

US VP Vance: America to Fight Religious Persecution During Trump's 2nd Term

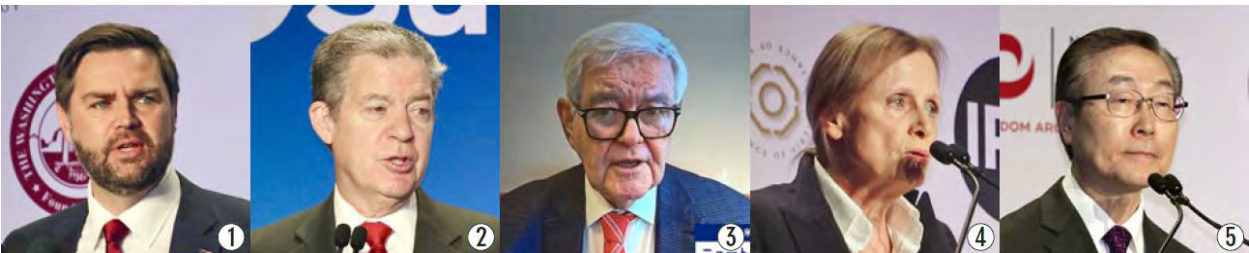
Song Yong cheon
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2025 International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington DC



Bitter Winter Editor-in-Chief Marco Respinti, Japanese attorneys Nakayama Tatsuki and Kondo Norishige, IRF Co-Chair Katrina Lantos Swett, and international lawyer Patricia Duval (from left) discussing "Religious Freedom in Japan"

The 2025 International Religious Freedom Summit (IRF Summit 2025) was held from February 4-5 at the Hilton Hotel in Washington DC, organized by the International Religious Freedom Foundation to examine violations of religious freedom worldwide and seek solutions.

Approximately 2,000 leaders from various sectors attended the event, including US Vice President JD Vance, under the theme "Empower, Legislate, Advocate, Activate: Four Tracks Provided at the IRF Summit 2025."



①US Vice President J.D. Vance delivering a special address ②Former US Republican Senator Sam Brownback giving welcoming remarks ③Former US House Speaker Newt Gingrich speaking at the "Supporting the Overcoming of Japan's Religious Freedom Crisis" session ④⑤International lawyer Patricia Duval and Japan Family Federation President Tomihiro Tanaka speaking at the same session

Vice President Vance, part of the Donald Trump administration inaugurated on January 20, 2025, delivered a special address highlighting how promoting religious freedom was realized as the most important diplomatic policy task during Trump's first administration. He stressed the importance of distinguishing between countries that respect religious freedom and those that don't. The Vice President further expressed that the administration would fight against religious persecution by expanding on previous achievements to further develop religious freedom, and affirmed that the Trump administration's second term is prepared to take action. His speech attracted significant attention from global media amid growing threats to religious freedom worldwide.

The IRF Summit, a powerful coalition of religious organizations, human rights groups, and civil society organizations advocating for religious freedom for all people globally, is regularly held in Washington DC and has contributed to raising awareness of international religious freedom issues.

Former US House Speaker Gingrich Expresses Concern that Attempt to Dissolve Unification Church

Goes Beyond Constitutional Measures

The summit included diverse leaders from various sectors, including current presidents, prime ministers, Nobel Prize winners, and civil society opinion leaders, who discussed important issues such as religious and faith freedom.

Sam Brownback, IRF Co-Chair and former Kansas Governor and Republican Senator, expressed in his greeting that over the past five years, more than 150 organizations have collaborated with IRF in efforts to promote the basic human rights of religious, conscience, and belief freedom. He shared his anticipation of working together on the challenges facing minority religious groups to realize religious freedom for all people worldwide.

The Washington Times and Universal Peace Federation (UPF) hosted an IRF Summit dinner session on "Supporting the Overcoming of Japan's Religious Freedom Crisis." Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who delivered the dinner speech, noted that the Japanese government is currently threatening to dissolve a legally established religious organization for political purposes. He conveyed that attempting to destroy the Unification Church without any illegality is a measure that far exceeds the scope of Japan's constitution. He cautioned that this situation will have a significant impact on US-Japan relations and American views on Japanese politics.

Former Congressman Dan Burton shared concerns about the attempt to dissolve the Family Federation religious corporation, emphasizing that religious freedom is for everyone and should be guaranteed everywhere, at all times.

Tomihiko Tanaka, President of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification in Japan, highlighted that the truth about religious freedom and its infringement is increasingly being revealed as even Japanese media point out problems with the Japanese government's petition for a dissolution order against the Family Federation. He added that through this IRF Summit, they are conveying to the Trump administration the unfairness of the dissolution order petition against the Japanese Family Federation.

Patricia Duval, a French international lawyer who presented a report on the "deprogramming" issue - the forced conversion through kidnapping and confinement of Japanese Family Federation members - indicated that there were attempts to plan the plundering of church assets by obstructing Family Federation activities and promoting damage claims by deprogrammed members. She criticized that the Japanese government's actions against the Family Federation are discriminatory and oppressive, similar to totalitarian states, even ignoring the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendation to stop.



The Family Federation in Japan has been recognized as a religious corporation since July 15, 1964, and has conducted active missionary work for 60 years without any criminal convictions. It has complied with laws while carrying out global missionary activities for world peace and human harmony.

Filing a lawsuit to revoke the religious corporate status of a religious organization that has been recognized as a legitimate religious entity for the past 60 years without a single criminal case is unprecedented in democratic countries. Consequently, global religious experts express concern that the Japanese government will go down in world history as a representative case of violating religious freedom.