

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Two European Scholars Warn Japan

Knut Holdhus
February 4, 2024



Featured image above: Dr. Massimo Introvigne and Dr. Jan Figel speaking at a special luncheon 31st January 2024, that was part of the 4th International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington DC

Scholars warning Japan that removing primary freedom of one minority will have huge implications for many more



Panel at special luncheon 31st Jan. 2024, part of 4th International Religious Freedom Summit. From left: Suzan Johnson Cook, Massimo Introvigne, Jan Figel, Cole Durham, Katrina Lantos Swett, Charles Hurt (moderator)

Dr. Massimo Introvigne, leading sociologist of religion and Managing Director of Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), commented 31st January 2024 on the current witch hunt against the [Family Federation](#) in Japan. He spoke at a special luncheon that was part of the 4th International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington DC and said,

"We should understand three things.

First, it's not about taxes. If the [Family Federation](#) is dissolved, it will not only lose its tax exemption. It will lose its places of worship, assets, everything. It will be a death sentence.

Second, it is not about the [Family Federation](#) only. Laws have been passed in Japan limiting the freedom of all religions to collect donations and pass the faith to their children. The Jehovah's Witnesses are right now already under attack.

And third, this is not about Japan only. We have evidence of continuous contacts at the private and governmental level between Japan and France, which in these very days is trying to make its bad law against cults worse.

So the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#) will not only affect the [Family Federation](#) in Japan. It will affect dozens of religions in dozens of countries."

His comments came as he was part of a panel during the above-mentioned luncheon hosted by The Washington Times Foundation and the Universal Peace Federation.

More messages from the special luncheon:

[Gingrich: Kishida Joining Communist Campaign](#)

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Some of the participants at the special luncheon 31st Jan. 2024 as part of 4th International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington DC

Another champion of religious freedom on the panel was Dr. Jan Figel, former European Commission Special Envoy for Promotion of Freedom of Religion outside the EU. He commented on the situation in Japan,

"A year ago, it was not so easy to raise the Japanese issue. Now, it's at a stage where many important people speak about it.

And I take your point [addressed to Charles Hurt, the moderator] on the totalitarian issue, because actually I lived half of my life under communism.

Communism used violence and lies to dominate and to get rid of it is not so easy.

But I see this pattern also in the Japanese case because the dissolution of the [Unification Church](#) has a history of half a century. There have been repeated calls for dissolution each decade from the Japan Communist Party and the leftist lawyers.

And we get to the point which is really very dangerous. Communists elsewhere during a century long history have showed a total animosity against religious freedom.

Because religious people are free people. They don't obey any authority and therefore it is important to notice that similar, and of course huge, problems with religious freedom exist in the region - in North Korea, in China, and now Japan is at the crossroads.

It's important that messages from here are given them because Japan is democratic and can use all democratic means to protect religious freedom for all.

And as you said, religious freedom is a primary freedom. I would add that religious freedom is a litmus test for all human rights, because if the freedom is not respected which is the innermost freedom, then freedom of thought, conscience and religion, spirituality, freedom of press, of opinion, of assembly, of association, surely, surely will also be limited or oppressed or violated.

Therefore, it is important that we discuss it today here, and that our appeal will be listened to in Tokyo and in Japan."

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Some of the speakers at the special luncheon on 31st Jan. 2024 at the International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington DC. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission.

Extract from a special pre-recorded message presented 31st January at the International Religious Freedom Summit 2024 in Washington DC, by senior American politician Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the US House of Representatives. He delivered his presentation during a conference luncheon sponsored by The Washington Times Foundation and the Universal Peace Federation on the last day of the summit.

I can't tell you how important I think it is that we recognize the threat all around the world to religious liberty as we see people killed in places, in Africa, in India, as we see repression in China. But particularly today, this special luncheon helping Japan overcome its religious freedom crisis is very timely and very important.

I've been working a great deal on the issue of what's happening in Japan, and it's really very shocking and very surprising. The Japanese had had a long tradition since World War II of honoring religious liberty, of enforcing the rule of law, and of respecting the conscience of individuals.

And yet now there's a real effort to dissolve the [Family Federation](#) [...] The government now has spent over a year in deep investigations, and after that year of investigations, they've not found a single crime that justifies going after the [Family Federation](#).

But the political pressures and the dishonesty of the Communist Party of Japan and the dishonesty of the lawyers who made a living out of some 20 years of attacking the [Unification Church](#), and then the [Family Federation](#), all of those risk overriding the rule of law.



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida swayed by communist campaign. Here, 16th April 2023. Photo: [首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

When the Prime Minister announced on 18th October 2022 that the [Unification Church](#) could not be dissolved because there's no breaking of a criminal law, I sort of began to relax. Yet the very next day, he said maybe we can use civil settlement cases to try to dissolve them.

