

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Will Japan Soon Be On Special Watch List?

Knut Holdhus  
April 12, 2024



*Katrina Lantos Swett at Anne Frank Awards 14th Sept. 2017 in the Embassy of the Netherlands to the United States*

**Former Chair of US Commission on International Religious Freedom mentions Japan together with Countries of Particular Concern and Countries on Special Watch List**

**The Global Forecast for Religious Freedom - Stormy Skies Ahead**

A speech by Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, president of the Lantos foundation for Human Rights and Justice and past chair of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. The speech was given 12th April 2024, the second day of an international online 3-day conference on "Peace and Public Leadership: Addressing the Challenges of Our Times", organized by HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership, New York, USA.

I am truly honored to be participating in this important event and with such distinguished panelists and moderators.

The topic of my portion of this session is "Stormy Skies Ahead". And actually, as I sit here with you today and look out my window, we are having a pretty major storm in New Hampshire, where I live. So it looks like Mother Nature is on board, supporting my thesis.

But why this ominous forecast? I think one would have to say that the facts on the ground show that huge numbers of the world's population in fact live in countries where religious freedom is significantly - and in many cases - egregiously constrained. China, Nigeria, Iran, Russia, North Korea, to name just a few.

### **Countries of particular concern (CPCs)**



The annual reports of USCIRF, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, which as you mentioned, Dr. Mickler [Dr. Michael Mickler, Distinguished Professor of Historical Studies, HJI, and moderator of Session V of the conference] I had the honor of serving on, demonstrate that there are a lot of very big and very significant nations that have been designated as CPC's, or "Countries of Particular Concern".

And why are they designated as CPC's? Because they engage in systematic, ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom. In fact, there are 17 countries that have been so designated in the most recent report of USCIRF.

### **Special watch list**

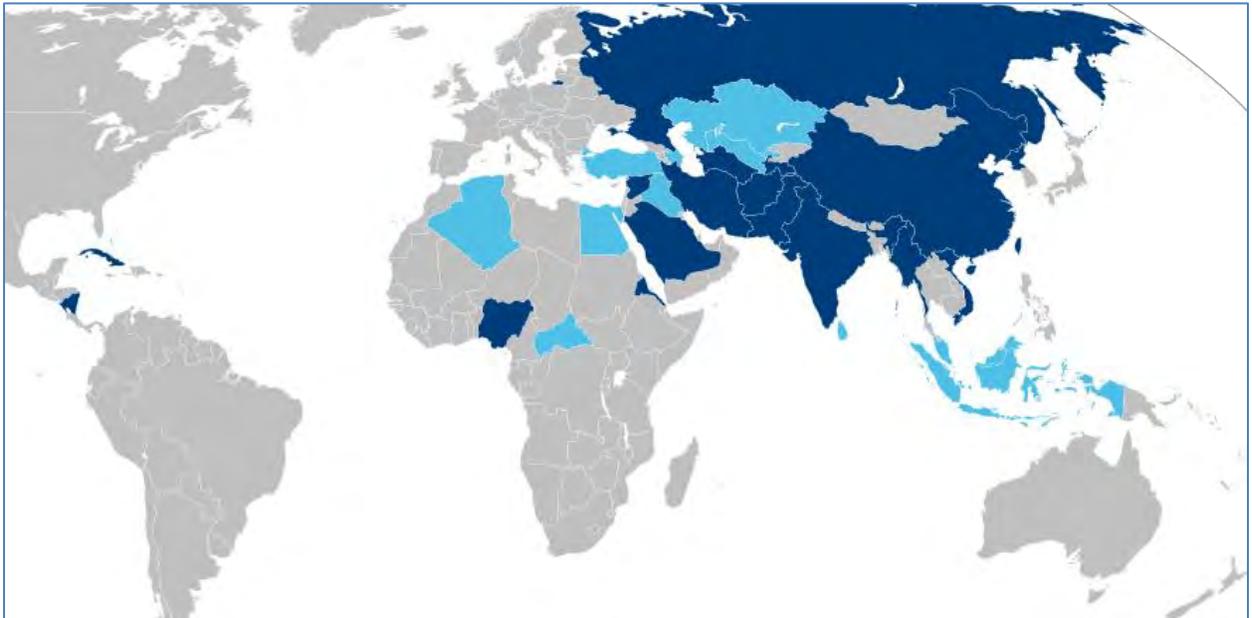
Furthermore, there are an additional eleven countries on what's called the Special Watch List, which means that they meet two of those three criteria of systematic, ongoing religious freedom abuses. So it's a pretty grim picture.

