

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: A Story of Reconciliation in A Divided Korea

Knut Holdhus
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Featured image above: From the border between North and South Korea on 28th September 2012. Photo: pictures Jettcom. License: [CC Attr 3.0 Unp](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/)



Beyond politics: A story of human connections, grassroots reconciliation, and rebuilding trust where ideology divides

Religious affairs reporter Jeong Seong-su (정성수). Photo: [Se](#)

On 23rd March 2026, a [column](#) published in the Korean newspaper [Segye Ilbo](#) by religious affairs reporter Jeong Seong-su (정성수) reflected on a pressing issue: the deepening division on the Korean Peninsula and what it means for the future of peace. Rather than focusing solely on high-level politics, the [article](#) draws attention to the human dimension of division - how ideological conflict affects everyday lives - and highlights the work of one individual, Koo Mal-mo (구말모 - 1935-2022), as a powerful example of reconciliation in action.



To understand the significance of the [article](#), it is important to grasp the current context. Relations between North Korea and South Korea have deteriorated sharply. North Korea has recently described the two Koreas not as parts of a single nation moving toward reunification, but as two separate and hostile states. This marks a major shift away from decades of rhetoric that at least nominally supported peaceful reunification. Physical symbols of connection - such as railways and roads that once linked the two sides

- have been cut or destroyed. The border between North and South, already heavily fortified, is increasingly seen not just as a line of division, but as an almost permanent barrier.

222 In such a situation, the [article](#) argues, it becomes crucial to focus on people rather than governments. When official dialogue stops, the risk is that human connections will also disappear. And when both political and personal ties are severed, the possibility of peace diminishes even further. Peace, the author suggests, does not begin in conference rooms alone - it also depends on relationships between ordinary individuals.



Closeup of the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that surrounds the Military Demarcation Line across the Korean peninsula, with the four North Korean infiltration tunnels that officially have been discovered by South Korea. More may exist

It was into this deeply divided environment that Koo Mal-mo (구말모) emerged as a figure of reconciliation. Born in Japan in 1935, he belonged to a generation that experienced both the legacy of Japanese colonial rule over Korea and the painful reality of national division. He pursued higher education in political science, studying at Waseda University in Japan and later at Yonsei University in South Korea. However, his life did not follow a straightforward academic path.



The Japanese headquarters of Chosen Souren (General Association of North Korean Residents in Japan) in Chiyoda, Tokyo, Japan. Photo: GcG / Wikimedia Commons

A defining moment came in 1971, during a period of authoritarian rule in South Korea. While studying at Yonsei University, Koo was accused of espionage and sentenced to 15 years in prison, of which he served 10. This experience could easily have led to bitterness or resentment. Instead, it became a period of deep reflection. While in prison, he confronted the larger tragedy of Korea's division and asked fundamental questions about why the nation had been split and whether reconciliation was possible.

This human cost of division is especially visible in the Korean diaspora in Japan. After World War II, many Koreans remained in Japan, forming communities that were later split along ideological lines. Two major organizations emerged: one aligned with South

Korea and another with North Korea. Although their members often shared common origins - sometimes even coming from the same hometowns - they became estranged over time. For decades, these groups lived parallel lives, rarely interacting. Social events, cultural celebrations, and even funerals were held separately. What should have been a shared community was fractured, with division shaping even the most personal aspects of life.

After his release in 1981, Koo returned to Japan. The divisions within the Korean community there were still as strong as ever. Rather than attempting quick or dramatic solutions, he took a patient and long-term approach. Over several decades, he traveled extensively, meeting people from both sides of the ideological divide. He listened to their stories, their grievances, and their fears. Through roles connected to the South Korean embassy and advisory bodies on unification, he gradually built trust.



The central headquarters in Tokyo of the pro-South Korea Mindan (The Korean Residents Union in Japan). Photo (2010)

By the time he reached his late sixties, Koo had become a central figure capable of bringing people together. His approach was based on a key insight: ideological arguments alone could not resolve deeply rooted divisions. Debates about political systems or national legitimacy often reinforced existing positions rather than bridging gaps. What was needed instead was the restoration of relationships at a personal level.

In 2004, this philosophy took institutional form with the creation of an organization aimed at fostering unity within the Korean diaspora in Japan. Its goal was not immediate political unification, but something more basic and arguably more important: rebuilding trust between people who had long seen each other

as enemies. Koo became its first leader.

His efforts were not without opposition. Some critics argued that engagement with the other side was naive or even dangerous. Nevertheless, he persisted, emphasizing that reconciliation must begin with direct human contact. He encouraged members of opposing groups to meet face-to-face, visit one another's homes, and openly address their long-held grievances. This focus on emotional and relational healing was central to his work.



the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP)



Father Moon and Mother Han advocated a [true love](#) movement and a vision for peace as solution not only for Korea, but the world

A major milestone came later that same year, when 1,200 Korean residents from Japan - representing both sides of the divide - traveled together to South Korea for a peace event - a "Peaceful Unification Rally" that took place in Seoul. According to [Jeong's article](#), this initiative was made possible in large part by the committed support of the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP) [See editor's note 1 below].