Now, there's no provision for civil settlement to be a cause for dissolving. It has to be criminal. And the Prime Minister himself has admitted that there is no such criminal case.

My team did a lot of research on this, and we take it very seriously. As many of you know, my wife

Callista was ambassador to the Vatican. She's taken on religious liberty around the world as one of her major projects.

What we discovered was that the dissolution effort was really started by the *Japanese Communist Party*, which as early as 1978 began attacking the [Unification Church](#) because the [Church's](#) God-affirming message was directly contrary to the atheistic beliefs of the *Japanese Communist Party* to end free speech and to end freedom of religion.

Unfortunately, some elements of the media have joined in and at times have been I think very, very biased, something we also understand here in the United States.

But there was a



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Katrina Lantos Swett

Suzan Johnson Cook

Featured image above: Left: USCIRF Chair Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett in Oslo 8th Nov. 2014. Photo: United States Commission on International Religious Freedom / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped. Right: Suzan Johnson Cook in July 2023. Photo: [FOREF](#)

RealClearPolitics [independent, non-partisan American media company] that Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook and Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett wrote that explain that this is a very alarming moment for all of us who believe in religious liberty, because Japan is one of our greatest allies.

It's been a bulwark in the Far East of standing for freedom, for the rule of law, and for constitutional behavior. And that's why I think so many of us are now engaged in real concern for the future of Japan.

Everything that Callista and I have done, working with the [Family Federation](#) and its various associates, working with the [Universal Peace Federation](#) and working with [The Washington Times](#), have been aimed at promoting the value of faith for all communities.

I've been astonished to be in meetings where literally people from over 100 countries representing virtually every religion on the planet come together peacefully to share their mutual right to approach [God](#) on their own terms. I believe this is central to the whole cause of freedom, the core value of being able to approach [God](#) without interference, it really underlies all freedom.

A government which can block you from approaching [God](#) can block you from anything.

I'm calling
an



Rashad Hussain 15th May 2023. Photo: Chuck Kennedy / U.S. Department of State / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

ambassador Rashad Hussein, the IRF ambassador at large, to continue the good attention he's already given this issue to alert Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and to shine a very bright light on Japan.

We have to make sure that the Japanese government understands that this is a key test of the future of Japan, a key test of the future of religious liberty.

And that to close down an organization as a deliberately political act of retribution is a profound undermining of the very basis of freedom.

And I so much appreciate all of you being involved in this important 'cause.

Featured image above: [Newt Gingrich](#) at the special luncheon 31st Jan. 2024 at the 4th International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington DC. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission.

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Lawyer Exposes Dirty Leftwing Plot

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Attorney gives detailed insights about ugly leftwing plot against the Family Federation in Japan

Why the Family Federation in Japan Should Not Be Dissolved

A special pre-recorded message presented 31st January at the International Religious Freedom Summit 2024 in Washington DC, by Japanese lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama (aka. Tatsu Nakayama). He delivered his presentation during a

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conference luncheon sponsored by The Washington Times Foundation and the Universal Peace Federation on the last day of the summit. Slightly edited.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm Tatsu Nakayama, a Japanese lawyer. I'm highly honoured to be given this precious opportunity to speak at the IRF Summit.

I have been representing **Family Federation** – although I am not a believer – since the assassination of former Prime Minister Abe. With my experience, I learnt a lot, and today I'm going to share with you in three points why the **Family Federation** in Japan should not be dissolved.

1. It's a **political fight**, which is going on beneath the legal issues pending in Japan,
2. **Deprogramming**, which is also hidden underneath.
3. I will conclude that there is **no requirement for dissolution** of the **Family Federation**.

Point number one: **A political and**

ideological fight has been going on in Japan from way back in 1978 when **Japan Communist Party declared war** on anti-communist **Unification Church**. Evidence of this: A couple of months after the Abe assassination, a famous journalist [Soichiro Tahara] commented that

“This conflict should be a final war against the **Unification Church**.”

Then, in response to this, Communist Party Chairperson Kazuo Shii admitted that final war and added that,

“This time we will do whatever it takes until we get it done.”

With such strong words, **leftwing parties have aggressively fought against the Family Federation**. Along with this political movement in Japan, **leftwing lawyers** [*National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales – NNLASS*] have been very aggressive and had a lot of **influence on the mass media and also the Japanese government**.

Those lawyers are anti-religious. Many are communists and started a dissolution campaign in 1987 in order to dissolve the Japanese **Family Federation**, true to Shii's words “We will do whatever!” They **worked with notorious deprogrammers** who deprogrammed – you may not believe it – as many as 4,300 poor **Family Federation** believers and broke the faith of many.

