

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan to Indoctrinate Children Who Belong to the Wrong Church

Knut Holdhus
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Japanese junior high school students in Kyomizu showing "peace" sign. The persons in the picture have no known relation to the Family Federation. Photo (2009)



[Bitter Winter](#), the world's leading online magazine on religious liberty and human rights.

European human rights expert points out how the Japanese authorities with "cult experts" as advisors have stepped up their assault on large religious minority Family Federation by implementing plan that includes indoctrinating school children

In the [third installment](#) of her four-part series examining the treatment of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) - formerly the [Unification Church](#) - in Japan following the government's dissolution proceedings against the movement, Paris-based international human rights attorney Patricia Duval turns her attention to a subject she considers

particularly significant: the policies directed toward children of [Family Federation](#) families.

Published in the human rights and religious liberty magazine [Bitter Winter](#) on 3rd June 2026, the [article](#) argues that the Japanese government's response to controversies surrounding the [Family Federation](#) has evolved beyond legal actions against the [religious organization](#) itself and now encompasses educational, counseling, and child-protection initiatives aimed at minors whose parents belong to the [movement](#).

Duval contends that these measures amount to a state-sponsored effort to indoctrinate children raised in [Family Federation](#) households and reshape their attitudes and beliefs. According to her [analysis](#), the policies are presented by authorities as child-protection mechanisms but function, in practice, as programs designed to persuade children that their parents' religious commitments have harmed them and that they should distance themselves from those beliefs.

The [article](#) focuses on two closely connected developments: the governmental action plan adopted in early 2024 and the official guidelines concerning what authorities describe as child abuse linked to religious beliefs. Together, Duval argues, these initiatives establish a framework through which schools, counselors, social workers, and child-protection agencies become active participants in monitoring, identifying, and intervening in the lives of children from certain religious communities.

Educational Programs and Awareness Campaigns

According to Duval, the governmental plan includes a variety of educational and counseling measures

directed at young people. These initiatives are incorporated into schools and human rights education programs and are intended to increase awareness of issues associated with religion, particularly in relation to the [Family Federation](#). Duval writes,



Patricia Duval - Member of the Paris Bar Association, specializing in international human rights law. Has defended the rights of religious and faith minorities both in France and internationally (2025)



*Disputed donations. Here, woman offering donation that her son later wanted refunded.
Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator*

"The governmental measures adopted in January 2024 implement [...] 'awareness-raising' sessions organized as part of human rights courses, including 'consumer education' on religious donations - as if donations to a church were a matter of [consumer law](#) - particularly regarding the "criminal financial activities" of the [Unification Church](#), to make children 'aware' of the problems that may arise from their parents' membership in that [church](#)".

She describes a system in which children are exposed to educational materials discussing alleged religious abuses, including cartoons, online forums, and classroom activities. Additional lessons are integrated into broader human rights and consumer education curricula. These sessions reportedly address religious donations and financial contributions made by members of the [religious organization](#), presenting them as matters that may affect families and children.

Duval emphasizes that the government frames these programs as awareness-raising efforts. However, she argues that their underlying message encourages children to view their parents' religious commitments as inherently problematic. In her interpretation, the educational content is structured to lead children toward the conclusion that membership in the [Family Federation](#) is associated with harmful behavior and that they may themselves be victims of that environment.

The [article](#) further notes that schools distribute materials encouraging students to seek assistance if they have concerns related to religion in their homes. These include contact information for counseling services and written forms through which children can communicate worries or request support.

Counseling and Psychological Intervention

A major concern raised by Duval involves the counseling infrastructure accompanying these initiatives. She notes that counselors involved in the program may receive training from former members of the [Family Federation](#) who are critical of the [movement](#).

In her view, this creates a significant risk that counseling services will not remain neutral. Rather than offering balanced support, she argues, such programs may encourage children to reinterpret their upbringing through a framework that assumes religious involvement is the source of emotional or psychological harm.

The [article](#) also discusses the possibility of referrals to mental health services. Children who express anxiety or distress connected to their parents' religious affiliation may be directed toward psychological evaluation or counseling. Duval questions whether such interventions are based on objective assessments of harm or whether they reflect a broader assumption that membership in a controversial religious group is itself a source of concern.