For many participants, this was the first time they had interacted closely with those they had previously regarded as adversaries. They shared transportation, meals, and conversations. These simple acts carried profound meaning. People who had spent decades separated by ideology found themselves sitting side by side, often moved to tears.

The [article](#) presents this moment as something close to extraordinary - not because of any formal agreement, but because it demonstrated the power of human connection. It showed that trust could be rebuilt from the ground up, even after long periods of hostility. Importantly, it suggested that such grassroots efforts might succeed where official diplomacy struggles.

Our [True Mother](#) has dedicated her entire life to realizing a world of peace, yet she said,

Another key aspect of Koo's work was its philosophical and religious dimension. The [Segye Ilbo column](#) explains,

"Among the ideological resources that shaped him were the 'True Love Movement' (참사랑 운동) [See editor's note 2 below] and

the 'vision of world peace' advocated by [Sun Myung Moon](#) (문선명) and [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자), co-founders of the Peaceful Unification Alliance. Their transreligious teaching - to embrace even one's enemies as one's own body - and the philosophy of '[living for the sake of others](#)' became the most powerful founding spirit sustaining the organization."

According to the [article](#), this perspective provided a crucial foundation for Koo's efforts. Where political logic tends to divide people into opposing camps, the concept of "[true love](#)" seeks to transcend such divisions. It encourages individuals to see one another not as representatives of conflicting systems, but as fellow human beings. In this sense, it functioned as both a bridge and a source of motivation.

The [column](#) concludes by returning to the present situation on the Korean Peninsula. With official relations at a low point and dialogue largely suspended, the lessons from Koo Mal-mo's work become even more relevant. His example suggests that peace is not something that can be achieved solely through grand political strategies. Instead, it often begins with small, everyday actions - sharing a meal, listening to another person's story, and acknowledging their pain.

In a time of increasing polarization, the [article](#) offers a reminder that reconciliation is both possible and necessary. By focusing on relationships rather than ideology, and by prioritizing empathy over division, individuals and communities can play a meaningful role in building a more peaceful future.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

[Editor's note 1: The Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP) was inaugurated on 6th February 1999 in Seoul by [Sun Myung Moon](#) (문선명) to bring together religious leaders and public figures from different faiths and nations to cooperate on peacebuilding and global dialogue. Its work was later reorganized and relaunched as the [Universal Peace Federation](#) (UPF), which was launched on 12th September 2005 in New York with [Sun Myung Moon](#) (문선명) and [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) as founders. This was essentially a restructuring or rebranding that grew out of the IIFWP framework into a broader global network with a more formal institutional structure.]

[Editor's note 2: The "True Love Movement" (참사랑 운동) is not a single formal organization. Rather, it is a core theological and ethical concept associated with the teachings of [Sun Myung Moon](#) - also called [Father Moon](#) - and [Hak Ja Han](#) - also known as [Mother Han](#).

The term "True Love Movement" refers to a moral and spiritual framework rather than a tightly defined institution. It emerges from [Father Moon's](#) and [Mother Han's](#) teaching that "[true love](#)" is selfless, [God-centered](#) love, not self-centered desire. It is fundamentally about [living for the sake of others](#), and it applies at every level: individual → family → society → world.

In this sense, the "movement" is more like a normative ideal or campaign for ethical transformation than a membership-based movement with a single structure.

At the heart of this idea is a very specific definition of love: Self-centered love is seen as the root of human conflict and "the Fall" (in [Unificationism](#)). [True love](#) is defined as giving first, without expecting return. It mirrors what is understood as [God's](#) nature - initiating love toward others.

A distinctive feature is that "[true love](#)" is not abstract. It is supposed to be realized concretely in the family, with an [ideal progression](#): child → sibling → spouse → parent. The family is seen as the training ground for universal love. From "true families," the model expands outward to society and the world. The [Unification Principles](#) and related teachings emphasize that the family is the basic unit of peacebuilding, not the state.

The "True Love Movement" refers to a broader effort to apply this philosophy to real-world conflicts (including the Korean division). It's called a "movement" because it has been promoted globally through interreligious initiatives, peace organizations like the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU) and the [Universal Peace Federation](#) (UPF), [marriage](#) and family programs, educational and cultural campaigns.

The idea is that societal transformation begins with moral transformation, especially through relationships.]

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Scholar Questions Secrecy In Dissolution Case

March 24, 2026 • Knut Holdhus



Japanese legal expert calls dissolution order legally void as he challenges the deliberately chosen secrecy of proceedings, calling it unconstitutional

On 20th March 2026, Japanese constitutional scholar Manabu Ishizaki (石崎学) shared a concise but pointed legal argument on his personal X account concerning the legality of the dissolution order issued against the Family Federation for



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against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) – formerly the [Unification Church](#). Writing from the standpoint of constitutional law, Ishizaki challenges the procedural framework under which such dissolution orders are handled, arguing that it conflicts with fundamental guarantees enshrined in Japan’s Constitution. His post distills a complex legal issue into a focused critique: whether the classification of dissolution proceedings as “non-contentious cases” [\[See editor’s note below\]](#) can withstand constitutional scrutiny when fundamental rights are at stake.