The top two

gentlemen of these leftwing lawyers are Hiroshi Yamaguchi (to the left) and Masaki Kito, the current leader (to the right). They are lawyers, but they **could be called political figures or political activists** because they even knew that at the time of the commencement of this political fight there were no victims.

That means that even though there were no legal victims, they

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continued to **argue in order to create "victims"**. They made many lawsuits representing apostates for the refund of donations made when they were believers.

Despite such a political campaign, as a lawyer, legally speaking, I do not think there is a requirement for dissolution because in Japan the **legal requirement for dissolution of a religious corporation is very high**.

Article 81 of the *Religious Corporations Act* (RCA) says that a religious corporation can only be dissolved only if it commits an act which is clearly found to harm public welfare extremely – which is a very high criterion – in violation of laws and regulations.

Requirement for dissolution 

Article 81 of the Religious Corporations Act ("RCA")

A religious corporation commits an act which is **clearly** found to harm public welfare **extremely** in violation of **laws** and regulations

↓

"A CRIMINAL LAW MUST BE BROKEN" 6

This has been debated so much after the Abe assassination because according to case law [common law – law based on precedents] in Japan, **"laws" here have been limited to criminal laws only**. That means that in order to dissolve a religious cooperation, **a criminal law must be broken**.

On the other hand, in the present case of the **Family Federation**, since its foundation about 60 years ago, no criminal law has been broken. That means there is **no legal reason to dissolve** the **Family Federation**.

PM Kishida changed in ONE day 



On Oct 18th 2022, PM Kishida said that the only **CRIMINAL** laws can be included in "laws" of Article 81 of the RCA.

→ On the next day of Oct 19th, he said that **CIVIL** suits can be included.

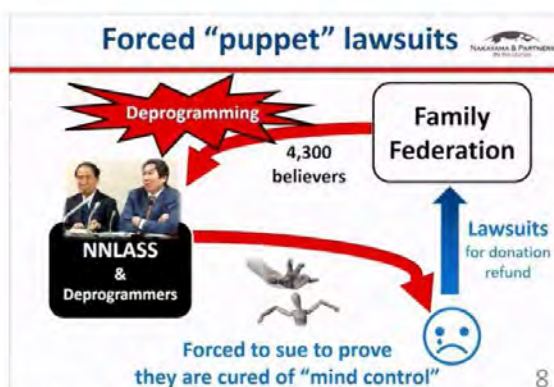
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Indeed, our Prime Minister Kishida admitted that case law and said in the Diet on 18th October 2022 that

only criminal laws should be included. That means that at that time the government did not intend to file a dissolution suit against the **Family Federation**.

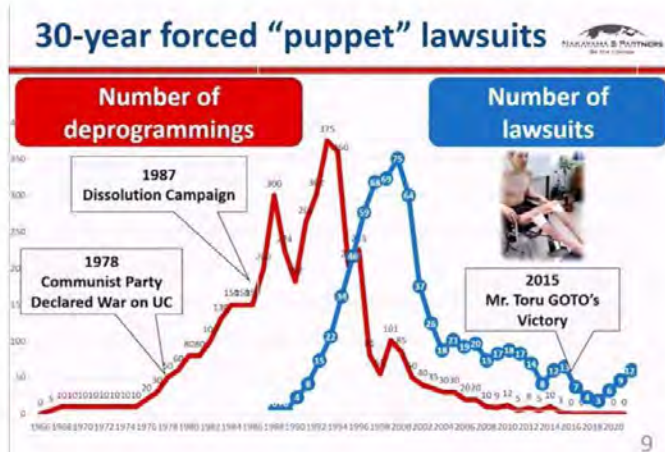
However, very surprisingly and very strangely enough, he did a 180 degree turn. He **changed his mind completely overnight** and said the next day that civil laws can be included. That means that civil lawsuits filed against the **Family Federation** – and they lost some – could be another reason for dissolution of the **Family Federation**. That became the starting point to proceed toward a dissolution suit of the **Federation**.

However, legally speaking, in many of such lawsuits against the **Family**



Federation, we see "puppet" connections. We can call it "forced 'puppet' lawsuits". What happened is like this: Deprogrammers in consultation with leftwing lawyers deprogrammed as many as more than 4,000 believers and **forced those poor believers to file a lawsuit** against the **Family Federation** for donation refunds. The lawyers said something like this, **"Unless you file a lawsuit, we continue to take you as mind-controlled by the Family Federation**. So do file an action against the **Family Federation**. Otherwise, we will continue to confine you and imprison you for deprogramming."

