

Deprogramming Unification Church Children in Japan. 2. Psychiatric Institutions May "Cure" Religious Faith

Patricia Duval
March 10, 2025



The four UN Special Rapporteurs who expressed concerns about Japan's policy on "religious child abuse": left to right, above, Nazila Ghanea (Freedom of Religion or Belief) and Farida Shaheed (Right to Education); below, Irene Khan (Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression) and Clément Nyaletsossi Voule (Right to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association).

Second part of a report sent by French attorney Patricia Duval to four UN Special Rapporteurs: under the Japanese "Plan," religious belief may be considered a form of psychiatric disease. [Original Article](#)

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December 28, 2022) was disseminated to all boards of education and other relevant organizations. This notice emphasized that passive responses should not be taken solely due to the religious nature of an issue. It also instructed that SCs, SSWs, and other staff be informed of the Q and A content during training sessions to ensure proper awareness. To enhance recognition of the Q and A among SCs, SSWs, and teaching staff, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) promoted the Q and A content during administrative briefings held in January, June, and September 2023."

In addition to the Guidelines, the Plan provides for training of all the various counsellors by former members / apostates from the Unification Church: "To enhance the understanding of the emotions and circumstances of victims and others, consultation staff at various support desks will collaborate with former members and second-generation individuals in religious communities by inviting them to serve as training instructors."

It can be concluded that the training delivered to counsellors consists in indoctrination on the alleged "criminal activities" of the Unification Church and "mental manipulation" it arguably exercises on its followers.

Based on this "training" and the Guidelines on religious child abuse, the counsellors/social workers take the subsequent decisions for the "protection" of children against their parents' faith.

The Plan further provides for the "Implementation of one-stop consultation services centered in the Japan Legal Support Center (Houterasu)."

The one-stop consultation services refer to "sessions involving lawyers, psychological professionals, welfare experts, and others, and were sequentially held across the country."

Legal consultation services have been provided by the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales - known as the anti-Unification Church lawyers' network - through the Japan Legal Support Center, which is entirely funded by the State as part of the "rescue" of victims of the Unification Church. Pursuant to the Plan, "free legal consultations and advance payment of attorney fees were provided."

"Proactive Utilization of Civil Legal Aid" has been used to implement the recommendations contained in the Guidelines. In case of neglect (not providing the children with sufficient financial means), the child can claim the rescission of the donations made to the Unification Church by the parents (Answer to Question 4.2 in the Guidelines): "a child may have the right to exercise the right of cancellation under Article 8, Paragraph 1 of the Act on Prevention of Unjust Solicitation of Donations by Corporations, in order to protect their right to financial support from their guardian. To actually exercise this right, the child must first make a financial support claim against their guardian and establish a claim related to the guardian's duty of support before exercising the right of cancellation."



Attorney Masaki Kito, a leading member of the anti-cult National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales

The Plan provides further: "in order to facilitate the application process, it is advisable for a lawyer to act on behalf of the child. Therefore, when child consultation centers and other relevant institutions handle such cases, they should work in collaboration with the bar association and related organizations. The bar association has a system that allows a child to appoint a lawyer without bearing the financial burden, provided certain conditions are met."

With this system, underage children are entitled to make financial claims against their guardian and claim rescission of their parents' donations to the Unification Church.

The Plan further recommends application of the Guidelines, in particular (Guidelines: Question Q6-1): "Children who may be experiencing child abuse related to religion may be strongly influenced by the beliefs and values derived from their guardians' religious doctrines. As a result, they may find it difficult to recognize their situation as problematic or to report it. It is essential

to conduct an objective assessment of their circumstances, and if child abuse is suspected, it is required to provide explanations and guidance to both the child and the guardians based on the definition of child abuse."

However, the Guidelines indicate that "it is anticipated that in some cases, parental actions and beliefs based on religious doctrines regarding their child may be difficult to change through guidance alone. Additionally, there is a concern that efforts to provide guidance may trigger an escalation of abusive behavior by the guardian, or that religious organizations may increase their influence over the family. Therefore, ensuring the safety of the child must be the top priority, and if necessary, immediate protective measures, including temporary custody, should be taken without hesitation."

Therefore, if parents are reluctant to follow the advice given, for example to stop making the child participate in religious activities, temporary custody should be considered as a possible "remedy."

When children apply on line for a one-stop consultation from the Legal Support Center as mentioned above, they have one-stop "sessions with lawyers, psychological professionals, welfare experts, and others." They are then referred to the relevant support organizations, pursuant to the Plan: "Under the one-stop consultation system centered on the Japan Legal Support Center (Houterasu), consultations from victims and others are widely accepted, with appropriate referrals made to relevant support organizations and tailored responses provided based on individual needs."

As part of the Plan, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare presented the following initiatives: "when mental health and welfare centers receive consultations related to concerns about mental health stemming from issues involving the Former Unification Church, including referrals from consultation desks established at Houterasu, they should ensure that they do not respond passively solely because the issue involves religion. They are also instructed to appropriately respond by, for instance, referring individuals to psychiatric medical institutions and coordinating with relevant organizations as necessary."

"This guidance was disseminated via an administrative notice dated November 10, 2022, and during the FY2022 Disability Health and Welfare Principal Section Chief Meeting held on March 10, 2023. In August 2023, the disability health and welfare departments of prefectures and designated cities were provided with Q and A materials and were reminded of the above-mentioned response policy."

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It is based on the [unscientific and debunked theory](#) of mind control (brainwashing), which equates faith with undue influence and views deprogramming as the means to undo the alleged "programming" of the minds. Under this rationale, the State would replace the parents in their educational religious choices for their children like in totalitarian States, which infringes Japan's duty of neutrality in religious matters stemming from its commitment to protect freedom of religion or belief.



How popular media imagine that new religious movement leaders "brainwash" their followers

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The Plan constitutes an outright violation of the parents' right to educate their children in conformity with their own convictions protected by Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that Japan has signed and ratified: "4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions."

It also violates the parents' rights under Article 14 of the Convention on the rights of the child, in spite of the malicious interpretation that Japan gives of this Article in the Plan: "2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child."

The Plan and policy implemented by the Japanese Authorities create a dramatic situation for the Unification Church believers and require urgent attention and action from the UN human rights institutions.

The Guidelines were targeting religious movements in general. If nothing is done, the Plan established for the Unification Church might be extended to other religious denominations in the future.

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03/05/2025 PATRICIA DUVAL

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by Patricia Duval

Article 2 of 2. Read [article 1](#).

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鈴木エイトは、欧州反カルト主義者の典型的な態度に倣い、敗訴した事件で「ほぼ勝利した」と主張している。この記事では、鈴木を敗北させた弁護士がその理由を説明する。



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