

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Government of Japan's Foul Play Outed

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*Left: Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa. Right: Professor Tsutomu Nishioka.*

### Kishida administration resorting to foul play against religious minority



*The cover front page of Monthly Seiron December 2023.*

In its December 2023 issue, the Japanese monthly opinion magazine Seiron (正論) carried a feature article on the horrible persecution of the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Japan. The article by Makiko Takita, the editor-in-chief of the magazine, presents a conversation with Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa (中川晴久), President of Japan Christian Theological Institute and Secretary of Tokyo Christian Theological Institute (東京キリスト教神学研究所), and Professor Tsutomu Nishioka (西岡力), from the Ethics and Moral Education Foundation, professor at the Institute of Moral Science, Tokyo Christian University.



On 17th January 2024, [Bitter Winter](#), the leading international online magazine on religious freedom and human rights, [published the first](#) of six parts of the English version of the original Seiron article.

During the conversation printed by the magazine, Rev. Nakagawa describes the request of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (文化庁) to the Tokyo District Court to issue an order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#),

"As a Christian pastor, I have followed the government's actions up to this point, and I find them very problematic. When the government requests a dissolution order, it is usually difficult to imagine a situation where the dissolution order is not granted. But that is usually the case only when the request is based on the right motive and the right argument, which does not apply to this case of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)."

Rev. Nakagawa questions the impartiality of the process that led the authorities to request a dissolution order,

"[...] the request for dissolution uses a lot of evidence, court documents, and findings gathered by the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (全国靈感商法対策弁護士連絡会). Some may say, 'The evidence is true, so there is no problem about who supplied it,' but it is almost as if the government is endorsing and relying on the claims and information of a private organization that has long been hostile and antagonistic to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). This is highly questionable in terms of the neutrality of the procedure."

Professor Nishioka points out how Prime Minister Kishida mysteriously all of a sudden changed his mind,



*Fumio Kishida 14th July 2022*

"This is because on October 19, 2022, only five days after the cabinet decision not to seek dissolution, Prime Minister Kishida changed his position overnight about the legal grounds for dissolution. He said that instead of basing dissolution solely on criminal acts and criminal law violations, torts under Article 709 of the Civil Code could also be considered. This is what has led to the current situation.

I was horrified at that time as well. What events or circumstances had occurred that necessitated the dissolution of the [Unification Church](#) as a religious organization? Was there a new case of unforgivable damage that came to light? I have no idea what happened to cause the request of dissolution of the church. This is a criminal trial."

Kishida's made his sudden U-turn even though the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT)

on previous occasions never had given in to the pressure from the activist leftwing lawyers called National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (Zenkoku Benren) to obtain a dissolution order. The reason was simply that the [Family Federation](#) (previously the [Unification Church](#)) had never been convicted of any criminal acts or violations of the Penal Code. Professor Nishioka explains,



*Shinzo Abe in 2017*

"The cabinet of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also originally adopted this position on October 14, 2022. A part of this story is that in 2012, the National Federation of Bar Associations filed a lawsuit against the MEXT, claiming that the MEXT was acting illegally when it failed to request a dissolution order for the [Unification Church](#). But the Tokyo District Court dismissed that lawsuit in 2017. Despite this precedent, the Kishida cabinet eventually approved and submitted the request for dissolution."

Nishioka also comments on the relationship between former prime minister Shinzo Abe and the [Unification Church](#),

## The Asahi Shimbun

"After the fatal shooting of former Prime Minister Abe, the 'Asahi' newspaper [leftwing] stated in an editorial that Abe was 'advertising' the [Unification Church](#). Those who oppose Abe have been trying to gear the conversation to make the [Unification Church](#) and Abe look as close as possible. I also think it is problematic that the government is acting to fulfill the wishes of the assassin by requesting the dissolution order."

Nakagawa and Nishioka point out several questionable sides of the government's dissolution request. The Christian leader points out one absurdity,

"Regarding the topic of Prime Minister Kishida suddenly changing his standards for dissolution, I would say it does not make sense in light of the legal principle of non-retroactivity of the law."

He also states,

"I am a Christian. I believe that God created heaven and earth and all things, and that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. I also believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross but rose from the dead three days later. These beliefs may appear strange to most Japanese. Therefore, I am also a member of a religious minority. But even so, freedom of religion is allowed. It should be the same for the [Unification Church](#)."



The Seiron monthly magazine is published by the Sankei Shimbun, one of Japan's top five daily national newspapers. Rev. Nakagawa describes one story the Sankei Shimbun published last year, headlined "The Agency for Cultural Affairs requests a dissolution order: Limitations to the investigation",



"In reality, the Religious Corporations Council had members who were dissatisfied with the government's stance towards the [Unification Church](#). However, the Agency for Cultural Affairs intervened by claiming that the Kishida cabinet would be in trouble [if the Religious Corporations Council members opposed the government's request]. But that is what I think is wrong. I heard that Agency for Cultural Affairs officials went to the homes of the Religious Corporations Council members, persuaded them to go along with the government, and then, one by one, holed them up while keeping it a secret. When I hear these stories, I am in a state of intense fear and disbelief."

To be continued. Part 2 coming soon.

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