FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Peter Ross - Fighting Misconceptions for 50 Years

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Peter Ross, attorney from New York, speaking at online conference on October 27, 2026

HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership

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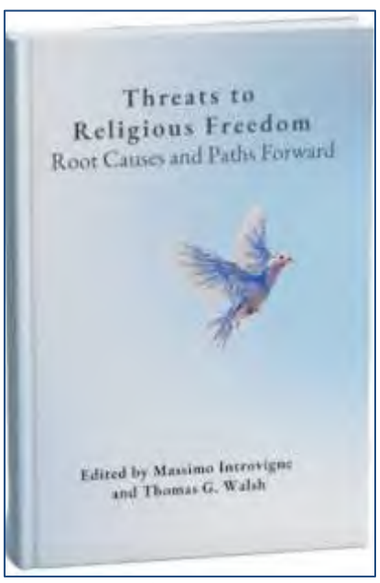
From hostile media coverage to derogatory labels, a history of confronting misconceptions about a religious minority

Part 1 of a speech by Peter Ross, a New York-based attorney and former Director of Public Affairs for the Unification Church of America - now the Family Federation - delivered at an online Zoom-conference 27th October 2026 with the theme "Addressing Misconceptions about Family Federation by Reviewing the Lessons from the Past". The conference was organized by UPF USA. Slightly edited version.



Threats to Religious Freedom: Root Causes and Paths Forward, edited by Dr. Massimo Introvigne and Dr. Thomas Walsh

Some time back I was asked by Drs. Thomas Walsh and Thomas Ward to present my case study at a conference by the HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership at the New Yorker Hotel in New York in August of last year. I was challenged by it because we're talking some years back.

So I headed to the garage to pull out what files I could find in addition to what I retained digitally, never mind what I retained mentally, but it was certainly a walk down memory lane.

I titled my paper at that time "Eulogy for An Epitaph - A Lesson from Recent History", and I was honored to have that paper included in the subsequent publication by HJI of its recent book "Threats to Religious Freedom: Root Causes and Paths Forward".

Today I'm going to just present some of the key elements from that and proceed accordingly. […]

Over the course of about 55 years, starting from the early 70s, the American Unification Church has been directed by - my estimation - about 10 presidents along with their respective administrations.

Each of those presidents during their tenure have had to deal with two core issues when presenting the institution to the American public.

One is to represent what it is, as a church and as a religious community, to present its founder, beliefs,

practices and activities.

But given the circumstances, there has been a second component, namely to address the particular adverse headwinds each of those administrations, each of those presidents had to deal with during their tenure.

And I'll just take two examples.

Neil Salonen [President 1972-1980] had to address issues associated with the Fraser Congressional subcommittee hearing along with Nixon's Watergate woes, especially after Father Moon launched his prayer-inspired Forgive, Love and Unite campaign.



Mose Durst, President of the Unification Church of USA 1980-1989



A bucket brigade fighting a fire

For his part, Mose Durst had to contend with the investigation and ultimate federal prosecution of Father Moon for alleged tax violations, while also contending with the public hue and cry fomented by the emerging faith-breaking / deprogramming [See editor's note below] industrial complex and its proxies.

Each administration did its level best to effectively inform the American public while contending with a mass media that was largely ill-informed, unserious, more focused on sensational infotainment, and increasingly hostile.

My work in those years straddled the latter part of the James Baughman presidency [1989-1995] into the first half of the Tyler Hendricks presidency [1995-2000].

In my few years, when I look back, I liken my beat as being a member of the Fire Department of New York's "pee and bucket brigades" [a humorous historical reference to the primitive nature of early colonial firefighting in the 1600s].

In my presentation, I'll refer to the Family Federation as the Unification Church, as it was then called - now the Family Federation.

And I will also use the "moonie" term at the outset, but thereafter I'll only refer to the M-word.

It's important to remember from the outset, and I hope everybody on this call realizes that the term "moonie" as a reference to the Unification Church was never coined by Unificationists, as adherents of the faith are appropriately identified.

It's not a fuzzy, cute or affectionate term. It's not just a fun play on the founder's name.

Rather, it is an outright slur intended to disregard, demean and dehumanize innocent people, its ultimate objective being to summarily deny its targets the very cloak of established civil and legal protections.

The M-word joined the catalog of similar hate fringe terms that otherwise evoke disdain and hatred of nationalities, races, religions and other minority groups.

