

## FFWPU UK Press Release On Current Court Case Against FFWPU In Japan

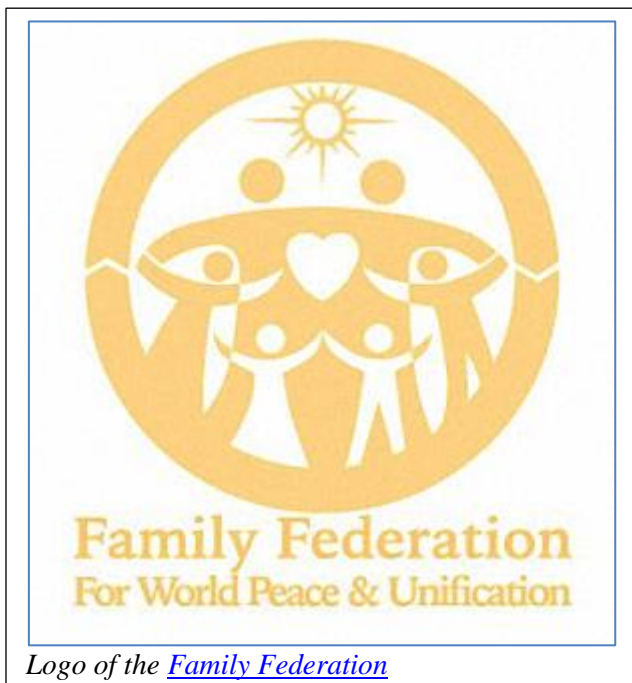
Knut Holdhus  
March 6, 2024



The flags of the [Family Federation](#) (top) and the [Unification Church](#) waving in South Korea

Press release from Family Federation of the United Kingdom 5th March 2024 on current court case at Tokyo District Court

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Logo of the [Family Federation](#)

The [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) calls on Japan to rethink the dissolution of the [religious movement](#) in the country. The first hearing is taking place of the Japanese governments [request for a dissolution order](#) against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). Expected to last several weeks, the behind closed doors hearing [started on Thursday 22nd February](#) at Tokyo District Court in front of presiding Judge Kenya Suzuki.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has called for the dissolution of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) following the death of Japan's former prime minister Shinzo Abe. Mr Abe died in hospital in July 2022 after he was shot at a political campaign event. The suspect Tetsuya Yamagami admitted shooting Abe and said he did so as he had a grudge against [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) and believed the former prime

minister supported them.

Following the assassination and the request for the dissolution of the church in Japan, members of [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) have raised concerns about the protection of religious freedoms. It is wrongly being reported that the dissolution of a religious corporation in Japan only has the effect of depriving the [corporation](#) of the tax privilege or its status of tax exemption and it would still be able to survive as a voluntary religious organisation.

In fact, as a result of the dissolution, the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) Japan would not be able to conduct ANY religious activities at all according to a number of articles of the Religious Corporation Act of Japan. (See notes)



Tomihiko Tanaka, here at press conference in Tokyo 7th Nov. 2023

In the opening of the hearing, Presiding Judge Kenya Suzuki heard arguments from Tomihiko Tanaka, head of the Japan branch of the [church](#), and also from the Japanese government. A lawyer representing the [church](#) told the judge that [donations from believers are used for missionary work](#) in and outside of Japan, and that receiving donations was part of religious activities.

The [church](#) has slammed the culture ministry's description of the [organisation](#) as a "vehicle for acquiring assets through illegal activities" and criticized Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's declaration on severing ties with the [organisation](#) as discrimination on the basis of ideology and a violation of the Constitution.

It is fully expected that the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) Japan will be vindicated in the courts. Over the years, the courts in Europe have again and again upheld the religious and human rights of the [church](#). In a similar case in the

UK, the then Attorney General was forced to admit there was "no case to answer" and had to reimburse £4.75m in costs.

