


Religious Freedom Requires Constant Protection, Speakers Tell UPF, Washington Times Foundation Event

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February 2, 2024

 <p>Universal Peace Federation The Washington Times Foundation</p>	<p>PRESS RELEASE</p> <p>Religious Freedom Requires Constant Protection, Speakers Tell UPF, Washington Times Foundation Event</p> <p><i>If a nation disrespects religious freedom, "all other rights surely will be limited, oppressed or violated."</i></p>
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WASHINGTON, DC (February 2, 2024) -- An array of human rights experts and religious freedom leaders told the audience at a recent event hosted by the **Universal Peace Federation (UPF)** and **The Washington Times Foundation**.

"The core value of being able to approach God without interference really underlies all freedom," said former US House Speaker **Newt Gingrich** during the Jan. 31 luncheon organized by UPF and the Times Foundation, which was part of the **International Religious Freedom (IRF) Summit 2024**. "A government which can block you from approaching God can block you from anything," Mr. Gingrich said.

The two-day IRF Summit, held in Washington, DC and led by co-chairs **Ambassador Sam Brownback** and **Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett**, shared testimonies and details about religious persecution from around the world, including China's attacks on Uyghur Muslims, Nigerian Muslim herdsmen killing Christians, Hindu and Muslim battles in India, and the recent massacre in Israel.

The UPF and Times Foundation luncheon further highlighted the unjust efforts of the Japanese government to dissolve -- and confiscate assets from -- the Family Federation of World Peace and Unification in Japan. (The dissolution case is currently before a judge in Tokyo District Court.)

The pretext for attacking the Family Federation in Japan was the July 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe; the shooter reportedly said he felt "hate" and a "grudge" toward the church because his mother, a member, made large donations to it some 20 years ago.

Religious freedom serves communities as well as individuals, said **Prof. Cole Durham Jr.**, director of the Brigham Young University's International Center for Law and Religious Studies. So, if there is wrongful conduct by an individual believer (or a believer's relative), that individual should be sanctioned, "but the entire religious community should not be shut down or crippled," he said.

Several speakers said the true reason the Family Federation in Japan is being targeted is because it publicly opposes communism, and the political opposition wants it neutralized.

The Japanese Communist Party "has alleged that the church is engaged in corruption and is a threat to

society," former US Secretary of State **Mike Pompeo** said in a video shown at the luncheon. "Nothing could be further from the truth. The church, founded by Reverend Moon, has long stood against communism and has always championed stronger ties between Japan, Korea, and the United States. If there is anything the Unification Church undermines, it is communism."

"We should see the [Japanese Communist Party's] attack for what it is: an attempt to undermine and weaken the vital U.S.-Japan alliance," Mr. Pompeo added.

"It is not OK to engage in collective punishment" or use government and media power to marginalize a faith community and make it "an easy picking for state abuse," Dr. Lantos Swett said in a panel discussion led by *Washington Times* Opinion Editor **Charles Hurt**.

"Japan is at the crossroads," said **Dr. Jan Figel**, a renowned religious freedom advocate and member of the IRF Summit Global Leadership Council. "Religious freedom is a litmus test of all human rights," he said, recalling how half his life was spent under the anti-religious communist regime in the former Czechoslovakia. If religious freedom is disrespected in a nation, "then all other rights surely will be limited, oppressed or violated," he said.

"Religious freedom means we are friends [of every faith]," and as friends, governments can help other governments protect it, said **Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook**, former Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom at the US State Department.

Church lawyer **Tatsu Nakayama** said his research showed that the Japan Communist Party and its activist lawyers began their Family Federation Japan "dissolution campaign" in 1987 and are eager now to "get it done." After Abe's assassination, he said, the leftist lawyers aggressively worked to defame the Family Federation in Japan's mass media. They especially promoted testimonies of church apostates (former members who are actively hostile to the former faith).

This includes people who, with help from these same leftist lawyers, partnered with professional deprogrammers (faith breakers) who stimulated fear about the faith and convinced them to have their relatives kidnapped, illegally confined and harassed, coerced to recant their beliefs, and then forced -- on pain of more confinement -- to sue the Family Federation in Japan for damages. "[I]n order to dissolve a religious corporation [church], criminal law must be broken," said Mr. Nakayama, whose arguments have been reprinted at length in *Bitter Winter*, the magazine of Center for Studies on New Religions. However, "in the present case of the Family Federation, since its foundation about 60 years ago, no criminal law has been broken -- which means there is no legal reason to dissolve the Family Federation," Mr. Nakayama said in a video.

"If the Family Federation is dissolved, it will not only lose its tax exemption, it will lose its places of worship, assets, everything. It will be a death sentence," *Bitter Winter* Editor in Chief **Dr. Massimo Introvigne** told the UPF and Times Foundation panel discussion.

Moreover, the Japanese laws passed to sequester the Family Federation will impact the freedom of all religions in Japan to collect donations and pass their faith to their children, he said, adding that "the Jehovah's Witnesses are already under attack."

The UPF and Times Foundation program included personal testimonies on Japan's oppression and abuse. **Rev. Luke Higuchi**, a US Family Federation member who was kidnapped by his family in Japan and sent to a mental hospital to break his faith, recalled the deprogrammers telling him, "Unless you give up your faith, you will never be released." He eventually escaped and reconciled with his family, but his repentant father admitted he "had paid a lot of cash to the deprogrammers" to harm his son.

Moriko Hori, president of the Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI), an NGO that has enjoyed general consultative status at the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1997, said their global projects have been impacted by the inexplicable attacks by Japanese government officials, left-wing lawyers and mass media.

For instance, years ago, the Japanese Embassy in Mozambique had recommended that WFWP and Mrs. Akiko Hozan, a school director and WFWP Japan volunteer, receive an award from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo. The foreign minister honored Mrs. Hozan and the WFWP with prestigious national recognition.

But in 2022, Mrs. Hozan received a call from the Japanese Embassy in Mozambique, informing her that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan had decided to revoke the Minister's Award she had received for her outstanding educational work there. This occurred after Member of Parliament Keiji Kokuta, from the Japanese Communist Party, accused the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of having given an award to "an organization affiliated with the Unification Church" during a parliamentary budget meeting, according to an interview with Mrs. Hori and Dr. Introvigne, editor of *Bitter Winter*.

Thus, "due to the persecution by the Japanese government, the lawyers' groups and the newspapers, our service project was crushed," Mrs. Hori told the luncheon.

Dr. Michael Jenkins, president of UPF International and The Washington Times Foundation, founded by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and her late husband Reverend Sun Myung Moon, stated "The protection and promotion of religious freedom is the critical responsibility of all who affirm God. UPF and The Washington Times Foundation are committed to protect, defend and advance religious liberty universally. As we join together at the IRF Summit 2024 which is the global leader in this arena, we will forge our collective commitment to fight religious persecution. Together we will roll back the tyranny of all God-denying ideologies and build a better world."

The UPF and Washington Times Foundation event was covered in a Jan. 31 *Washington Times* article, under the headline, "Japan's dispute with church a test of liberty everywhere." Article link:

www.washingtontimes.com/news/2024/jan/31/key-test-japans-clash-with-church-seen-as-pivotal/

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