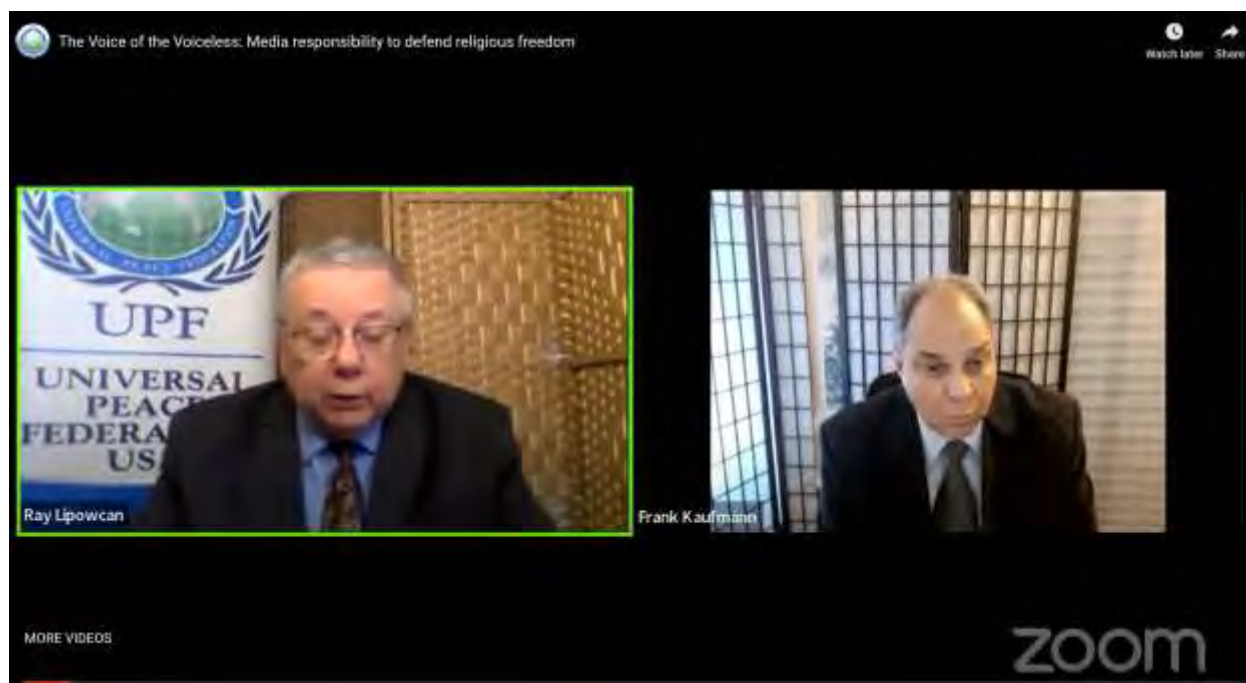


## UPF & IMAP USA: The Voice of the Voiceless, Responsibility of the Media to Defend Religious Freedom

Hans Moyer  
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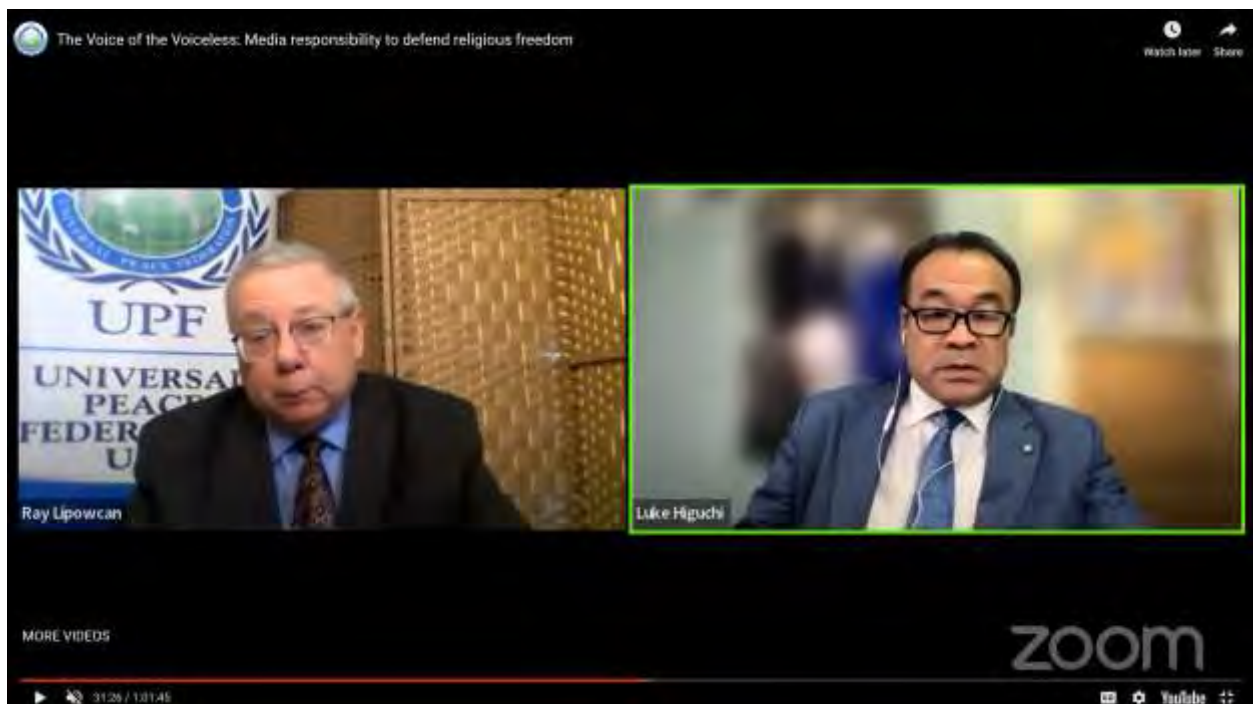
**United States** -- At a webinar hosted by UPF-IMAP, panelists expressed their views and experiences on the topic, "The Voice of the Voiceless, Responsibility of the Media to Defend Religious Freedom." There was general agreement that mass communication media is given two great responsibilities. First, to relentlessly fight for freedom of the press in places where it does not exist and, second, to demand the strictly ethical exercise of that freedom by their colleagues in places where it does exist. The International Media Association for Peace (IMAP) hosted the forum for journalists and scholars to discuss issues freely, and promote the defense of human rights, of which the most foundational is freedom of religion. The event was held on December 27, 2022.



**Dr. Frank Kaufmann**, president of the Twelve Gates Foundation, an interfaith association, spoke on the theme "Religious Illiteracy and Religious Freedom." **Ms. Susanna Kaneer**, public affairs director for the Church of Scientology of Western USA, spoke about the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a Church's Campaign for its Application." **Mr. Luke Higuchi**, president of the U.S.-based Survivors Against Forced Exit (SAFE), a support group for victims of attempted forced conversion, offered an updated report on the current religious freedom crisis against members of the Family Federation for World Peace in Japan.



Dr. Kaufmann emphasized the importance of religious literacy and interfaith cooperation as the main deterrents to the current global phenomena of religious liberty violations in both open and closed societies. His presentation illustrated how religion, government and media are all crucial actors to maintain religious freedom in our world today. He gave the following conclusions and warnings: (1) Religion is vital. The welfare of free democracies is in precipitous decline, including in the United States. If religion, because it competes with other rights, ceases to be recognized as important it will lose the protection of the State. (2) If knowledge that religion is needed becomes lost, people in all fields will become religiously ignorant, or religiously "illiterate." Journalists will be too ignorant of religion and its importance; they will not be able to report on it intelligently, and will have no interest in protecting it. (3) The revitalization of religion in free democracies must be characterized by rigorous interfaith investment.



Ms. Kaneer recounted how Scientology is actively promoting religious literacy by providing study materials worldwide and promoting local community activities. She emphasized the need to begin teaching religious freedoms from an early age and sighted various educational materials developed for this purpose by the Church of Scientology.

Mr. Higuchi shared a personal experience of being denied his religious freedoms in Japan in the 1980s and 90s. His activism both in the past and today has revealed forces at work to limit religious freedom, human potential and opportunity for happiness.