And of course, when you factor in countries like China, like Nigeria, the sheer numbers that you're talking about of world citizens who face this kind of repressive environment is really quite sobering.

Now, these threats come in a variety of forms. You have, of course, the pervasive state-generated oppression in communist countries, notably places like China and North Korea, where all religious communities are suppressed. All religion is viewed as a dangerous threat to the state control and the "permitted faiths" - and I use that in quotes - are all under the strict control of the government.

This is where we see the severe persecution of whole communities, groups like the Uyghur communities in the Xinjiang region of China. And in fact, the treatment of the Uyghurs by the Chinese government has been designated as a genocide. The Falun Gong practitioners, the house church movement, all of these come under severe, severe repression.

On the opposite pole, you have brutally repressive theocracies - countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan, where the state-imposed religious order crushes any threat to its religious hegemony, and the government imposes its religious rules on the entire society.



*A map indicating countries designated by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom as Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) or for inclusion on the State Department's Special Watch List (SWL).*

Then we have the interesting case of countries like India, the world's largest democracy, where a rising ethno-religious nationalism has led to increasingly problematic laws and practices, and where the environment has frankly become increasingly threatening for religious minorities.

#### **Non-state actors terrorizing religious minorities**

We have another category, countries where the governments have been unwilling or unable - or in some cases both unwilling and unable - to quell non-state actors who engage in violence and terror against religious minorities, or against those they perceive as threats to their dominance.



*Demonstration in Nigeria demanding the rescue of the 276 Chibok girls abducted by Boko Haram in 2014*

A clear example of this kind of threatening environment for religious freedom would be Nigeria, where the terror group Boko Haram has been responsible over the past decade or so for some 50,000 deaths, and two and a half million people displaced. And some of the really high-profile atrocities have been the kidnapping of schoolgirls, kidnapped, raped, and forcibly converted and married off.

I've always been interested in the origin of terms and names and the etymology behind things. Boko Haram, the name of this well known, widely known terror group, actually translates as "Western education is forbidden".

And so it gives you a sense of just how antithetical a group like this is, not only to freedom of religion, but any notions of the pursuit of knowledge independently.

## Majority faith serving the government

Another category we can look at where we see this very threatening landscape for religious freedom are countries like Russia, where an authoritarian government has co-opted and corrupted the social influence and credibility of the majority faith to serve the government's goals.

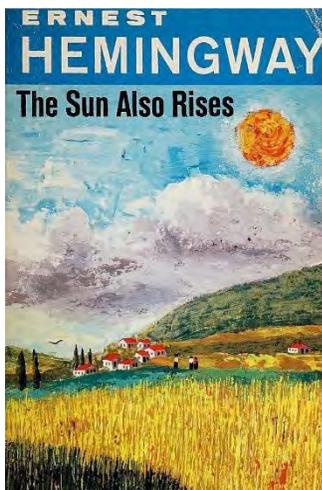
I'm thinking, of course, of the way the Russian Orthodox Church has really been drafted, you might say conscripted, to defend and to advocate and to bless Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

And we have seen this lead to a very profound break between the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church. For a long period of time, the Ukrainian Orthodox patriarch was under the umbrella of the Russian orthodox patriarchy.

