

UPF Lisbon, Portugal: Violations of Japanese Unificationists' religious freedom

Sergio Vieira
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Lisbon, Portugal -- UPF-Portugal marked Human Rights Day by discussing violations of Japanese Unificationists' religious freedom.

With this program, titled "Universal Rights and Religious Freedom," UPF informed some of its closest key contacts and friends (especially Ambassadors for Peace and representatives of partner organizations) about the current situation of persecution of the Unification Church/Family Federation in Japan.



Approximately 40 participants attended the event on December 10, 2022, in the UPF Peace Embassy, with many others joining online.

The program was organized jointly by UPF and the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an organization that is affiliated with UPF.

After an informative video on human rights, **Dr. Sérgio Neto**, the leader of FFWPU-Portugal, spoke about the evolution of the UPF founders' work. Beginning with the spiritual revelation that Jesus gave to a teenaged Reverend Moon, Dr. Neto described the mission of Rev. and Mrs. Moon, and also the reason for the many organizations created by the Unification Movement.

Despite various legal, social and statutory differences, all these organizations seek essentially the reconciliation and the brotherly unity of humankind. In Portugal, the Unification Church was registered in 2008 with the same rights as other religions with the same status.

Dr. Sérgio Vieira, the president of UPF-Portugal, continued the explanation of the founders' work but focused on the current situation of the Unification Church in Japan, which has suffered increasing persecution since the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in July 2022. To read his speech, [click here](#).

The presentation included a summary of the three submissions already made to the UN Human Rights Committee (UN HRC) concerning the religious rights violations occurring in Japan.



The program then gave the participants the opportunity to present questions regarding religious freedom, the reason for the persecution of religions, and more specifically about the persecution of the Unification Church.

The answers given by the Ambassadors for Peace and partners, both present in the room and online, were very revealing for their solidarity in decrying a situation completely opposite to the consecrated and universal human rights.

These speakers were: **Dr. Ajit Hansraj** from the Hindu Community of Portugal; **Dr. Teresa Prim** from Brahma Kumaris Portugal; **Professor Nuno André** from Lusophone University; **Professor Delmar Gonçalves** from the Mozambican Writers Circle; and **Dr. Cristina Carvalho** and **Rev. Barros Banza** of the Anglican Church.

The online meeting ended after a photograph of the online participants, but the event continued offline with the offering of the founders' autobiographies and the booklet *Shinzo Abe and the Unification Church*; a group photo and fellowship moments with those in attendance. Fraternal Embrace! "We Are Together!"

Zoom Record Event UPF PT_10.12.2022: vimeo.com/788550394



**Presentation of Three Statements to the United Nations
Human Rights Committee**

Human Rights Day, December 10, 2022

“Universal Rights and Religious Freedom”

Sérgio Vieira, president, UPF-Portugal

Dear Ambassadors for Peace, fellow speakers, partners and sympathizers of UPF and of peace, ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you very much for your participation in this significant event in which we are commemorating Human Rights Day—which is celebrated by the United Nations and also by the international and national UPF chapters. But our commemoration, which we are observing online and in person at our Peace Embassy, has a focus on religious freedom.

Our Theme: “Universal Rights and Religious Freedom”

Because, as [FFWPU-Portugal President] Dr. Sérgio Neto pointed out, the search for reconciliation and unity requires not only religiosity but also creating and maintaining a lasting peace relationship through forgiveness and love, Rev. and Mrs. Moon founded these many and varied organizations, in different areas, so that no human being—believer or non-believer and coming from any background—would feel excluded, because Rev. and Mrs. Moon believe that God is the "Parents of Love."

The Washington Times wrote lately: "Religious freedom is the hallmark of an open society" and "The biggest difference between open and free societies and authoritarian regimes is respect for human rights and religious freedom." This also was stated by speakers at the recent Conference of Hope in South

Korea for "Universal Human Rights and Religious Freedom," sponsored by this institution and Think Tank 2022.

I therefore will speak in this presentation about the intolerance, discrimination and persecution against members of the Unification Church/Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, in Japan.

I will do this by summarizing the three declarations presented (in September, October and November 2022) to the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva by CAP-LC (Coordination of Associations and Individuals for Freedom of Conscience), an NGO with Special Consultative Status with the United Nations.

Introduction

I believe you know that former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated on July 8, 2022. (It also has been reported that the assassin made earlier attempts to kill Unification Church leaders and even the founder herself.) However, this happened via a man who had never been a member of the Unification Church but who justified his actions by referring to the resentment he claims to have held against the church for over 20 years. He claimed that this was caused by a very large donation that his mother (who was, and still is, a member of the church) had given to the church some 20 years earlier—despite the fact that already 13 years earlier the church had refunded half of that money because the donation was overly generous and also because of the family's financial situation at that time.

The media also omitted to give an account of the serious problems in the killer's family, which happened long before any of their involvement with the Unification Church and which led to

his father committing suicide—even though his mother at that time had no connection with the church—which inevitably must have affected their children as well.

