

FFWPU USA: Japan to Re-educate (Brainwash) Children of Church Members

Demian Dunkley
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The Newsletter

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News

Quick Connect: Japan to
"Re-educate" Children of Church Members



Today on Quick Connect, an effort to further marginalize members in Japan is underway, and Japanese members share the impact of the dissolution order and decades of persecution.

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Unification Church in Japan: After the Dissolution, the Purge — 1. Anti Heresy Campaigns

How lawyers and religious competitors have pushed Japan toward measures that target believers even after the organization’s dissolution.

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Unification Church in Japan: After the Dissolution, the Purge. 2. Targeting Believers’ Children

Yoshihide Sakurai, another leading figure in the fight against heresy and “cults” in Japan, a professor of sociology at Hokkaido University, and a Nichiren Buddhist priest, recently [gave an interview](#) to the *Asahi Shimbun* on April 18, 2026. He stated that he had long recommended the dissolution of the Church and was pleased that it had been decided, but insisted that this measure was not sufficient. According to him, “the problems associated with the former Unification Church will not simply disappear. Many believers will continue practicing their faith even if the group loses its status as a religious corporation.”

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Monarch Report's mini documentary on the impact of the dissolution order



Unification Church Members in Japan Details Decades of Abductions, Forced Deprogramming, and Recent Church Dissolutions. Japan has seen intense controversy surrounding the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Unification Church) for decades, intensified after the 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

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Unification Church in Japan: After the Dissolution, the Purge — 1. Anti Heresy Campaigns

by Patricia Duval | Jun 1, 2026 | [Op-eds Global](#)

How lawyers and religious competitors have pushed Japan toward measures that target believers even after the organization’s dissolution.

by Patricia Duval

Article 1 of 4.



Leading exponents of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales: attorneys Hiroshi Yamaguchi (left) and Masaki Kito (right). Screenshot.

Following the dissolution order issued in March by the Tokyo High Court against the Federation of Families for World Peace and Unification (hereinafter referred to as “the Unification Church” or “the Church”), opponents of the Church issued several statements expressing satisfaction, but also frustration that the dissolution did not lead to a complete ban of the Unification Church in the country. Anti Church activists, led by some lawyers and religious competitors, urged the government to go further to prevent the very practice of the religion in Japan.

According to them, the problem with the Unification Church does not lie so much in deviant practices that could be corrected—as occasionally happens in traditional religions—but rather in the faith itself, which they deem heretical, and in proselytizing, which they view as a form of mind control. Under the influence of such a lobby, several measures have been proposed or already implemented, particularly regarding the continued religious practice of individual believers or groups of believers, as well as the “issue” of minors raised in their parents’ faith, which is considered “child abuse related to religious belief.” This form of witch hunt—or religious purge—in a modern democracy, disguised as a campaign against “cults,” poses a real threat to freedom of conscience and the freedom to practice the religion of one’s choice, as well as to the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, all of which are protected by the treaties Japan committed to uphold after the end of World War II.

Anti Heresy Movement

The National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS)—founded by lawyers close to the Communist Party at a time when Church members were campaigning against the spread of atheistic communism in East Asia—joined forces in 1987 with a group of Protestant pastors who viewed the Unification Church as a rival sect to eliminate the Church from Japan. For the following three decades, these lawyers worked in coordination with pastors involved in the “deprogramming” or forced deconversion of believers through their abduction and confinement by families, and coerced indoctrination by pastors to recant the religion. This longstanding practice was euphemistically referred to as a “family issue” or “protection” by the Japanese authorities, who covered it up until the Human Rights Committee, in 2014, urged them to put a definitive end to it.

NNLASS lawyers, who pledged the elimination of the Church, [made a statement](#) right after the release of the High Court decision on March 4. They welcomed the Court’s decision but stated that it was not sufficient. Based on a biased interpretation of the religion—which they view as a form of mental manipulation—and of donations made to the Church—which they see as mere commercial transactions, completely disregarding the faith of the believers who solicit these donations—they claim that even future fundraising by groups of believers would constitute “unfair solicitation of donations,” just as the Church previously did.

And they call for a revision of the law on the prevention of abusive solicitation of donations: “The current Unfair Donation Solicitation Prevention Act still shows serious shortcoming in that the prohibition of excessive solicitation of donations is not effective.”

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several shortcomings from the perspective of preventing or remedying the specific type of victimization seen with the Unification Church. This involves victims having their value judgments altered through illegal proselytizing activities that infringe upon freedom of religious choice, leading them to make donations as instructed. Furthermore, as the Act primarily prevents donation solicitation by corporations, it cannot regulate similar solicitation activities conducted by the Unification Church or its members as voluntary groups after losing their religious corporation status, or by individuals.”