But given this, what is certainly perceived by the Ukrainians as this corruption of the church to serve the ends of the state, we see a break emerging there.

## Nicaragua

Finally - and this is by no means a comprehensive list, but I hope it gives you a sense of the landscape and the reason for that stormy skies broadcast - we have countries like Nicaragua, where there has been a slow erosion of democracy, and then suddenly you wake up and recognize that it's gone.



It reminds me of the famous little mini quote from Ernest Hemingway's book "The Sun Also Rises", where one of the characters is asked how he went bankrupt. And his answer is, "Gradually, and then suddenly." And that's what we've seen in Nicaragua.

I think another analogy, that some of you in our listening audience may have heard, is of the frog sitting in a pot of water. And the temperature is quite comfortable, but slowly and imperceptibly, it's raised by one degree, one degree, one degree. The frog doesn't realize the peril he's in and eventually boils to death because of the somewhat gradual encroachment on him.

A symbol, I think, to me the most powerful symbol of this descent into dictatorship that we see in Nicaragua has been the targeting of the Catholic Church, again, because it is viewed as a threat to the authoritarian rule of the government and is viewed as a moral voice by the people of Nicaragua.

And the really powerful symbol of this has been in the arrest and sentencing of the Archbishop of Nicaragua, Rolando Alvarez, sentenced to 26 years in prison because he refused to go into exile.

One tactic used by the Nicaraguan government has been basically to first arrest, harass and target their opponents and then deport them all, basically send them into exile, get them out of the country.



*Archbishop Rolando Alvarez deprived of his nationality and citizenship rights and sentenced to 26 years in prison, but released after 500 days and exiled to the Vatican*

And Bishop Alvarez refused to do so and has been rewarded for his active conscience, not wanting to abandon his Catholic flock in Nicaragua, by a sentence of 26 years in prison.

I think that this kind of brief tour of the landscape, if you will, and the various ways and the different kinds of political systems and countries in which we see really alarming degrees of violations of religious freedom, helps to explain my forecast of stormy skies.

## Japan's assault on the Family Federation

But because we are gathered here today to talk about new religious movements [The theme of Section V of the conference was "New religious Movements and Contemporary Threats to Religious Freedom"], I think we have to take a moment to consider the case of Japan and its determined assault on the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#).

Now, my wonderful colleagues on the panel will address the various legal threats and attacks facing the [Family Federation](#) in greater detail, and I'm sure with more substance than I can.

But I would like to comment on how troubling, and, quite frankly, profoundly undemocratic are the multi-pronged efforts we see in Japan to dissolve and eliminate an entire belief community.

This is not how a rights-respecting and confident democracy treats minority faiths.

And Japan is perilously close to undermining its claims to be a nation that honors human rights, including, very importantly, article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Dr. Mickler, you referenced the International Religious Freedom Summit where I did appear on the panel where we addressed this. And at that time, I used a popular phrase in culture that friends don't let friends drive drunk, meaning that those of us who view Japan as a democratic ally, an important counterweight to China, can't really stay silent while a country that in many respects does a good job defending democracy, defending human rights, is going seriously, perilously close to running off the rails when it comes to their treatment of the [Family Federation](#).

Today, I'd like to invoke another, you know, popular cultural phrase to give a sense of how I view the way Japan is behaving in its targeted attacks on the [Family Federation](#).

You've all heard, and I think there might have been a movie by this title, but I have certainly heard the term or the phrase "mean girls" used to describe those people, those mean girls who take the posture that if you're not part of the in-group, if you're not a member of the popular clique, if you're not one of us, then you are fair game for a really reprehensible form of social bullying, or in this case, an out and out political targeting.



*On January 31st, a panel discussion was held at the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Summit in Washington DC, U.S.A., discussing the Japanese government's request for the dissolution of the former [Unification Church](#). From left to right: Suzan Johnson Cook, former U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom; Massimo Introvigne, director of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR); Jan Figel, former European Union (EU) Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief; Cole Durham, Honorary Professor at Brigham Young University Law School; and Katrina Lantos Swett, co-chair of the summit*

It is just wrong to target a faith community in this way. And it certainly violates the spirit of the Universal Declaration's protection for freedom of religion, conscience, and belief.