The leftist media in Japan used the killer's explanation to turn the truth upside down and portray him as the victim, and the Unification Church as the perpetrator of the crime, ignoring all other factors. This false narrative then was used by various forces in Japanese society to launch a campaign of intolerance, hatred, discrimination and persecution against the Unification Church (UC), now known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU). During this campaign, the human rights of Unification Church members in Japan have been systematically violated and continue to be violated.

As has become abundantly clear through a statement by Japanese Communist Party Chairman Kazuo Shii in the November 6 issue of the *Sunday Mainichi*, perpetrating this false narrative and eliminating the Unification Church in Japan was part of the party's "final war" against the church, and was what his party and its fellow travelers had vowed to accomplish for more than a half-century for all that the International Federation for Victory over Communism (IFVOC), a branch of the Unification Church, had done to expose the fallacies of communism. The IFVOC carried out a decades-long, in-depth education program for all who were open to hearing it, in particular stressing communism's denial of the existence of any divine being, religion and spirituality, and warning of communism's frequent, extreme violations of religious freedom around the world.

Based on its widespread support from the leftist media in Japan, this "war" has fanned the flames of hatred against the Unification

Church that first were ignited by this false narrative. Due to the Communist Party's falling numbers in the public polls, they prompted the Japanese government to take draconian measures against the Unification Church, hoping to raise their own status.

What follows is, therefore, a summary that I have made of all the deeply oppressive and painful consequences of the relentless pushing of this false narrative by the media in Japan and its unprincipled acceptance by the Japanese government, as laid out in these three presentations made on behalf of the Unification Church to the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva.

The following various articles at issue constitute violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Articles: 9, 17, 18, 18.1, 18.3, 19.3.a, 22, 25 and 26.

First Statement—September 9, 2022

1) Violations for Arbitrary Interference with Privacy and Attacks on Honor and Reputation

Members of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, established in 1987 as an anti-Unification Church organization, currently participate in a so-called "expert committee" convened by the Consumer Affairs Agency and the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, which suggests new measures against the UC/FF.

2) Violations of freedom of religion or belief; discrimination and limitations of the rights and freedoms of association to self-organize

The "expert committee" and the Lawyers Network lobby are proposing to have the already restrictive Specified Commercial Transactions Act of 2000 amended to prohibit solicitation of donations (legal, normal and legitimate) with the clear aim of preventing donations to the UC/FF, as it has become clear that they would be treated differently from donations to all other religions.

3) Violation of the right of all citizens to political participation

Political purges and rules against politicians attending meetings held by organizations linked to the Unification Movement violate the freedom of citizens to participate fully as believers (or not) in the democratic process, and the freedom of politicians to cooperate with members of religions of their choice. Several Japanese cabinet members were forced to resign just for attending meetings of a Unification Movement affiliate, the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), an NGO with General Consultative Status (ECOSOC) at the United Nations and widely respected at all levels of society.

4) Violations of personal safety and discrimination in the workplace, schools and other educational establishments due to belief

UC/FF members in Japan have experienced hate speech, death threats, racist slogans, physical assaults, damage to property, etc.

Second Statement—October 13, 2022

1) On the "Expert Committee" of the Consumer Affairs Agency

It is hard to believe that a person as partial as Masaki Kito, a prominent member of the anti-UC/FF Lawyers Network, could have been appointed as a member of this "Expert Committee," in total disregard of the fundamental principles of fairness and natural justice. He is closely associated with the illegal practice of "deprogramming" Unification Church members, through which, over 30 years, some 4,300 Unification Church members were forcibly detained and forced to renounce their faith, using abductions, forced confinement and conversions, threats, violence and even sexual assaults.

The Lawyers Network is lobbying to persuade the government to dissolve UC/FF in Japan; to restrict its ability to raise donations; and to pass legislation making parents who are members of the Unification Church guilty of "abuse against children" for raising their children in the faith of this church.

2) About the "Complaint Hotline"

In September 2022, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs launched a hotline on which citizens can complain about alleged objectionable practices by the UC/FF—but only about this and no other confession. Because of the hotline, complaints related to UC/FF, which had steadily decreased from 229 in 2012 to 27 in 2021, suddenly grew to 1,317 in the single month of September. This is also evidence of the discriminatory practices of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and the violation of Articles 18.1 and 26 of the ICCPR.

Third Statement—November 4, 2022

A Slippery Slope from Intolerance to Discrimination to Persecution

1) Intolerance: for violations of the right to honor and reputation, freedom of religion or belief, and non-discrimination

There has been and continues to be a clear failure to adopt any fair process to determine the truth or falsity of allegations before they are merely accepted as facts. The stories of so-called "victims," presented to the media by anti-cult lawyers, are accepted at face value, including by the authorities, without allowing their own family members, or the church itself, to present their own versions of the stories. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's conduct has been merely emblematic of this unprincipled and unfair approach, as has that of many others in government. This failure also violates Article 14 of the ICCPR on due process.

