

# FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Religious Freedom Symposium in Tokyo on Japan's maltreatment of Unification Church

Knut Holdhus  
August 13, 2024



Yosuke Yokokawa talks about his religious identity on 8th August 2024 in Musashino, Tokyo



**Members, politicians and religious leaders gather for religious freedom symposium to address current persecution in Japan**

Tokyo, 9th August 2024 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

Symposium on Religious Freedom Held in Tokyo

"Let's Speak Out to Protect Our Faith"

by the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)



Norio Hosoya, Japanese author and politician. Among his books is one titled "[The Constitution and the Former Unification Church](#)" (2023)

A symposium titled "Symposium on Religious Freedom and Fundamental Human Rights", hosted by the West Tokyo Peace Ambassadors Council, was held on 8th August 2024 in Musashino City, Tokyo, with about 100 participants, mainly members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)).

Yosuke Yokokawa (横川洋介) (46), a second-generation believer and employee of the [Family Federation](#), commented on the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's request to the Tokyo District Court for an order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#). He emphasized that "for believers, the church is faith itself and their identity." He called on participants to "raise their voices to protect the faith for future generations."

Norio Hosoya (細谷典男), a city councilor from Toride City, Ibaraki Prefecture, pointed out that "the issues surrounding the [Family Federation](#) have become a political struggle." He encouraged the participants by saying,

"The believers understand best that the [Family Federation](#) is not an organization that should be dissolved."

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# UN Body Watching: Japan Triggering Hate Crimes

July 7, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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**UN Human Rights Council has expressed its concern over Japan triggering hate crimes against religious minorities**

Tokyo, 4th July 2024 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article*

UN Human Rights Council expresses concern over “Q&A on abuse of second-generation members of religions” and urges the Japanese government to reconsider it.

by the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*



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In December 2022, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare formulated and announced the “Q&A on Response to Child Abuse Related to Religious Beliefs” (Q&A on abuse of second-

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From a UNHRC meeting. Here Maria Otero, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Addresses the Human Rights Council, March 1, 2010, Geneva, Switzerland. Photo: Eric Bridiers from US Mission Geneva. License: CC Attr 2.0 Gen

generation members of religions). Prefectural governors and municipal mayors were notified about it. It has recently come to light that **four special rapporteurs from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) have raised concerns with the Japanese government in four areas related to this issue, including “freedom of religion or belief” and “the right to upbringing”.**

The notification, sent to the government in April this year following a resolution by the UNHRC, has been made public after a 60-day confidential period. The notification points out that the **Q&A was formulated through repeated consultations with the Japan Anti-Cult Association** – led by President Kimiaki Nishida (西田公昭) – which had **publicly made defamatory statements about Jehovah’s Witnesses and other religious minorities.** However, it was

developed **without any consultation with the religious organizations that may be targeted.**

The report also points out that the **Q&A was formulated in the wake of the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe amid growing “surveillance and stigma” against some religious groups in Japanese society.** The notification also highlights the **lack of independent expert review** and the **extremely short period of 18 days taken to formulate the Q&A.** It criticizes the **imbalance of the document,** which emphasizes the rights of children, but **lacks reference to the rights and obligations of parents and legal guardians to provide appropriate guidance to children.**

The special rapporteurs also mention the **increase in hate crimes targeting Jehovah’s Witnesses following the nationwide distribution of the Q&A.** Overall, the special rapporteurs have urged the government to reconsider the Q&A, arguing that it risks violating international treaties that Japan has ratified, such as the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR). In response, the government replied in June, stating that it would “take note” of the concerns.



### International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

In February of this year, associate professor Kazuko Ikeya (池谷和子) of Nagasaki University’s Faculty of Education, who specializes in constitutional law and the protection of minors, also expressed **concern that the Q&A threatens religious freedom.**

**Featured image** above: Japan being watched. Illustration generated by Microsoft Designer Image Creator 6th July 2024.

*A Special Rapporteur (or Independent Expert) is an independent human rights expert appointed by the United Nations (UN) to provide reports or advice on human rights issues from either a thematic or country-specific perspective. These experts are selected by the UN Human Rights Council and operate independently of any government, playing a crucial role in monitoring the actions of sovereign nations and democratically elected governments.*

*Special Rapporteurs do not receive financial compensation from the United Nations for their work. However, they receive support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and are often funded by charities and corporations. Annually, they convene in Geneva to discuss common issues, coordinate their efforts, and engage with various stakeholders, including states and civil society organizations.*

*These experts frequently conduct fact-finding missions to investigate human rights violation allegations in different countries. In addition to these missions, they regularly review complaints from alleged victims of human rights abuses. If a complaint is verified, they send an urgent letter or appeal to the concerned government. Even without a specific complaint, Special Rapporteurs can intervene on behalf of individuals or groups at their discretion.*

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