024 in Tokyo, Japan

A video message delivered by Reverend Paula White, religious advisor to the incoming U.S. President Donald Trump, at a [lecture event titled "The Crisis of Religious Freedom and Democracy in Japan"](#). The event took place in Tokyo on 8th December 2024 and was organized by Japanese Committee of the International Religious Freedom Alliance (ICRF), a group of experts dedicated to protecting people from religious prejudice and oppression domestically and internationally.

Dear distinguished leaders, I am Pastor Paula White, President of the National Faith Advisory Board in the United States and spiritual advisor to President Elect Donald J. Trump.

I'm honored to speak to you today at the International Coalition for Religious Freedom. I want to greet all the leaders and citizens of Japan and thank you for your strong support for the United States-Japan alliance for Peace. Japan and the United States are very close and most critical allies to ensure peace in Asia and around the world.

As you know, President Donald J. Trump was elected to a second term on November 5, 2024. He is the strongest advocate of religious freedom and will increase his unwavering support for religious freedom for all faiths and all people.

President Trump was very close with Prime Minister Abe who was the most courageous leader who

strongly led Japan against tyranny in the world. We mourn his loss.



President Donald Trump delivers remarks at his event on religious freedom, at the United Nations, in New York City, New York on September 23, 2019

Religious freedom is the foundation for all other freedoms. Japan is the United States' great ally who we have the greatest appreciation for.



Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain, here at the Daily Press Briefing at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., on June 2, 2022

However, concern has now been raised by prominent leaders around the world that believe Japan is not upholding its religious freedom commitment as a signer of the UN Human Rights Declaration.

The United States State Department Office of International Religious Freedom in its [2022](#) and [2023](#) reports showed serious questions that Japan, as a prominent world leader and great liberal democracy is now violating religious freedom.

Ambassador Rashad Hussain, the current US State Department's Ambassador-at-Large in the Office of International Religious Freedom, noted concern about Japan in the Japan section of his [2022](#) and [2023](#) report.

The [report in 2022](#) stated the CAP-LC, a Paris-based United Nations NGO, [submitted a series of statements](#) to the UN Human Rights Committee that said that the [Unification Church](#) in Japan had become a victim of a campaign of intolerance, discrimination and

persecution in Japan since Prime Minister Abe's assassination.

The [church](#) stated its members [suffered attacks](#), assaults and death threats as a result of negative media attention.

The 2023 report stated that Japan deviated from the norm when it decided to dissolve the [Unification Church](#) without any criminal law being broken by the church.

This year, on 30th April, the United Nations issued a UN mandate through its Rapporteurs on Religious Freedom and Human Rights, [calling into question Japan's compliance](#) with the UN Human Rights Declaration and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Japan is a signer.

According to the UN Mandate, government guidelines are stating that parents who strongly urge their children to go to church could be seen as child abuse.

The mandate says this is directly causing the violations and physical attacks to the members of the Jehovah's Witnesses and persecution of the [Family Federation](#) and other religions.

The UN Rapporteur on Religious Freedom made a formal request to the Japanese government to visit Japan to investigate the possible violations of religious freedom against minority religions. But the nation of Japan has denied her request. This rejection of her request is listed on the United Nations website.



*Sent formal UN request to Japan, but no reply:
Nazila Ghanea, UN Rapporteur on Religious
Freedom since February 2023*

This is raising serious concern throughout the world about religious freedom in Japan.

We in the United States are concerned that the media and some in the government and the Ministry of Justice are suppressing information and not allowing the public to know about the facts.

Letters were sent to Prime Minister Kishida, the Foreign Minister and the court from current US Congressmen, former heads of state and the [former US Secretary of State](#), as well as the [former US speaker of the House](#).

The former US Secretary of State said that this could have severe implications for our vital partnership and global perception of Japan's commitment to human rights.

[Religious freedom scholars and experts](#) around the world are calling on Japan to stop the violation of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the

[Family Federation / Unification Church](#). As faith leaders and religious freedom experts, we urge our great ally in Japan to uphold religious freedom for all.

May [God](#) abundantly bless Japan. May the United States-Japan alliance for freedom throughout the world be blessed.

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Japan Urged To Cease Sinister Rights Violations

• December 8, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Tokyo conference on freedom of religion urges Japan to stop its state oppression of minority faith and cease sinister rights violations



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Tomihiko Tanaka speaking in Tokyo 8th December 2024. Photo: ICRF Japan

Japan Committee of the International Religious Freedom Alliance (ICRF), a group of experts dedicated to protecting people from religious prejudice and oppression domestically and internationally, held a lecture event titled "The Crisis of Religious Freedom and Democracy in Japan" in Tokyo on 8th December 2024. During the event, Reverend Paula White, religious advisor to the incoming U.S. President Donald Trump, sent a [video message](#), expressing that

"serious concerns are being raised globally about the state of religious freedom in Japan."

Reverend White referred to the U.S. State Department's annual report on religious freedom, expressing concern over discriminatory actions in Japan against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. She further highlighted that

"according to United Nations recommendations, Japan's guidelines could view parents strongly encouraging their children to attend church as a form of child abuse,"

suggesting that this has contributed to the persecution of religious organizations such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the [Family Federation](#). Reverend White emphasized that scholars and experts worldwide are urging Japan to

"cease rights violations against Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church."

See [Paula White's message](#)

Marco Respinti, director of the Italian online religious magazine [Bitter Winter](#), delivered the keynote speech, emphasizing that freedom of religion is not only

"the freedom to believe or not believe but also the freedom to live according to those beliefs."

He expressed concern over the response of Japanese authorities, warning that the country is continuing down a



Marco Respinti 6th April 2023. Photo: FOREF

"dangerous path of labeling religious minorities as 'cults' or 'anti-social' organizations and discriminating against them."

Tomihiko Tanaka (田中富広), president of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) in Japan, also spoke as an invited guest. While offering a "sincere apology for having contributed to societal distrust toward religious organizations," Tanaka underscored that

"this issue extends beyond a single religious organization and touches on the very foundations of democratic nations."

He expressed deep concern over violations of freedom of religion and human rights.

Featured image above: Reverend Paula White, a religious advisor to the incoming U.S. President Donald Trump, sent a [video message](#) on the morning of 8th December 2024 in Chuo Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀).

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