2) Discrimination

On October 18, Prime Minister Kishida told the Lower House Budget Committee that neither the FFWPU nor its legal representatives or leaders had been convicted of any crime. He confirmed that violations of Civil Code provisions found by courts in civil (as opposed to criminal) cases are not included among the "violations of laws" that can be a cause for dissolution of the institution.

But as early as October 19, the prime minister changed his mind, reportedly based on calls received by the hotline. However, as mentioned above, these complaints are recorded but not verified. The government's own data indicate that the complaints largely refer to incidents that allegedly occurred several years ago.

In other words, this is a grossly unfair investigation and in violation of several provisions of the ICCPR.

In 2021, over 98 percent of the complaints filed with the Consumer Protection Agency concerned groups other than UC/FF. The only reason for singling out the FFWPU now is that pressure from the anti-UC lobby and the media has created a political and electoral problem for the government. This (also) constitutes a clear violation of Article 18 of the ICCPR.

Secondly, canvassing with a view to requesting the dissolution of a religious organization that has not been found guilty of any crime is unprecedented in Japan's legal history and contrasts with Japan's ICCPR obligations with respect to freedom of religion or belief (as an adherent country in the UN as well).

Third, the fact that the UC/FF was singled out for hostile special treatment, as well as the attitude of the politicians, point to the fact that the FFWPU can hardly expect fair treatment, which is contrary to Article 14 of the ICCPR. In other words, instead of being presumed innocent, the FFWPU is presumed guilty from the very beginning of this case.

Violation of the ICCPR by the Liberal Democratic Party

On October 26, 2022, the LDP Party amended its Code of Governance to include a 5/4 rule requiring members of that party

not to cooperate with "organizations or groups whose activities raise concerns of social relevance." A letter sent the same day to all party members clearly indicated that this concerned UC/FF and affiliated organizations (as part of the Unification Movement). This is a flagrant violation of freedom of association and the right to political participation.

Under pressure from the media and left-wing politicians, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs canceled an award given to a woman who has been running a school in Mozambique for over twenty years because she is a board member of the Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI), an organization affiliated with the Unification Church, also with General Consultative Status (ECOSOC) at the United Nations and widely praised for its efforts on behalf of women in developing countries. The cancellation of this award is causing this person difficulty in continuing to raise funds for the school and thus threatens its continued operation.

3) Persecution

Although the FFWPU has not yet been disbanded, and no members have been incriminated or arrested, a climate of intolerance and discrimination, fueled by hate speech, is generating hate crimes.

CAP-LC (Coordination of Associations and Individuals for Freedom of Conscience) has evidence of domestic violence against women who are members of the FFWPU by their non-church husbands (being stirred up by slander campaigns); of young believers bullied in school; and of adult members harassed in the workplace. There have been threats against

churches and their ministers, and death threats, often accompanied in the media by racist and xenophobic insults against a "Korean group."

Conclusion

In all three of these submissions, FFWPU-Japan and its affiliated organizations have called upon the UN system to demand that the Japanese government's actions of persecution and discrimination against them cease immediately. However, such requests, to date, have had no effect. Meanwhile, such actions continue unabated, but the church members continue to suffer persecution and an existential threat to their religious community, as well as a serious threat to their ability to practice their own life of faith.

I conclude here the summary of these three presented declarations.

Dear friends, as Professor W. Cole Durham Jr., director of Brigham Young University's International Center for Law and Religion Studies, said at the first Conference of Hope on November 12, 2022, in South Korea: "Remaining under persecution builds a kind of strength, which is its own reward." Moreover, surviving persecution leads to "an intensified appreciation of the importance of practicing religious freedom" and of "empathy for the suffering of others."

I therefore add that "suffering" has been experienced by many religions over many centuries, including in Jesus' time – with himself and with the first Christians as "the sect of the Nazarene."

But, indeed, the more intolerance, discrimination, and persecution there has been, the more the work, the growth, the victory and the success of the founders and of this peace movement have flourished exponentially.

However, according to Rev. Moon's words in the third volume of *Messages of Peace*, a collection of his speeches (pg. 48,49):

It has been a lonely course, which cannot be fully understood by anyone. It has been a course that (led) me to walk thorny paths in the wilderness—paths that (I) had to follow completely alone. Not even God (could) recognize me.

Hovering many times between life and death, and vomiting blood, even then (I) had to (rise) again, like a phoenix, to keep (my) promise to God.

Yes! Because although he was innocent, Reverend Moon had to endure unjust imprisonment six times:

- In Japan (twice), for belonging to the underground movement for Korea's independence, while he was a student;
- In North Korea, which was under the communist yoke, for propagating God's will, immediately after Korea's independence (prison and torture and then three years in a concentration camp);
- In South Korea after it was reborn as a free nation, during Syngman Rhee's government;
- Even in the United States, which proudly proclaims itself as a model of democracy, in the 1980s.

He also asked: Who on earth can understand Reverend Moon's life?

Dear Ambassadors for Peace and UPF-Portugal partners, we sincerely hope that among the already huge number of leaders, it will also be you who will understand Rev. and Mrs. Moon.

We are together! Thank you very much for your attention!