They include odious terms such as the N-word, the K-word for Jews, the C-word for Chinese, the three letter J-word for Japanese, the G-word for Vietnamese, the G-word for Italians, the S-word for Latinos, and the F-word for homosexuals.

While almost all of these pejorative terms have largely been - at least by reasonable people - consigned to the pained graveyard of history, the pernicious exploitation of the M-word by haters and fomenters yet continues without impunity, postponing any final eulogy.

To be continued. Part 2 coming soon.

[Editor's note: Coercive faith-breaking ("deprogramming") 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). In Japan, 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.

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.



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of Soka Gakkai. Here students belonging to the faith in 2001

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.]

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Apologies For Mother Han's Return To Detention

November 5, 2026 • The News Desk

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Public apologies from senior leaders follow the revocation of Hak Ja Han's bail and her return to Seoul Detention Center

The South Korean major news outlet JTBC News published on 4th November a follow-up report on the news circulated widely by the country's media the day before about Hak Ja Han's recently granted bail being revoked.

Reporter Lee Ja-yeon (이자연) wrote for JTBC News about a late-night prayer vigil held by the Family Federation in Gapyeong, North-East of the capital Seoul. She mentioned Moon Shin-chul (문신출), the grandson of Hak Ja Han (한학자) – also called

The logo of JTBC News (Joongang Tongyang Broadcasting Company),

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Mother Han – and seen by many as her future successor. During the meeting, he delivered a short message where he bowed his head and apologized to the members present and tens of thousands following the event around the world, for his ailing and frail grandmother having to return to a tiny cell in *Seoul Detention Center* that same evening. According to the JTBC News, he said,

> "I sincerely apologize that we have come to face this situation because of the shortcomings of our leadership."

a prominent South Korean private cable television network launched in 2011. Known for its influential general programming, it features highly rated dramas, popular variety shows, and an impactful news division.



Dr. Song Yong-cheon *speaking on 3rd Nov. 2026 in Gapyeong, South Korea. Screenshot from live transmission by FFWPU*

At the same event, on behalf of the movement's leadership in South Korea, Dr. Song Yong-cheon (송용천), President of the Korean branch of the Family Federation, said,

"Having heard the apology offered by International Headquarters Director-General Moon Shin-chul (문신출), I too, as president of the Family Federation in Korea, feel heart-rending pain and an overwhelming sense of responsibility that I cannot express in words.

First, let me briefly explain what has happened. Following the court's decision to grant True Mother bail on October 19, she continued to receive medical treatment at the hospital. However, on November 2, there was a court hearing to deliberate the fact that Mother had traveled from the hospital to visit Cheon Jeong Gung [Cheon Jeong Temple]. The central issue at this hearing was whether Mother's visits to her home during the daytime constituted violations of the conditions of her bail.

The defense team interpreted the relevant regulations and precedents – which distinguish restrictions on residence from restrictions on going out – as permitting temporary outings. They explained that Mother had made the visits based on legal advice from her lawyers and with the hospital's permission. They maintained that there had been no overnight stay outside the hospital and no violation of restrictions on contact with persons connected to the trial.

The court, however, emphasized the purpose of the strict residence restrictions imposed as conditions of bail, as well as the need for prior authorization [for leaving the hospital,] and made the decision to revoke Mother's bail. The Family Federation in Korea respects the court's decision and takes its implications very seriously. We will reflect on the points that should have been more carefully verified in the process of interpreting and responding to the bail conditions. We will inform you of developments concerning the enforcement of detention and procedures for challenging the decision as soon as they are confirmed through the defense team. We will also respond to members' questions transparently and sincerely.

My heart is deeply pained as I confront this situation. Despite True Mother being in such poor health that even moving about is difficult, she has been enduring each day with great difficulty, yet concerned only for the well-being of the providence and for our members. Faced with the heartbreaking situation in which True Mother must once again endure the suffering of detention, I feel sorrow and remorse beyond anything words can express."

In a message to members on 4th November, Rev. Demian Dunkley, Continental Director of the Family Federation in North America, wrote,

> "According to the latest news reports, Mother returned to the Seoul Detention Center on November 3. We do not yet have confirmed information about her current medical care or the legal team's next steps. Our immediate concern is Mother's health and well-being, and that she has access to the medical care she needs."



Rev. Demian Dunkley, Continental Director of the Family Federation in North America. Screenshot from

Introductory text*: Knut Holdhus, editor*

Featured image *above: Moon Shin-chul expressing his apologies on 3rd November 2026*

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at a prayer vigil in Gapyeong, South Korea. Screenshot from video by FFWPU.

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