

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Media Helps Terrorist Who Assassinated PM Shinzo Abe

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Positional relationship between former prime minister Shinzo Abe and the shooter Tetsuya Yamagami on his assassination



Sekai Nippo

Japanese media helping terrorist Yamagami accomplish his objectives

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Investigating the Request for an Order to Dissolve the Family Federation - Politics and Media out of Control

Part 3: Biased Media: "Information Disaster" Fueled by Terrorist

by the Editorial Department of Sekai Nippo

See [part 1](#), [part 2](#)

In the media coverage of the incident when former Prime Minister Abe was shot on 8th July 2022, there was extremely little criticism of the terrorist act itself committed by defendant Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也). On the contrary, the media outlets that had opposed Shinzo Abe's politics during his tenure as prime minister, rather focused on the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the Unification Church). Those news channels were rather more critical of the [religious organisation](#), emphasizing Yamagami's feelings of being a victim due to his mother's large donations to the [religious organisation](#). The defendant claimed those feelings were his motive for committing the crime.

The press conferences of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, which is in dispute with the [religious organisation](#), have been widely reported. At the same time, the claims of the [religious organisation](#) and individual believers have hardly ever been mentioned. Amidst this, there was a widespread one-sided discourse demanding sanctions against the [Family Federation](#). Naturally, this had a negative impact on the Kishida cabinet's approval rating in public opinion polls.

On 19th October 2022, Fumio Kishida without much effort and without Cabinet approval, made a change in the interpretation of the Religious Corporations Act. The move was criticized as "changing one's mind like the wind", yet both the ruling and opposition parties joined the Prime Minister in his disregard for procedure. At that time, the Japanese media stood by and watched as the authorities readily violated the basic human right of "freedom of religion" guaranteed by the constitution. This exposed a double standard that is in stark contrast to the openly opposing attitude of the media shown during the 2015 security legislation.



Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand 2017-2023



Fumihiro Kato 20th Jan. 2024

Especially since the terror attacks on the United States 11th September 2001, terrorism has been regarded as one of the greatest threats to the security of modern society. Former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, said of a terrorist [who was seeking notoriety], "We [...] will give him nothing, not even his name." However, the lessons learnt from that have not been heeded [in Japan]. By allowing the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to request a dissolution order - in other words, effectively giving the [religious organisation](#) a "death sentence" - the Japanese media inadvertently has helped the terrorist accomplish his goals.

At a public symposium held on 20th January 2024, author Fumihiro Kato (加藤文宏) analyzed big data using AI and announced that the huge amount of news coverage critical of the [religious organisation](#) was ultimately directed at the Kishida administration. In order to deflect this criticism, Fumio Kishida clearly demonstrated his stance by aiming to cut ties with the [Family Federation](#) and related organizations from then on, and by issuing a dissolution order against the [religious corporation](#) in an effort to avoid blame and regain support for his cabinet.

Under these circumstances, the [religious organisation](#) and ordinary believers have become targets of people's hatred. The above-mentioned Kato has condemned the media's behavior, which rather than checking the power, has allowed it to run amok. He calls this an "information disaster". At a press conference, the [religious organisation](#) revealed a number of discriminatory incidents, including members being fired at their workplace, cancellation of job offers, teachers criticizing the [religious organisation](#) during class, suicides, suicide attempts, and graffiti marking the facility as belonging to a "cult". Despite the Kishida Cabinet requesting a dissolution order, its support rate has decreased. Also, the opposition parties pursuing the matter, have been unable to escape from low approval ratings.

Some say that the one-sided media coverage bashing the [religious organisation](#) has led to a rift between executives and young reporters within major media outlets. 2nd-generation members of the [religious organisation](#) have held panel discussions with journalists and experts in open forums. In addition, meetings have been held steadily to denounce 4,300 members of the [religious organisation](#) being abducted and locked up in an attempt to forcibly break their faith. The articles written by reporters who covered those events have not seen the light of day.



Masahito Moriyama, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)

However, it was reported that Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Masahito Moriyama (盛山正仁), who filed a request for a dissolution order with Tokyo District Court, had exchanged an "endorsement-affirming form" with a [Unification Church](#)-related organization in Hyogo Prefecture ahead of the ahead of the 2021 House of Representatives election. Believers had actively made phone calls to support his election.

As a result, the very minister who received support from that organization ended up requesting a dissolution order. That led to voices of discontent from employees and believers of related organizations being covered by various media outlets. In the future, it should be further examined whether his action violates the freedom of religion guaranteed by the constitution. In addition, his action raises issues regarding governance.