These allegations—that Unification Church members “alter people’s value judgments” through “illegal proselytizing activities that infringe upon freedom of religious choice”—are based on the discredited and unsubstantiated theory of mind control, which courts of law have rejected as nonscientific worldwide.

Based on this flawed theory, the>NNLASS recommended amending the law to prohibit the collection of donations by groups of followers or by individual believers who wish to continue practicing the Unification Church’s faith. However, this is a Christian inspired denomination with a body of doctrine developed by its founder and a large community of followers, which therefore meets the criteria for a religious community under international law and, as such, deserves the protection afforded by that law.

The dissolution of the only Unification Church religious entity that brought together all of Japan’s churches, along with the cessation of all related activities, left hundreds of thousands of believers without places of worship or any means to practice their religion in community with others in Japan.

The European Commission for Democracy through Law—better known as the Venice Commission, the Council of Europe’s advisory body composed of top constitutional experts—issued Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities, which provide that “the legal prohibition and sanctioning of unregistered activities is incompatible with international standards.”

In particular, the Commission specifically addressed the dissolution of religious organizations: “The withdrawal of legal personality from a religious or belief organization should not in any way imply that the religious or belief community in question, or its individual members, no longer enjoy the protection of their freedom of religion or belief or other human rights and fundamental freedoms... Doing so would impose a collective sanction on the community as a whole for actions that in fairness should be attributed to specific individuals” (§34).

Even if the Church had committed wrongdoing, only the individuals involved could be punished, and the practice of religion should not be affected. Yet>NNLASS lawyers want to go further than dissolution and prevent the religious practice by individuals or groups of faithful, and forbid the raising of necessary donations to fund their activities, in violation of the right to “establish and maintain religious institutions” protected by international human rights instruments, in particular the 1981 Declaration of the National Assembly, Article 6(f): “The right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief includes the freedom to solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions from individuals and institutions.”

The lawyers’ stance amounts to advocating the banning of an entire religion from Japan, just as in totalitarian states such as Russia, where the religion of Jehovah’s Witnesses has been banned as extremist and believers are regularly prosecuted for holding group meetings and reading the Bible at home. On March 13, 2026, the United Nations Human Rights Committee condemned the Russian Federation for violating their right to freedom of religion as a result of these arrests and incarcerations. The ruling [obliges Russia](#) to provide full reparations to the Witnesses involved and to take measures to prevent similar violations in the future (“Vilitkevich et al. v. Russian Federation,” CCPR/C/145/D/3192/2018).

In contravention of these international human rights standards,>NNLASS proposed similar measures to prohibit the practice of the Unification Church faith in Japan. They also expressed their intention to spread similar repression to South Korea, according to statements made to the media. On January 8, 2025, the>NNLASS signed an agreement with the The Korean Association of Christian Heresy Counseling Centers to cooperate in their fight against “cults” in Japan and Korea and help “pass laws that regulate cult organizations in South Korea” (cf. article [published in “Kirishin,”](#) a Korean Christian newspaper, on January 21, 2025).



NNLASS’ Hiroshi Yamaguchi (right) signs the agreement with The Korean Association of

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 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.

Furthermore, to continue the purge that had been carried out for decades in Japan through the deprogramming of believers, the lawyers proposed measures aimed at “de-indoctrinating” their children within the public school system.

The>NNLASS issued an Opinion in December 2023, recommending that the authorities adopt measures to re-educate second-generation believers to turn them away from their parents’ faith (Opinion Paper on the “Prevention of Harm and Support for Second-Generation Members of Religious and Similar Groups,” December 14, 2023).

This recommendation was implemented through a plan adopted at a Cabinet meeting on January 19, 2024 (the “Proposed Measures to Enhance and Strengthen Support for Victims of the ‘Former Unification Church,’” hereafter the “Plan”).

[Anti-Cult, Japan, Religious Liberty, Unification Church](#)



Patricia Duval

Patricia Duval is an attorney and a member of the Paris Bar. She has a Master in Public Law from La Sorbonne University, and specializes in international human rights law. She has defended the rights of minorities of religion or belief in domestic and international fora, and before international institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Union, and the United Nations. She has also published numerous scholarly articles on freedom of religion or belief.



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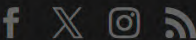
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Unification Church in Japan: After the Dissolution, the Purge. 2. Targeting Believers’ Children

by Patricia Duval | Jun 2, 2026 | [Op-eds Global](#)

New measures now focus on reshaping the upbringing of minors from believing families, raising serious concerns about parental rights and ideological neutrality.

by Patricia Duval. Article 2 of 4. Read [article 1](#).



