

IMAP Canada Examines Attacks on Religion in Asian Democracies

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What is the future for religious freedom in Northeast Asia?

Tuesday, December 23rd, 2025: 2-3 PM EST

Dr. Massimo Introvigne
Founder and managing director, the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR)

Dr. Franco Famularo
President, Universal Peace Federation, Canada

Isaac Jeong
Co-founder, Jeong Media

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IMAP, Canada - This end-of-year webinar, in which UPF-Canada partnered with the International Media Association for Peace (IMAP), featured Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Dr. Franco Famularo, and Mr. Isaac Jeong examining the politically motivated persecution of religions under both South Korea's and Japan's current governments. The panel discussed recent raids on churches, arrests of pastors, and the implications of these actions. They also addressed the role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in influencing anti-cult campaigns in both South Korea and Japan. The speakers emphasized the importance of religious freedom as a cornerstone of democracy and called for international action to address the persecution of religious groups in the region.

Dr. Massimo Introvigne, founder and managing director of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), discussed the recent "unwelcome revival" of anti-cult movements in Asia, highlighting the extension of the cult label to conservative religions and non-religions, particularly in democratic countries. He explained the "strange, unholy alliance" between fundamentalist protestant groups and left-wing intellectuals in Korea and Japan, noting China's role in organizing these alliances.

Dr. Introvigne further described the anti-cult movement in South Korea, including the formation of the Christian Heresy Research Council in 1998 and its use of Japanese deprogramming methods, which sometimes led to violence. He asserted that the most significant development of the 21st century has been the creation of the Warren Association Against Heresy, headquartered in Seoul, which operates with

funding from the CCP. He concluded by discussing recent developments, including the 2022 assassination of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, which led to four known meetings between the Christian Heresy Research Council, the Japanese Anti-cult Lawyers Group and CCP bureaucrats about how to use this assassination to destroy the Unification church in Japan and South Korea.

The downfall of President Yoon Suk Yeol in Korea and the election of current President Lee Jae Myung have created a complex political landscape for anti-cult activities. President Lee is investigating and prosecuting not only churches that have been targets of the anti-cultists. He also has detained leaders of other mainstream churches that supported the party of the former president. Dr. Introvigne concluded that this could lead to the breakup of the "unholy alliance" between conservative Christian pastors and leftwing politicians that has been the hallmark of the South Korean anticult movement until now.

Dr. Franco Famularo, president of UPF-Canada, gave a historical perspective on religious persecution during the French Revolution and going back to the Roman Empire. He asserted that the CCP's view of religions as a threat stems from their inability to control them. Dr. Famularo elaborated on the persecution of new religions as cults in the West, and highlighted recent developments in Japan and South Korea.

Mr. Isaac Jeong, co-founder of Jeong Media and the Monarch Report, shared his personal experience with media portrayal of the Unification Church in South Korea and his efforts to counter misinformation through the Monarch Report. He concluded by emphasizing that in the current age, every individual has incredible power to speak out with the use of AI and social media.

The panelists encouraged the international community to exert pressure on South Korea to release religious leaders Dr. Hak Ja Han and Pastor Son Hyun-bo, who are being illegally detained, and emphasized the importance of religious freedom in democracy.

A recording of the webinar is available [here](#).