



American Clergy Leadership Conference

3224 16th Street, NW ❖ Washington, DC 20010 ❖ Tel: (202) 319-3200 ❖ Fax: (202) 483-4700

“Rebuild the Family, Restore the Community and Renew the Nation and the World”

October 12, 2010

The Honorable Shinichi Nishmiya
Ambassador and Consul General
Japanese Consulate in New York
299 Park Ave # 19
New York, NY 10171-0025

Dear Mr. Ambassador

The American Clergy Leadership Council represents 22,000 clergy men and women of various faiths in the US. We are deeply committed to interfaith mutual respect and tolerance. For example, on September 10 of this year we held a press conference in Washington DC denouncing the plan of a misguided Christian pastor to burn the Qur’an. We are glad to say that this public protest helped to put a stop to such an act of intolerance.

Mr. Ambassador, regrettably, today we need to draw your attention to another act of intolerance going on in your own country. Although Japan has a commendable record on human rights and religious freedom generally, a recent documentary aired by the Korean SBS broadcasting network has made it clear that Japanese police and prosecutors are failing to enforce your country’s constitutional guarantee (Article 20) of religious freedom, as well as its criminal laws against false imprisonment and coercion. The documentary reported that a number of Japanese women who had married Korean husbands in the Unification Church were abducted by family members in Japan and confined for prolong periods in order to break their faith and end their marriages.

Moreover, there are reliable reports that large numbers of Unificationists have been kidnapped in Japan (4,300 by UC estimates) with a similar intent. We have met and interviewed several of the victims who now live in the US and are convinced that there is indeed cause for concern. We are informed that the director of Japan’s National Public Safety Commission stated in the Diet this year that when police learn of a missing person who is suspected of being abducted to de-convert him from a religious group, the police are supposed to discover his or her whereabouts and learn from the person directly if he/she is being confined. A similar statement was made in 2002 by his predecessor. However, there is documented evidence that when police are actually contacted and informed of a missing person in such cases, they either decline to investigate or take the word of the family that person is free, without hearing directly from the reported victim.

We have been meeting with the State Department’s International Office on Religious Freedom and members of congress to brief them on the issue. Many are deeply concerned that such an important friend and ally of America is allowing on ongoing injustice to continue. We are discussing with our Congressmen how we might address this issue.

A particularly egregious case is that of Mr. Toru Goto, who was held against his will for 12.5 years, starting at age 31. Subjected to an intensive attempt to break his faith, he was not even allowed to go outside to exercise and had lost half his body weight when he was finally released. However, criminal charges against the perpetrators of this crime were dropped for "lack of evidence" in December of last year.

Mr. Ambassador, these cases remind those of us who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the US of the situation in which the US Attorney General had a good policy, but local and state authorities turned a blind eye to the persecution of African-Americans in the South. However, in Japan, your justice system is more unified, and there is no excuse for not enforcing the law. All that is lacking is the will of national authorities to make it clear to local police and prosecutors that the laws must be enforced.

Efforts have been underway for several years to bring this matter to the authorities' attention, but to no avail. Now, the international human rights community is beginning to speak out. Mr. Ambassador, we have no desire to bring shame to your great nation, which in most ways is a shining example of democracy and commitment to human rights. However, we need to be assured that steps are being taken to remedy the situation.

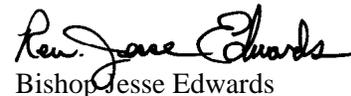
Toward that end, we propose a meeting as the earliest possible convenience between yourselves and us, together with several of the Japanese victims currently living in the US. We are certain that once you hear their stories as we have, you will agree that something must be done. We will hand deliver this letter today to underscore the seriousness of our request.

Very sincerely yours.



Rev. Michael Jenkins
Chairman
ACLC

Dr. Luonne Rouse
United Methodist
ACLC



Rev. Jesse Edwards
Bishop
Co - President
ACLC