

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Putting Korean Media Fantasies to Rest

Knut Holdhus
June 6, 2026



An airstrip in the Chaco Region of Paraguay. Illustration: Grok xAI



Issuing statement on media allegations: The Korean HQ of the [Family Federation](#) in Cheongpa-dong, Seoul, here at the inauguration in May 2005

Korean Family Federation publishes statement refuting media allegations: Rebuttal to a Sisa Journal report and clarification of the facts

A statement issued by the South Korean headquarters of the [Family Federation](#) to the media on 5th June 2026, in response to a report in the weekly current affairs magazine Sisa Journal (시사저널). Translated from the [text on the Korean language website](#) of the [Family Federation](#).

Response and Factual Clarifications by the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification Regarding the Sisa Journal Article (29th May 2026)

The Korean chapter of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (hereinafter "the Korean [Family Federation](#)") expresses regret that significant portions of the 29th May 2026, Sisa Journal article titled "'Drug-Gate Funds Shared' in [Unificationism](#) Internal Documents... Signs of Involvement by Senior Paraguayan Officials" were reported through distorted and exaggerated interpretations that differ from the facts.

Accordingly, the Korean [Family Federation](#) presents below the clear facts and legal grounds concerning the major allegations raised in the article.

The Chaco property where the drug airstrip was discovered is being occupied without authorization by the [UCI side](#); there is no evidence that [Family Federation](#) personnel were involved, and the [Federation](#) itself proactively requested a drug investigation.

Allegation in the article

The property of [Unificationism](#) (통일교) was allegedly used for drug-related crimes.

Facts and Legal Basis

Illegal occupation of the property:

The land in question (the Chaco property in Paraguay) is indeed owned by the South American

[Family Federation](#). However, it had previously been leased to Victoria S.A., a corporation affiliated with [UCI](#) (the side associated with the third son, Moon Hyun-jin), for the period from 1st March 2001, to 1st March 2021. Although the lease has officially expired, the [UCI side](#) is allegedly continuing to occupy the property unlawfully without authorization.

Proactive request for investigation by the [Family Federation](#):

The [Family Federation](#) states that it was the first to detect suspicious illegal activity on the airstrip located on the property. On 5th April 2022, it formally filed a criminal complaint with Paraguay's anti-drug agency (SENAD) and the specialized anti-drug prosecutor's office, requesting an investigation. The [Federation](#) argues that it was not involved in criminal activity but was instead among the most active parties cooperating in efforts to combat drug trafficking.

Objective reporting by Reuters:

According to a Reuters report dated 10th August 2023, Reuters found no evidence that [Unificationism](#) (통일교) or its members were involved in the drug-smuggling activities targeted by the operation. Reuters also reported that it found no evidence that [Unificationism](#) (통일교) controlled the airstrip in the Chaco region, which Paraguayan authorities have described as a lawless area.



The Chaco Region (Western Region) of Paraguay. Illustration: Chat GPT

Supporting Document 1: Copy of the complaint filed with Paraguay's anti-drug agency and specialized anti-drug prosecutor's office. [See [original Korean article](#)]

Allegations that [Family Federation](#) leaders shared drug money were concluded with a final finding of no wrongdoing by Paraguayan judicial authorities in March 2024.

Allegation in the article

Religious leaders were allegedly involved in laundering drug money connected to former congresswoman Cynthia Tarragó.

Facts and Legal Basis

Malicious defamation and orchestrated accusation:

The [Federation](#) asserts that these allegations stem from a false complaint maliciously organized by an individual affiliated with the [UCI side](#), which is allegedly occupying [Family Federation](#) property unlawfully, with the purpose of defaming regional leaders in South America.

Final dismissal by judicial authorities:

According to the [Federation](#), after a thorough investigation, the 7th Court of Guarantees of Paraguay (decision dated 14th March 2024) and the First Specialized Prosecutor's Office for Money Laundering in Asunción concluded that former regional leader Seo [given name withheld], national president E. [name withheld], and attorney Mi [name withheld], and other [Family Federation](#) leaders had no connection whatsoever to the money-laundering case and that there was not a single piece of evidence supporting criminal charges. The matter was therefore dismissed and closed with a finding of no wrongdoing.