She suggests that the cumulative effect of these measures is to encourage children to reconsider their parents' beliefs and authority through a lens shaped by state-sponsored educational and counseling programs.

To be continued.

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Carlson’s discussion in the section titled “The Nature of Communism and How It Uses People”, draws heavily upon the work of Fred Schwarz, whose analysis of communist strategy sought to explain why revolutionary movements are often able to attract support far beyond the ranks of committed party members.

To understand Carlson’s argument, it is useful first to understand the background of Dr. Fred Schwarz and the publication he cites. Fred Schwarz (1913–2009) was an Australian physician who became one of the most influential anti-communist educators of the twentieth century.



Dr. Fred Schwarz (1913-2009), physician, writer, political commentator, at an anti-communist press conference in Los Angeles 14th October 1964. Photo: Los Angeles Times. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

Concerned by the global expansion of Marxist-Leninist ideology during the Cold War, he devoted much of his life to explaining communist doctrine, strategy, and methods to public audiences. In 1953 he founded the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, which organized lectures, seminars, and publications throughout the United States and other countries.

Schwarz became especially known for presenting complex ideological questions in a way that ordinary citizens could understand. The source cited by Carlson, *What Is Communism*, originated as a lecture series delivered by Schwarz and later published by Chantico in Long Beach, California. The work

sought to describe not only communist philosophy itself but also the broader network of supporters, sympathizers, and unwitting collaborators that, in Schwarz’s view, enabled communist movements to gain influence within democratic societies.

Although written during the Cold War and reflecting the political assumptions of that era, the publication remains an important historical example of anti-communist thought and has continued to influence certain religious and political commentators.

Drawing upon Schwarz’s framework, Carlson notes that people associated with communist causes can be divided into several categories. The first group consists of committed communists themselves – individuals who consciously embrace and advance communist ideology. Beyond them, however, lie several additional categories that Schwarz believed were often more significant because of their numbers and social influence.

One such category is that of “fellow travelers”. These are individuals who may not formally belong to communist organizations but who nonetheless support policies, movements, or cultural trends that advance communist objectives. Whether through political activism, intellectual advocacy, or participation in social campaigns, their actions align with goals that they may not fully acknowledge or recognize.

Another group is composed of sympathizers. According to Schwarz, these individuals often believe that communist movements can be moderated through understanding, tolerance, or goodwill. They may hope that revolutionary organizations will eventually become constructive partners in society if given sufficient acceptance and encouragement. Carlson questions this assumption, arguing that such optimism underestimates the fundamentally destructive nature that thinkers critical of communism have historically attributed to its ideology. From this perspective, sincere hopes for accommodation can become a source of vulnerability rather than a path toward reconciliation.

Schwarz also identified what he called “pseudo-liberals”. These are often educated professionals, academics, intellectuals, lawyers, and others who are deeply engaged in theoretical discussions about society and social reform. They frequently champion causes involving justice, equality, or civil liberties. Carlson suggests that such individuals may sincerely believe they are advancing noble principles, yet they can become detached from practical realities. In Schwarz’s analysis, they sometimes employ legal or intellectual arguments in ways that unintentionally support movements whose ultimate objectives are far more radical than the values they publicly profess.

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Perhaps the most striking category is that of the “dupe”. Drawing upon dictionary definitions, Schwarz describes a dupe as a person who is easily deceived or misled. Such individuals need not possess malicious intentions. On the contrary, they are often patriotic, compassionate, and genuinely concerned about improving society. Their vulnerability lies not in bad motives but in their inability to recognize when they are being manipulated by more determined ideological actors. Because they respond readily to appeals framed as humanitarian, moral, or socially beneficial, they can be recruited into campaigns whose deeper purposes remain hidden from them. From Schwarz’s perspective, the list would likely have included:

- Peace movements
- Nuclear disarmament campaigns
- Anti-war coalitions
- Anti-fascist organizations
- Anti-colonial and national liberation campaigns
- Civil-rights and anti-racism campaigns
- International friendship societies
- Student protest movements
- Certain labor and trade-union initiatives
- Campaigns against military spending



Peace activist 8th August 2020. Photo: Susan Ruggles / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 2.0 Gen](#)



February 16, 2003: An elderly American woman raises her fist in opposition to her country's imminent invasion of Iraq. Photo: Pedant / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image

Carlson argues that these categories remain relevant in the present day. In his view, many people who contribute to harmful ideological movements are neither openly revolutionary nor consciously evil. Rather, they participate because they have accepted certain narratives, assumptions, or social pressures without fully examining their origins and consequences. As a result, they may unknowingly assist agendas that contradict the very values they believe they are defending.