In order to make money for legal fees, the leftwing lawyers continued this cycle as an "ecosystem". We can find this "ecosystem" in the graph here.



The left line here is the number of **4,000 deprogrammings**. It came to a peak after the Communist Party's declaration of war against the Unification Church and the leftwing lawyers' political campaign.

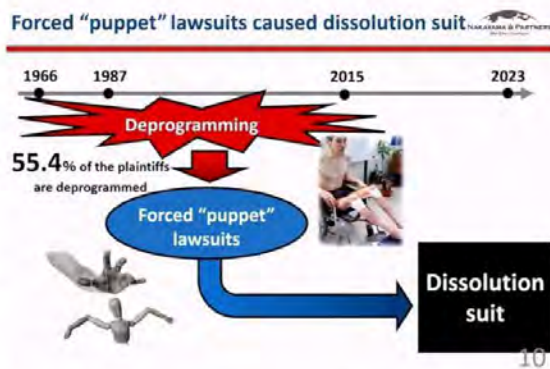
What follows is the blue line here – the number of lawsuits filed against the Family Federation. From this visible intimate correlation between the red and the blue lines, you can note many of the lawsuits against the Family Federation are "forced 'puppet' lawsuits" using deprogramming.

This correlation came to an end in 2015 when Toru Goto, the skinny gentleman here, who suffered a very long confinement of more than 12 years, and who filed a lawsuit against the deprogrammer and won a victory in the Supreme Court of Japan.

Indeed, very unfortunately, such "forced 'puppet' lawsuits" caused the dissolution suit now pending in Japan.

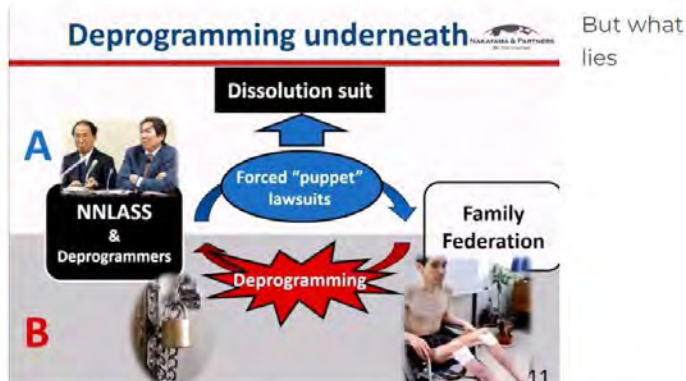
Historically speaking, deprogramming lasted 50 years in Japan. Some of the victims of deprogramming were used for "forced 'puppet' lawsuits". That could be said to be one of the main reasons for the dissolution suit pending in Japan.

After a careful legal analysis, we found that more than half, **55,4 percent of the plaintiffs were poor deprogramming victims**.



With this in mind, I don't believe that the Family Federation should be dissolved.

What is going on now in Japan is a dissolution suit against the Family Federation. The main reason is the many lawsuits filed against Family Federation initiated by leftwing lawyers.



underneath, is another framework (B) which consists of 4,000 inhumane deprogramming cases.

Indeed, **Japan has rejected dissolution so many times**. Demanding leftwing lawyers have requested many times that the government dissolve the Family Federation.

30 years ago, the



government rejected it twice, and recently Tokyo District Court also rejected to dissolve the [Family Federation](#). Meanwhile, the [Family Federation](#) issued a declaration of compliance intended to improve their internal operations. And it actually worked.

Evidencing this, during the last seven seven years, **no single lawsuit has been filed against the [Family Federation](#)**.

No requirement for dissolution

Family Federation in Japan has:

1. **NOT** committed any crimes;
2. Lost in **CIVIL** lawsuits for refund donation; but
3. Half of the plaintiffs were **DEPROGRAMMED**; and
4. Improved compliance in these **15** years.

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With this, I hope you will be convinced that there is **no requirement for dissolution**. The [Family Federation](#) in Japan has not committed any crimes during

its 60 years.

There have been some civil lawsuits for refunds of donations, but **half of the plaintiffs had been deprogrammed**. Also, the [Family Federation](#) has improved its compliance during the last 15 years.

Most of what I shared is written in my booklet published last year in Japan and English translation of which you can find on [Bitter Winter](#).

Lastly, I strongly hope that with this kind attention and support from you distinguished guests and honourable minds at this IRF Summit, religious freedom in Japan should be protected at any cost.

Thank you very much.

Featured image above: Tatsu Nakayama delivering his message at International Religious Freedom Summit 2024 in Washington DC, USA 31st January. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission.

All illustrations by Nakayama & Partners.

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