Of course, every faith community must respect and abide by the legitimate laws of the land where they operate. But no government is justified in targeting and harassing a minority faith or whipping up public sentiment against a minority faith or new religious movement just because they think they can get away with it.

And I fear that to some degree, that is what we are seeing unfold in Japan right now. And it's wrong. It's morally wrong, it's politically wrong, and ultimately it's wrong for the health and the resiliency and the integrity of their own society.

I started out talking about stormy skies, and I think my remarks have highlighted, if you will, that gloomy forecast. But I want to say that I remain an optimist.

What my late father Tom Lantos, the only survivor of the Holocaust ever to serve in Congress, used to tell me, meant a lot to me as it was coming from a man who had experienced so much in his life. When I was alarmed or disheartened by some circumstances around me and the world, he used to say, "We are just bending a windy corner of history. But around this tough corner will be bright blue skies and wonderful possibilities."

And I believe that.

Thank you, and I look forward to the remainder of our discussion.

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Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor. In fact, her father, Representative Tom Lantos, is the only Holocaust survivor to ever serve in the US Congress, which he did for nearly 30 years.

Dr. Lantos Swett entered Yale University at age 14 and graduated at age 18, obtained a doctorate in jurisprudence and a PhD in history.

She's the President of the Lantos foundation for Human Rights and Justice and past Chair of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. She co-chaired the International Religious Freedom Summit 2024 in Washington, DC earlier this year.

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## Family Federation

### The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification

The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification is a global federation of individuals and families who aim to create a world of peace and unity beyond national, cultural, religious and ideological barriers, a world where everyone may live together in peace and harmony.



*Father and Mother Moon 1st August 1996.*

### In a nutshell

**Name:** Family Federation for World Peace and Unification

**Founded:** 1996

**Founders:** Rev. [Sun Myung Moon](#) (1920-2012) and Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#)

**Teachings:** [Unificationism](#), a long series of revelations received by [Sun Myung Moon](#). See: [Brief about the Teachings](#) of the Family Federation

**Goal:** The [Kingdom of Heaven](#) on Earth. A harmonious world family, where everyone may experience peace, security, freedom and love.

**Strategy:** Unite all good forces

**Distribution:** Largest in South Korea and Japan, but found in most nations.

**Background:** The Family Federation took over many of the functions of the [Unification Church](#) and its basic teachings.

**Frequently asked questions:** See: [Faq](#)

### Three ideals

As the name indicates, the Family Federation is based on three ideals – family, world peace, and unification.

- **The family ideal.** Most religions focus on the individual and its spirituality. The Family Federation teaches a broader concept of spirituality, where your [relationships](#) to your loved ones are of decisive importance for your eternal life. As [God](#) is the source of love, [marriages](#) blessed by [God](#) and families full of [true love](#) are the

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your eternal life. As [God](#) is the source of love, [marriages](#) blessed by [God](#) and families full of [true love](#) are the very foundation for the [Kingdom of Heaven](#) that [God](#) longs for. It is a love kingdom, and the family is a [school of love](#).

- **World peace.** If there is love and peace in the home, there is hope that we may also create societies and nations with peace. The family is the fundamental social institution. If we can learn to love our fellow human beings on micro-level, in a family, we may also do so on macro-level, i.e. in the society around us and in the big world we live in. Well-functioning families are the very key to reducing crime, alcohol and drug abuse, the number of suicides and many other social problems.
- **Unification.** We talk about unification on all levels, from the individual to the global level. [God](#) is the source of unity, evil the source of division. Therefore, the goal of the Family Federation is to remove the barriers and create a world of unity, a social unity, such as that between husband and wife, between parents and children, different social groups, nations and religions, but also unity between the inner world and the outer, between mind and body, spirit and matter, religion and science.