This concern connects to a broader theme within the [Unification Principles](#). Those basic teachings of the [Family Federation](#) point out that evil does not always present itself openly as evil. People may sincerely believe they are advancing justice, progress, or humanitarian ideals while unknowingly supporting forces that oppose [God's providence](#). Thus, individuals can become participants in destructive historical movements without recognizing the spiritual implications of their actions.

One of the most relevant statements in the [Unification Principles](#) appears in the discussion of the relationship between good and evil throughout history:

“Throughout history, evil people have often masqueraded as good people, by advancing causes and policies which superficially appear good.”

This theme is developed further in the Introduction's explanation of how conflicting ideologies emerge and how people can be drawn

into movements that appear righteous while actually serving purposes contrary to [God's providence](#). The Introduction argues that the struggle of history is not simply between obviously good people and obviously evil people, but between forces and ideas whose true character is not always immediately apparent.

David Carlson contends that many people today are convinced they are promoting goodness, justice, or progress while remaining unaware of the larger ideological currents influencing their thinking. The central warning of this section is therefore not directed solely at committed ideological activists but at ordinary citizens as well. Vigilance, discernment, and a willingness to examine the underlying assumptions behind social and political movements are presented as essential safeguards in a rapidly changing world.

In this way, Carlson's discussion extends beyond a narrow critique of communism and becomes a broader reflection on how ideas influence human behavior. His underlying message is that societies are most vulnerable when people cease to question the forces shaping their beliefs and actions. Understanding the difference between conscious commitment, sympathetic support, intellectual rationalization, and unwitting participation is therefore portrayed as an important step toward preserving both personal integrity and social responsibility.

Disclaimer: The views expressed are those of the author.

Dr. David Carlson is an educator and author with over 30 years of experience teaching world religions, philosophy, and family values. He holds a Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate University and spent more than a decade in South Korea as a professor of Korean history and culture. Until his retirement in 2014, Dr. Carlson served on the faculty of the Cheongshim Graduate School of Theology. His published works include *Sunrise on Christology* and *The Dawning of a New Culture*, as well as serving as co-editor of *Explorations in Unificationism*. Having held both academic and pastoral positions throughout his career, he currently resides in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Good intentions manipulated. Illustration: ChatGPT, June 2026.

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Unification Church in Japan: After the Dissolution, the Purge. 3. The Government’s “Re-Education” Plan

by Patricia Duval | Jun 3, 2026 | [Op-eds Global](#)

New state policies introduce school-based programs designed to reshape the thinking of minors from Unification Church families.

by Patricia Duval

Article 3 of 4. Read [article 1](#) and [article 2](#).



Japanese schoolchildren. Credits.

Government Plan for De-Indoctrination

The governmental measures adopted in January 2024 implement the following:

1. the indoctrination of children in elementary school through cartoons and online discussion forums regarding “abuses” related to religious beliefs;
2. “awarenes-raising” sessions organized as part of human rights courses, including “consumer education” on religious donations—as if donations to a church were a matter of consumer law—particularly regarding the “criminal financial activities” of the Unification Church, to make children “aware” of the problems that may arise from their parents’ membership in that church;
- telephone numbers for them to call for further questions and talks with counselors;
4. consultation services provided by counselors trained by hostile former members of the Unification Church;
5. referral to mental health institutions of children made anxious about their parents’ affiliation; and
6. requests for the suspension of parental authority and temporary custody in cases of suspected abuse, as provided in the “Guidelines for Handling Cases of Child Abuse Related to Religious Beliefs,” to remove the children from their parents’ influence.

In summary, the “re-education” provided during the Ministry of Justice’s human rights classes aims at making children realize that, due to religion, their parents have been abusing them since an early age. And by “drawing on the knowledge and expertise of former members,” as the government’s plan stipulates, the training of counselors can only lead to this “counseling” being used to indoctrinate children against their parents’ religious beliefs.