Yoshihide Sakurai. Screenshot.

Yoshihide Sakurai, another leading figure in the fight against heresy and “cults” in Japan, a professor of sociology at Hokkaido University, and a Nichiren Buddhist priest, recently [gave an interview](#) to the *Asahi Shimbun* on April 18, 2026. He stated that he had long recommended the dissolution of the Church and was pleased that it had been decided, but insisted that this measure was not sufficient. According to him, “the problems associated with the former Unification Church will not simply disappear. Many believers will continue practicing their faith even if the group loses its status as a religious corporation.”

In particular, he expressed concern that second generation believers “continue to suffer, well into adolescence and adulthood, from the effects of what may be called ‘religious abuse’ during their formative years”—referring to their religious education ordinary social norms may be impaired.” He added that “even when such children do not inherit the faith, they often remain strongly affected by their parents’ cognitive biases and by the worldview of the group.”

According to these advocates of thought control, the problem with parents’ religious beliefs lies in the worldview they instill in their children, which, they argue, prevents them from grasping the social norms and appropriate ways of thinking in Japanese society. This constitutes an unacceptable violation of the right to freedom of conscience and belief, as well as the right to live according to one’s chosen worldview and to raise one’s children accordingly.

It should be noted that it was precisely based on “social norms” that the civil courts ruled against the Church and that the High Court ordered the dissolution of its religious association. However, social norms must under no circumstances be used to determine whether a religion should be tolerated or not. All beliefs deserve protection, and the State has a duty to remain neutral in religious matters, as emphasized by the Human Rights Committee in its General Comment No. 22, which gives directions to State parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR): “Article 18 protects theistic, nontheistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief. The terms ‘belief’ and ‘religion’ are to be broadly construed. Article 18 is not limited in its application to traditional religions or to religions and beliefs with institutional characteristics or practices analogous to those of traditional religions. The Committee therefore views with concern any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief for any reason, including the fact that they are newly established, or represent religious minorities that may be the subject of hostility on the part of a predominant religious community.”

In contravention of these international standards, antiheresy and anticult activists are making increasingly extreme statements, calling for measures to prevent the practice of the Unification Church faith and “worldview” in Japan. Relying on the fallacious argument that religious education exerts undue influence, they proposed—and the government adopted—measures aimed at systematically “deindoctrinating” children from the education provided by their parents.



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Second-generation Unification Church members protest for freedom of religion in Tokyo. From Instagram.

In their Opinion submitted to the government, NNLASS lawyers argued that children do not voluntarily adopt their parents’ religious beliefs because of their young age. Yet it is precisely the right of parents to educate their children in accordance with their own convictions that States Parties, including Japan, have sought to protect through Article 18(4) of the ICCPR: “The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.”

In violation of this protected right, NNLASS argues that, to enable children to regain their ability to choose “freely,” they must be provided with “critical” information that challenges their parents’ beliefs, so that they can regain their “critical thinking skills.”

In their Opinion submitted to the government in December 2023, these lawyers provided the following description of the “problem” to justify the reeducation of children: “Individuals raised by parents who practice a particular religion—especially when they are forced to adopt that religion or are educated according to its teachings—are generally referred to as ‘secondgeneration religious followers.’”

“Secondgeneration followers” are viewed as victims who have not yet realized the extent of their indoctrination and who must be reeducated to turn away from their parents’ faith: “It has also become clear that individuals who grow up in such environments during the formative years of their personality often remain unable to break away from the religious doctrines instilled in them, even after reaching adulthood, resulting in longterm psychological instability and ongoing difficulties in daily life.”

It is clear from this explanation that the goal is to prevent the children of Unification Church members from becoming believers and followers of that religion in the future.

The plan published by the government in January 2024—titled “Proposed Measures to Enhance and Strengthen Support for Victims of the ‘Former Unification Church’”—is entirely designed to reeducate the children of Unification Church members, who are considered victims even though they have not complained about anything. They are presumed to be under mind control and must be deindoctrinated so that they turn away from their parents’ religion.

The argument that second generation followers “suffer” and need help is a fabrication designed to justify the indoctrination of these children in Japanese public schools. The following developments show that, in reality, if there is any suffering, it is the result of the Japanese authorities’ policy of stigmatization and the destruction of families.

Japan, Religious Liberty, Unification Church



Patricia Duval

Patricia Duval is an attorney and a member of the Paris Bar. She has a Master in Public Law from La Sorbonne University, and specializes in international human rights law. She has defended the rights of minorities of religion or belief in domestic and international fora, and before international institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Union, and the United Nations. She has also published numerous scholarly articles on freedom of religion or belief.



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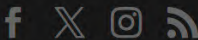


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