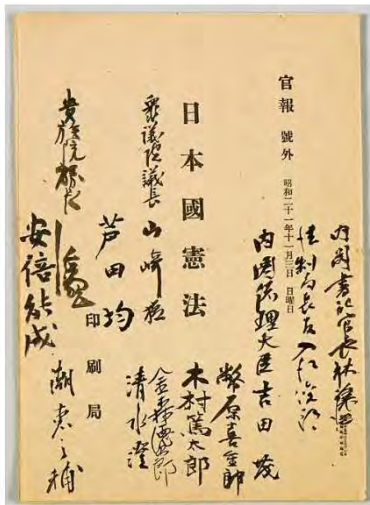
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From the X account of constitutional scholar Manabu Ishizaki 20th March 2026. Screenshot

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The Constitution of Japan (The Official Gazettes, a Special Edition). Photo: National Diet Library / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#)

At the center of Ishizaki’s argument is Article 82 of the Constitution, which establishes the principle that trials must be conducted publicly. This provision reflects a core tenet of modern constitutional democracies – transparency in judicial proceedings serves as a safeguard against arbitrariness and ensures public trust in the legal system. However, under the *Religious Corporations Act*, proceedings related to the dissolution of religious organizations are directed to follow the *Non-Contentious Case Procedures Act* [\[See editor’s note below\]](#). This classification effectively

removes such proceedings from the category of formal “trials”, thereby exempting them from the constitutional requirement of public hearings.

Ishizaki’s critique hinges on the tension between this statutory framework and the substantive nature of dissolution orders. He argues that labeling these proceedings as “non-contentious” [\[See editor’s note below\]](#) is a legal fiction that fails to reflect their real impact. Non-contentious cases are, by definition, matters that do not directly adjudicate the rights and obligations of individuals. Yet, a dissolution order against a religious corporation has profound consequences: it restricts the freedom of religious association, including the ability of a group to exist as a legal entity. This freedom is explicitly protected under Article 20 of the Constitution, making any state action that curtails it a matter of constitutional significance.



Constitutionally highly problematic proceedings against [Family Federation](#) were held behind closed doors in joint building of the Tokyo High Court, Tokyo District Court, and Tokyo Summary Court in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo, Japan. Photo: 663highland / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp](#)

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From this perspective, Ishizaki contends that **dissolution proceedings are not merely administrative or procedural matters but are, in substance, adjudications of rights**. They determine, in a final and binding manner, whether a religious organization may continue to operate. As such, they bear all the hallmarks of a “trial” as contemplated by Article 82. If this interpretation is accepted, then **the current practice of conducting these proceedings behind closed doors becomes constitutionally problematic**.

He further reinforces his position by invoking Article 82, paragraph 2, which explicitly mandates that cases involving the rights guaranteed in Chapter III of the Constitution must always be conducted publicly. Since freedom of religion is among those protected rights, any judicial or quasi-judicial process that directly affects it should, in principle, be open to public scrutiny. The implication is clear: the procedural route prescribed by existing law cannot override constitutional requirements when fundamental rights are involved.

Ishizaki's conclusion is that **the dissolution order against the Family Federation should be understood not as a routine administrative matter but as a constitutional adjudication requiring full procedural safeguards**, including public hearings. The use of non-contentious procedures [See editor's note below], which are typically closed to the public, is therefore inappropriate in this context. It creates a structural inconsistency between statutory law and constitutional mandates, one that cannot be resolved simply by formal classification.

Consequently, Ishizaki argues that the **dissolution order**, having been issued through a non-public process, violates Article 82 and **should be regarded as unconstitutional and legally void**. He extends this reasoning to the appellate level, asserting that the Supreme Court, upon reviewing the case through a special appeal, **bears the responsibility to correct this constitutional defect**. Specifically, it should **nullify the Tokyo High Court's decision on the grounds that it rests on an unconstitutional procedural foundation**.

Ishizaki's post presents a tightly reasoned constitutional critique that calls into question not only a specific legal outcome but also the **broader procedural framework governing state intervention in religious organizations**.

Manabu Ishizaki (石崎学 – born 1968) is a Japanese constitutional scholar and professor in the Department of Law, Faculty of Law, Ryukoku University in Kyoto.

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: The unconstitutionality of dissolving a religious organization in secret. Illustration: ChatGPT, 24th March 2026

[Editor's note: A **non-contentious case** refers to a legal matter where there is no dispute between parties. These cases typically involve administrative, procedural, or uncontested legal actions, such as **probate (handling a deceased person's estate), uncontested divorces, adoption, or registering a trademark**. Since there are no opposing parties or legal conflicts, these cases usually proceed smoothly through the legal system without litigation.]

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