The Guidelines

The Guidelines, titled “Questions and Answers on Responding to Child Abuse Related to Religious Beliefs” (the “Guidelines”), were issued by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare on December 27, 2022. These Guidelines, intended to serve as a reference for teachers and school counselors, include examples of how to respond to cases of “child abuse related to religious beliefs.” They were the subject of [an official UN Communication](#) sent to the Japanese government on April 30, 2024, and signed by four Special Rapporteurs to the Human Rights Council—responsible, respectively, for freedom of religion, freedom of education, freedom of expression, and freedom of association—who expressed their concerns regarding the Guidelines’ non-compliance with international law.

As stated in the Communication, they “were drafted in consultation with the Japanese Society for Cult Prevention and Recovery (JSCPR), whose Chairperson called for the recognition of a new type of child abuse by religious groups in October 2022, and had previously made public statements denigrating the

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Jehovah's Witnesses and other religious or belief minorities.” They were “hastily prepared, in just 18 days (December 5–23, 2022), in closed-door sessions with those same anti-cult groups, and adopted without any independent expert review or public consultation” (Jehovah’s Witnesses, Submissions to the Japanese Government, March 2024).

These Guidelines include, among other things, that making a child attend religious services when they do not feel like it or participate in religious activities constitutes “psychological abuse,” and that imprinting continuous fear since childhood through verbal reprimands or references to “hell” constitutes child abuse. Clearly, the focus here is on the religious education that parents may provide to their children, as well as their religious, moral, and ethical values and the religious practice itself.

As stated by the four United Nations experts, the Guidelines “appear to set a lower threshold for the establishment of abuse in religious as opposed to non-religious contexts.” For instance, the Guidelines “assert that ‘forcing a child to participate in religious activities, etc., during hours that may interfere with the child’s schooling or daily life constitutes neglect,’ without clarifying what is meant by ‘forcing,’ nor what distinguishes ‘religious activities, etc.’ in this case from activities such as extra tutorials, music or language lessons, or other secular extra-curricular activities in ‘daily life.’”

The UN Special Rapporteurs concluded that “the Guidelines in their current form may undermine the rights of children to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 14.1); and of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions, as set out in article 18, paragraph 4 of the ICCPR.” They added that they “are also concerned that in the context of heightened suspicion of religious or belief minorities, the Guidelines in their current form may facilitate stigma, social pressure, or bullying of children belonging to religion or belief communities.” They called on the Japanese government to review and reconsider certain key aspects of the Guidelines to ensure compliance with Japan’s international human rights obligations.

However, Japan’s authorities never reconsidered the Guidelines. On the contrary, the Guidelines have been widely disseminated to teachers, counselors, and social workers, and training sessions and briefings have been organized to ensure proper awareness so that they can track down cases of “child abuse due to religious beliefs.”



Anti-cult “SOS mini-letters” distributed in Japanese schools.

Tracing Children from Religious Minorities

An important phase of the governmental plan concerns the role assigned to teachers, social workers, and counselors in identifying children from Unification Church families who are deemed to need specific “counseling.” These school staff are instructed to act “in the absence of explicit statements from the child,” so their primary mission is to identify those children.

In its opinion submitted to the government, which led to the adoption of the plan, the>NNLASS specifies what instructions should be given in this regard: “As a prerequisite for such efforts, it is essential that schools first identify children who are facing problems related to religion or similar belief systems. As an initial indication, a child may speak to school staff about concerns related to their parents’ religious beliefs while at school. It is also possible that teachers may come to recognize the influence of religious beliefs on a child when, for instance, the parent or the child requests certain accommodations in academic or school life based on faith, or when the child engages in behavior at school that differs from that of other students. Given that the conditions of a child’s home life are often difficult for third parties to observe, schools must make every effort not to overlook such signs and to identify children facing second-generation religious issues accurately.”

Therefore, school staff is instructed to take action even in the absence of any request from the child or any indication of problems in the child’s family life. They are instructed to look for signs of religious upbringing and then infer the existence of problems from those signs. Their first step is to spy on the children and identify those likely to come from a Unification Church family. For this purpose, a Guide for Psychological Counseling on cult issues has been provided to them.

Japan, Religious Liberty, Unification Church



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

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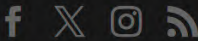
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