Supporting Document 2: Copy of the Paraguayan court and prosecutorial decisions dismissing all allegations against [Family Federation](#) personnel (non-prosecution and dismissal). [See [original Korean article](#)]

Former Congresswoman Cynthia Tarragó is not the "South American Representative of [Unificationism](#)."

Allegation in the article



*Cynthia Tarragó, a former television host and politician from Paraguay who served as a National Deputy of the Republic of Paraguay from 2013 to 2018.
Image: Grok xAI*

A subheading referred to her as the "South American representative of [Unificationism](#) (통일교) caught in an FBI undercover operation."

Facts and Basis

Not recognized as an official representative:

The official title corresponding to the [Family Federation](#)'s representative in South America is the position of South America Continental Chair, a formal clerical office.

Only held an honorary service position:

Former Congresswoman Cynthia Tarragó was neither a public official nor a clergy member of the [Family Federation](#). The [Federation](#) states that she merely served in an honorary volunteer capacity as the South American chair of the Inter-Parliamentarians Association for Peace, one of many peace-

related affiliated organizations. Reporting her as though she were the official external representative of the [religious organization](#) is described as a clear distortion of the facts.

Allegations that attorney Caballero sought the replacement of a prosecutor unfavorable to [Unificationism](#) are entirely unrelated to the [Family Federation](#).

Allegation in the article

The Family Federation's chief Paraguayan attorney allegedly colluded with judicial authorities to replace a prosecutor unfavorable to the legal interests of [Unificationism](#) (통일교).

Facts and Legal Basis

A completely unrelated case:

The Federation states that the matter had no connection whatsoever to the [Family Federation](#). Rather, it concerned a so-called wiretapping case related to the Electrofácil fraud scheme case, which attorney Caballero was handling independently in a separate legal engagement.

No mention of the [Family Federation](#) in court rulings:

According to the [Federation](#), neither the trial court decision, appellate decision, nor Supreme Court ruling in Paraguay contains a single reference to "Unificationism" or the "[Family Federation](#)". The organization categorically denies any collusion with judicial authorities or any involvement in illegal lobbying or influence efforts.

Supporting Document 3: Copies of the first-instance, appellate, and Supreme Court judgments involving attorney Caballero. [See [original Korean article](#)]

Conclusion and Statement

The Korean [Family Federation](#) contends that the Sisa Journal article ignored clear and objective facts - including official rulings by Paraguayan judicial authorities (such as dismissals and findings of no wrongdoing) and records showing that the [Federation](#) itself initiated criminal complaints - and instead relied primarily on distorted allegations, resulting in a biased report.

The [Federation](#) states that such reporting seriously damages its reputation and credibility. It urges members of the media to conduct thorough fact-checking and to pursue fair and objective reporting based on balanced perspectives. The [organization](#) further states that it intends to take all necessary measures, including legal action, against future reports that it considers factually inaccurate or distorted.

Thank you.

5th June 2026

Korean Chapter of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)

(In Korea known as [Unificationism](#) - 통일교)

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Next Target After Dissolution: Believers' Rights

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Not satisfied with dissolving the Family Federation, hostile activists advising the authorities are now targeting believers' rights

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BELIEVERS RIGHTS

On 1st June 2026, *Bitter Winter*, a leading online magazine focused on human rights and religious freedom, published an [article](#) by international human rights lawyer Patricia Duval. In her [analysis](#), Duval examines recent developments in Japan following the [dissolution order](#) issued against the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification*. She argues that the debate has evolved beyond allegations of organizational wrongdoing and has become part of a wider contest over the rights of believers to practice and maintain their faith.



Logo of *Bitter Winter*, the world's leading online magazine on religious liberty and human rights.

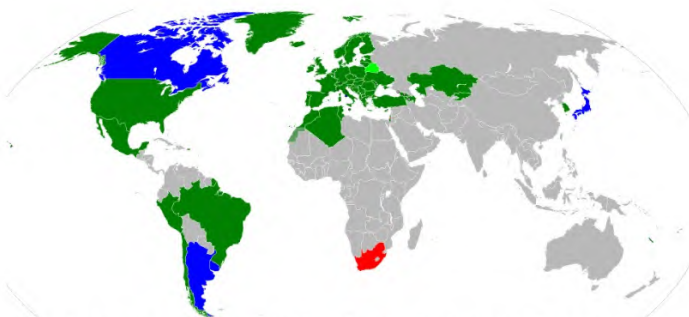
More from Duval: [Beyond Dissolution: A Religious Purge in Japan?](#)

More from Duval: [Religious Freedom in Jeopardy After Dissolution](#)

The Rights of Religious Communities

A central legal argument in the [article](#) concerns the status of religious communities under international law. Duval emphasizes that the *Family Federation* possesses a developed body of doctrine, a defined religious identity, and a large community of followers. For that reason, she argues, it qualifies as a religious community entitled to the protections recognized in international human rights instruments.