## The inauguration

The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification was first founded in the USA 31st July 1996 by [Sun Myung Moon](#) and his wife [Hak Ja Han](#), and in many European nations soon after that.

As co-founder, [Mother Moon](#) gave the inaugural address titled "View of the Principle of the Providential History of Salvation", reading a prepared text. [Father](#)

[Moon](#) spoke without a script at the closing banquet the following day, 1st August, at the Sheraton Washington Hotel. His speech was titled "In Search of the Origin of the Universe".

Gerald Ford, U.S. President 1974-1977, spoke at the inauguration 31<sup>st</sup> July 1996. He said,



Gerald Ford 31st July 1996

"While the world's finest athletes test themselves in Atlanta, this gathering is sort of a spiritual Olympics. Like the Olympians, you have assembled from all over the world to further the cause of peace among nations.

But while those Olympians are dedicated to gold and glory, you in this room pursue other objectives. The glory you seek, comes from God, not gold.

I sound a bit like an Old Testament prophet, it's because there is nothing about which I feel more strongly, more deeply, than the survival and the strengthening of the family. No civilization that neglects the family, can be called civilized for long, and no political philosophy that takes the family for granted, will be taken seriously by anyone who values morality, compassion and peace."

The chronicle "40 Years in America" describes the event,



[Mother](#) and [Father Moon](#) 31st July 1996

"The movement's most spectacular world convention was held in Washington, D.C. from July 30-August 1, 1996, inaugurating the Family Federation for World Peace (FFWP).

This event included a cast of luminaries rivaling anything the movement had yet undertaken: two former Presidents of the United States, Gerald Ford and George Bush; former President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias of Costa Rica; former Prime Ministers Edward Heath of Great Britain and Brian Mulroney of Canada; thirty-six one-time heads of state or governments; university presidents including Boston University's John Silber; Christian television personality Robert Schuller; Christian Coalition Executive Director Ralph Reed; Coretta Scott King, the widow of Martin Luther King, Jr.; Maureen Reagan, the

daughter of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan; well-known comedian Bill Cosby; and Christian singer-actor Pat Boone. In addition, the main proceedings were covered live by C-SPAN television network. (p.443) [...]

The establishment of the FFWP represented a new stage in the movement's development. Rev. Chung Hwan Kwak,



The Inaugural World Convention of the Family Federation 31st July 1996



National Building Museum, Washington DC. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped



who was appointed International President, maintained that the FFWP was more important than the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) or [Unification Church](#). HSA-UWC, he noted, was “not [True Parents](#)’ ultimate organization”.

The rationale for this assertion was connected to the historic shift that underlay the emergence of the [Completed Testament Age](#). As noted previously, Rev. Kwak explained,

‘Religious organizations have always been centered upon the salvation of the individual, but we have now progressed to the salvation of the family. [...] Such an organization is not a church; it is the Family Federation for World Peace.’



[Sun Myung Moon](#) 1st August 1996



From the Inaugural Convention 31st July 1996.

Given this understanding, it wasn’t surprising that the FFWP rather than the [Unification Church](#) was the main sponsor of the World Culture and Sports Festivals and International [Marriage Blessings](#) after 1996.” (p.444) (From the section “Federations for World Peace and Unification”, in “40 Years in America – 1959-1999 – An Intimate History of the Unification Movement”, by Michael Inglis and Michael L. Mickler, published by HSA Publications Oct. 2000, 624 pages.)

The Family Federation was launched on the foundation of the [Unification Church](#), a spiritual movement [founded](#) in South Korea in 1954. The original intention was neither to establish a church nor a new religion.

The Family Federation took over many of the activities and tasks of the [Unification Church](#) and the same basic teachings, but has a pronounced goal of creating a world of peace and unity based on well-functioning families.

[More](#) about the Family Federation

Text: Knut Holdhus



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