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Opposition Inciting Regime To Excessive Steps

February 18, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Kishida administration pressured by opposition to take excessive steps like changing the law overnight



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Investigating the Request for an Order to Dissolve the Family Federation – Politics and Media out of Control

Part 2: The opposition parties created an uproar and made use of state power to attack a religious organization.

by the Editorial Department of Sekai Nippo

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The government changing the interpretation of the *Religious Corporations Act* naturally **affects all religious corporations.**

Previously, the interpretation of the requirements for a dissolution order for a religious corporation explicitly stated that it must have engaged in acts falling under Article 81, Paragraph 1, Item 1 of the same law, namely, “acts that violate prohibitory norms or directive norms established by statutory laws such as the *Penal Code*, and moreover, it is clearly recognized that such acts significantly harm the public welfare,” along with Item 2, which states “acts that are recognized as significantly deviating from the purposes of religious corporations stipulated in Article 2 of the *Religious Corporations Act*” (Tokyo High Court, 19th December 1995).



Front page of 2018 English version of *Religious Corporations Act of Japan*.

However, the interpretation of Item 1 was **suddenly changed overnight** under the Fumio Kishida cabinet to include “unlawful acts under the Civil Code” (19th October 2022, *House of Councillors Budget Committee*, response from Prime Minister Kishida).

The right to ask questions in order to request a dissolution order has been expanded. All at once, it became possible to exercise this right not only against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), but also against **all other religious corporations**. This only **strengthened the state's power over religion**. According to statistics from the *Religious Affairs Division* of the *Agency for Cultural Affairs*, there are approximately 180,000 religious corporations and a religious population of 180 million individuals in Japan. That exceeds the population of Japan. In other words, it **affects the majority of the population**.



Satoshi Hamada in Dec. 2023. Photo: Tamiron / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#). Cropped

However, such a significant change in the legal interpretation was **made by a limited number of people within the government**. In Prime Minister Kishida's response to the written question from *House of Councilors* member Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡) (31st January), he **did not disclose the details of the cabinet's decision** or internal government deliberations (9th February).

So far, the

opposition parties, that should have been vigilant about “state power”, have not raised any issues regarding this matter. In the *Budget Committee of the House*



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of Councillors, Constitutional Democratic Party lawmaker Hiroyuki Konishi (小西洋之), who elicited a change in interpretation from the Prime Minister, said, "Changing one's interpretation overnight is excessive." Konishi did not however pursue the matter further regarding the change in interpretation.



Hiroyuki Konishi in March 2020. Photo: 石垣のりこ / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp. Cropped

Later, Konishi said at a talk event in August 2023,

"I suggested to Kishida, 'You can say you've changed your mind, and that **civil law torts can also be applied**. If you do that, I won't pursue that part.' And Prime Minister Kishida said exactly that."

The video of this was spread on X (formerly Twitter). The opposition parties, which often chant slogans such as "We won't tolerate government excesses," were the ones who **incited the government's excesses**.

During the debate over the security legislation in 2015, the main opposition party at the time was the *Democratic Party* [民主党, Minshutō – a centrist to centre-left liberal party in Japan from 1998 to 2016]. It fiercely opposed the Cabinet decision that changed the interpretation of the constitution to allow limited exercise of the right of collective self-defense, and were hostile to then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, accusing him of "Abe politics". Within the parliament, they employed delay tactics, and outside, they held protest demonstrations almost every day.

In the "Opposition Coalition" then the *Democratic Party* **cooperated with the Communist Party** with the aim of potentially sharing power with it. That coalition began with the justification of revoking the Cabinet decision that serves as the basis for the security legislation. The "Opposition Coalition" now, on the other hand, provided support for flawed procedures, such as the lack of a Cabinet decision regarding the interpretation change of the *Religious Corporations Act*, which could potentially **undermine the guarantee of freedom of religion** as stipulated in the constitution.

The political forces that make up the "Opposition Coalition" share the same view as defendant Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也), who shot Shinzo Abe, that "Abe and the former **Unification Church** were close." After the shooting incident, they opposed Abe's state funeral and criticized the "contacts" between the *Liberal Democratic Party* and the former **Unification Church** as well as groups associated with it, such as the *International Federation for Victory Over Communism*. While using this as material to attack the conservative politics of the Abe administration, it can be said to have encouraged the exercise of the right to question the former **Unification Church** in order to request an order to dissolve it.



Shinzo Abe March 2022. Photo: English: United States Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image. Cropped

However, democracy emphasizes the importance of procedures. Is there no problem with that?

Before the war, the opposition party had caused the military to go out of control. In the Imperial Diet [Parliament] of 1930, the opposition party, the Rikken Seiyukai (立憲政友会 – *Association of Friends of Constitutional Government*), attempted to corner the civilian government led by Prime Minister Osachi Hamaguchi (濱口 雄幸) of the *Rikken Minseitō* party by pursuing accusations of having "absconded the right to command" at the *London Naval Disarmament Conference*. The dissatisfaction with disarmament stimulated the public sentiment and the media, and the atmosphere of the times

could no longer be prevented from heading towards war. Isn't there a resemblance to the ruling and opposition parties, and the media, in their pursuit of dissolution requests?

Featured image above: *Fumio Kishida and opposition communist Kazuo Shii. In the Japanese Diet building 30th March 2020, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida receiving the Japanese Communist Party's proposals regarding Japan-China relations from Kazuo Shii, chairman of the Japanese Communist Party (JPC).* Photo: [首相官邸ホームページ](#) License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int.](#) Cropped

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