She observes that the dissolution of the principal *Family Federation* organization in Japan left many believers without established places of worship and without the institutional structure that had previously coordinated their activities. In her view, this situation makes the protection of individual religious rights even more important.



Member states of the Venice Commission per December 2020. As of 2026, the Commission counts 61 member states – the 46 member states of the Council of Europe and 15 non-European countries. Nations marked in blue, including Japan, Uruguay, Argentina, and the Holy See have observer status. Russia has been expelled. Illustration: Hogweard / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image

To support this position, Duval refers to guidelines issued by the Venice Commission, the constitutional advisory body of the Council of Europe. She highlights the Commission's view that religious activities should not become illegal merely because an organization lacks formal legal registration.

The [article](#) further stresses that withdrawing legal personality from a religious organization should not deprive either the community or its members of the protections associated with freedom of religion and belief. Duval argues that collective penalties imposed on an entire religious community are inconsistent with the principle that responsibility for wrongdoing should rest with specific individuals.

Fundraising as a Religious Freedom Issue

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Duval also addresses the issue of donations. She argues that religious communities cannot realistically function without financial support and that the ability to seek and receive voluntary contributions forms part of internationally recognized religious liberty.

In her view, attempts to prohibit believers from collecting donations after dissolution would effectively prevent them from maintaining religious institutions, organizing meetings, and sustaining communal religious life.

The [article](#) therefore frames fundraising not merely as an economic activity but as an aspect of religious practice protected under international human rights standards. Duval contends that restrictions targeting donations could become a mechanism for suppressing the religion itself.



Is the [Family Federation](#) in Japan heading for the same fate as the Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia – banned? Here, two followers of JW at an information stand in Oslo, Norway 11th March 2026. Photo: Knut Holdhus. Published with permission.

Comparisons with Russia

One of the strongest arguments in the [article](#) involves comparison with developments in Russia. Duval notes that the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses has been banned there as extremist and that believers have faced prosecution for ordinary religious activities.

She points to a March 2026

decision by the *United Nations Human Rights Committee* criticizing Russia for violations of religious freedom in cases involving Jehovah's Witnesses. According to Duval, the Committee required remedies for those affected and called for measures to prevent future violations.

The [article](#) suggests that proposals aimed at preventing [Family Federation](#) believers from gathering, fundraising, or practicing their faith could move Japan toward a model that resembles the Russian approach. Duval regards this possibility as deeply troubling from a human rights perspective.



From header of the [webpage](#) of the Human Rights Committee, a subpage on the site of the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

International Cooperation Among Anti-Cult Activists

Duval further discusses cooperation between Japanese "anti-cult" lawyers and South Korean Christian organizations engaged in "anti-heresy" work.

According to the [article](#), agreements were reached to coordinate efforts against groups classified as "cults" and to encourage legislation targeting such organizations. Duval interprets these developments as evidence that the campaign extends beyond Japan and reflects a broader movement seeking stricter controls on certain religious groups.

She also notes a statement from leading activist lawyer Hiroshi Yamaguchi (山口廣), founder of *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (NNLASS), indicating concern among his fellow Japanese activists that younger pastors have shown less interest in anti-cult faith-breaking [\[See editor's note 1 below\]](#) activities than previous generations. The [article](#) suggests that this has encouraged greater cooperation with South Korean counterparts who remain active in “anti-heresy” initiatives.



