

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Malicious One-Sided Japanese Government Source Selection

Knut Holdhus
January 20, 2024



Some of Fumio Kishida's cabinet on 13th September 2023. Kishida on the left and Taro Kono on the right. Kono, Minister for Digital Transformation and Minister for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety, is known to have lobbied Kishida to get the [Family Federation](#) investigated. In August 2022 Kono appointed Masaki Kito as expert advisor in a study group Kono established in the Consumer Affairs Agency for the issue of the [Family Federation](#). Kito is an activist radical leftwing lawyer who has been campaigning against the [Family Federation](#) / [Unification Church](#) for decades

British precedent: Government lost case based on anti-religious source selection



The first page of the feature article in the December 2023 issue of Seiron (正論) with the title "Doubts about the Request for a Dissolution Order".

The Japanese monthly opinion magazine Seiron (正論) published in its December 2023 issue a feature article on the outrageous persecution of the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Japan. The article by Makiko Takita, well known journalist and 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.

BITTER WINTER

On 18th January 2024, [Bitter Winter](#), the leading international online magazine on religious freedom and human rights, [published the second](#) of six parts of the English version of the original Seiron article. (See the [whole Bitter Winter article](#).) Read comment on [article 1](#) in the [Bitter Winter](#) series.

In the second part, Rev. Nakagawa describes how the government body Agency for Cultural Affairs (文化庁) has ignored several serious and crucial issues in its request to the Tokyo District Court to issue an order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#).

The Christian leader points out that the information that the government has based its request on, is completely one-sided and not to be trusted. In fact, much of it appears to come from National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (全国霊感商法対策弁護士連絡会), a group of activist lawyers, many of them leftwing, who are hostile to the [Family Federaton](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) and have been campaigning against it for decades.



Haruhisa Nakagawa

Rev. Nakagawa explains that the network of lawyers,

"has been using such former believers - who were abducted and forcibly converted [de-converted by faith-breakers] in confinement for many years - to develop court battles in pursuit of the [church](#) and its assets."

In other words, the network of activist lawyers exploited cynically a situation where more than 4,000 members of the [Family Federation](#) were kidnapped, held in forcible detention, sometimes for years, and forced to undergo horrendous faith-breaking sessions controlled by professional deprogrammers. If and when a believer would finally agree to abandon his faith, he would be introduced to lawyers who encouraged him often [under duress](#) to sue the [Family Federation](#) for damages. Rev. Nakagawa describes the situation,

"The Agency for Cultural Affairs used as the basis for the dissolution request 128 of the 231 plaintiffs in the 22 civil lawsuit judgments (increased to 32 at the time of the request). These cases were the ones the [Unification Church](#) lost in court. These cases were also often these where the people suing the church had been forced to apostatize through the same kind of abduction and confinement tactics. We believe that this could violate Article 38 of the Constitution, which states, 'No confession made under compulsion, torture, or intimidation, or after unreasonably long detention or imprisonment, shall be admissible as evidence.'

Hence, it is hard to understand that the government does not see that they may be acting illegally in basing their dissolution request on civil cases largely masterminded by hostile lawyers who support methods like kidnapping, forcible detention, and testifying under duress.



Illustration of how [Family Federation](#) member Toru Goto was abducted by his own family

Nakagawa describes how some parents of adult members of the [Unification Church](#) were involved in the forced de-conversion of their sons or daughters. The parents were thoroughly instructed by faith-breakers for a period of up to half a year, learning how to carry out the kidnapping, forcible detention, and faith-breaking. Haruhisa Nakagawa says,

"Parents claim they tried to compel their abducted children to leave the church out of love. However, it is important to note that these 'children' were adults."

The Christian leader also mentioned how the forced de-conversion

"damages the parent-child relationship and leaves a big scar. Even if the adult believers say they are happy to have left the group, they may still be tormented by the memory of

the moment of abduction and confinement, and a rift between parent and child may eventually develop, and the wound may never heal."

Rev. Nakagawa also explained that such faith-breaking hardly exists in other nations.

"However, in Japan, deprogramming has continued. This is because the National Federation of Bar Associations [short for National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales] has a well-established system of inducing deprogrammed believers to file lawsuits."

Nakagawa goes into this in further details,

"On the surface, the lawyers and former believers say, 'We were deceived by the [Unification Church](#),' and 'The [Unification Church](#) is reprehensible,' but behind the scenes, they pursue the [Unification Church](#) as plaintiffs in court by committing serious human rights violations and trampling on the dignity of individuals. But the system behind the scenes is hidden from the public, and the fact that even Christian pastors and lay leaders have been involved in these human rights violations is still not mentioned at all."



Masaki Kito, activist leftwing lawyer who was brought in as advisor to the Kishida administration by China-friendly government minister Taro Kono

The Christian leader also points out that he is astonished that the network of hostile lawyers has been asked to take part in the government's investigation prior to requesting the dissolution order.

He emphasizes that

"there is already a precedent in the U.K. of an attempt to dissolve a religious corporation through the concerted efforts of an 'anti-cult' organization/activists and the government. In 1984, the British government joined forces with anti-cult movements to eliminate the charitable status of the [Unification Church](#), which is equivalent to Japan's efforts to revoke its status as a religious corporation.

The British government's investigation relied almost entirely on the anti-cult groups, and deprogramming experts gathered testimonies from ex-members who had been forced to apostatize. But much of this information was exaggerated or disproven, and eventually the British government lost in court and had to pay the [Unification Church](#) \$6 million, or about 850 million Japanese yen."

Read comment on [article 1](#) in the [Bitter Winter](#) series

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The cover front page of Monthly Seiron December 2023.

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. *Read comment on [article 2 in the Bitter Winter series](#).*



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* (全国霊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. Photo: [首相官邸/Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

“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

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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,

“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**,

“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**



Shinzo Abe in 2017. Photo: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 2.0 Gen](#). Cropped

The Asahi Shimbun **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 disaffiliated with the



Agency for Cultural Affairs,
Government of Japan

Logo of the Agency for
Cultural Affairs. *Public
domain image*

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.

Featured image above: Left: Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa. Photo:
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