Hiroshi Yamaguchi (山口廣), activist leftwing lawyer and founder and leading member of *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (NNLASS). Photo: Screenshot / [Bitter Winter](#)

Duval writes,

“The representative of the Japanese lawyers explained that they have a serious problem in Japan: pastors who have been ‘counseling’ believers and lost believers are in their 70s and 80s, and young pastors are not very involved. He stated that ‘People who offer counseling do not grow up much in Japan. I envy the Korean system, which has consultation offices all over the country. We want to work with the pastors.’ It appears that, since Japanese pastors have stopped practicing deprogramming [\[See editor's note 1 below\]](#) and the ‘counseling’ of reluctant members has declined, Japanese lawyers are seeking to collaborate with Korean pastors who are actively fighting against heresy and who are known to continue engaging in such activities.”

Paris-based human rights attorney Duval also notes,

“Furthermore, to continue the purge that had been carried out for decades in Japan through the deprogramming [\[See editor's note 1 below\]](#) of believers, the lawyers proposed measures aimed at ‘de-indoctrinating’ their children within the public school system.”

Focus on Second-Generation Believers

The final section of the [article](#) addresses children raised within the faith. Duval reports that NNLASS recommended policies intended to support what it describes as second-generation members [\[See editor's note 2 below\]](#) of religious groups.

According to [her account](#), these recommendations from “anti-cult” lawyers included educational and intervention measures designed to influence children who had grown up in the [Family Federation](#). Duval characterizes such proposals as efforts to steer young people away from the beliefs of their parents.

She argues that these measures represent a continuation, through public institutions, of earlier attempts to coerce members to abandon their faith. The [article](#) notes that the recommendations the activist lawyers made in December 2023, were subsequently implemented in a government plan adopted already one month later, in January 2024.

Conclusion

In this first installment of her series, Patricia Duval emphasizes that the “anti-cult” activists are far from contented with the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan and want to outright limit the rights of believers themselves. She contends that the activists seek not merely accountability for alleged wrongdoing but restrictions that would affect worship, religious association, fundraising, and

the transmission of faith within families.

Throughout the [article](#), Duval evaluates these developments through the lens of international human rights law. Her position is that dissolving a religious organization does not extinguish the rights of its members and that measures preventing believers from practicing their faith would conflict with internationally recognized standards of religious freedom.

More from Duval: [Beyond Dissolution: A Religious Purge in Japan?](#)

More from Duval: [Religious Freedom in Jeopardy After Dissolution](#)

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: French international human rights lawyer Patricia Duval in Tokyo 5th February 2025. She is a member of the Paris Bar Association, specializing in international human rights law. Earned a degree in public law from Sorbonne University. Has defended the rights of religious and faith minorities both in France and internationally, including at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the Council of Europe (CE), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations. Author of numerous academic papers on religion and freedom of belief. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

[Editor's note 1: Coercive faith-breaking

("deprogramming") in Japan refers to the practice of coercively attempting to separate individuals from their religious affiliations or beliefs, typically through intervention by family members, professional faith-breakers (deprogrammers) or organizations hostile to new religious movements (NRMs). This phenomenon often targets members of such movements, e.g. relatively large faiths like the [Family Federation](#) or Jehovah's Witnesses, but also smaller groups like Happy Science (Kōfuku no Kagaku) and other newer religious movements.



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of [Soka Gakkai](#). Here students belonging to the faith in 2001. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp](#). Cropped

However, also Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist-based lay organization with more than 8 million Japanese members, and affiliated with Nichiren Buddhism, has occasionally been subject to faith-breaking attempts.

The practice gained attention in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Parents or concerned family members often hired faith-breakers who taught them how to abduct and forcibly detain believers. Almost all such cases involved confining the individual believer and cutting him or her off from the religious community. During the confinement, the believer was subjected to intense questioning or indoctrination designed to break his or her faith. The aim was to "rescue" the person from what the family often had been tricked by faith-breakers or lawyers to regard as harmful influence from the religious organization.

Critics of forced de-conversion argue that it violates fundamental human rights, including freedom of thought, religion, and association. Reports of psychological trauma and accusations of unlawful detention have sparked

debates over its ethical and legal implications. In response, some religious groups, particularly NRMs, have lobbied for greater protections against such practices.

Japanese courts have been inconsistent in addressing cases of coercive faith-breaking. While some verdicts have condemned the practice as illegal detention, others have been more lenient, citing family concerns about “mental health” or alleged “exploitation” as mitigating factors.]

[Editor's note 1: The term “second-generation members” generally refers to people who were raised in a religion by parents who belonged to a religious organization, rather than joining it themselves as adults.]

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