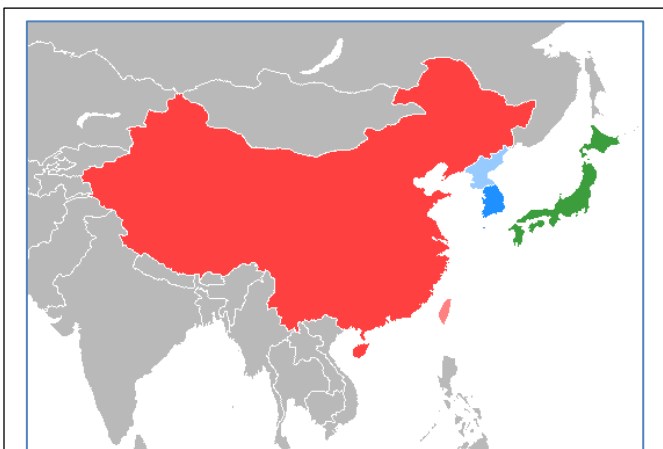


Dr. Michael Balcomb

However, this process will prolong the unfair and unconstitutional persecution of membership in Japan, who have already endured discrimination in employment and education and in access to basic governmental services and resources simply because of their faith.

Dr Michael Balcomb, Director of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification UK, says,

*"The [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) of the UK, are deeply disappointed that the government of Japan has taken this rash and ill-considered action to push ahead with dissolution. Many religious and [human rights experts](#) from throughout the world have written to the Japanese government in recent weeks urging them not to take this step, which is a blatant disregard of international laws and conventions on [human rights](#) and [religious freedom](#) and may be found unconstitutional even in Japan.*



China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan

This call for a dissolution order is a sad reflection on the current state of Japanese parliamentary leadership.

I believe now more than ever that there needs to be that solidarity, and bringing together of people in Japan, as the country faces many major external challenges (the threat of a confident and increasingly belligerent People's Republic of China, sour relations with South Korea, and the nuclear ambitions of Kim Jong-un) as well as a number of internal challenges.

The country as a whole remains closed-minded and suspicious toward the immigrant

communities, including those of the [Family Federation](#), whose traditional values and stable and relatively large families are the best chance Japan has of turning the demographic tide.

If the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) 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. And to lose our religious freedom in the country not only affects us at [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), but all those practicing their chosen religion."

UK Media Contact

For further information or to book an interview please contact Emma Rushton at Roseleigh Media on [roseleighmedia@gmail.com](mailto:roseleighmedia@gmail.com) and copy in [pr@ffwpu.org.uk](mailto:pr@ffwpu.org.uk)

[Sun Myung Moon](#) had firsthand experience with the evils of Communism in North Korea. He warned the Japanese of the totalitarian ideology and system. His movement in Japan contributed significantly to slow down the growth of Communism there. The Japanese Communist Party never forgave him and has for decades fought vehemently to stop his movement. With the help of the current Kishida administration, it seems like they are about to succeed.



Here a photo from the factory where the inmates of the horrendous [labour camp Sun Myung Moon](#) was sent to in North Korea in 1948. It's an earlier photo, but the tasks carried out were similar. Here, 40 kg bags of ammonium sulfate being carried in industrial city of Heungnam. Picture taken in the 1930s when the large factory was run by a Japanese company - Nippon Nitrogen Fertilizer Co., Tokyo. Photo: Nippon Nitrogen Fertilizer Co,

### Notes for Editor

The [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), previously known as the [Unification Church](#) was founded by [Sun Myung Moon](#) in Korea [in 1954](#).

It became known as [FFWPU](#) in 1997 and aimed to be a new broader based evolution of the Unification Community as an alliance of people who generally share the vision of building [God](#)-centred families as the basis for healthy communities, stable societies and a peaceful world.

When [Sun Myung Moon](#), the founder, was just 15, [Jesus Christ revealed to him](#) that the end of the age was fast approaching. [Moon](#) took the revelation to churches in Korea but they were dismissive. He gained a small group of followers and preaching in the Communist-held northern part of Korea resulted in his being thrown into a [harsh labour camp](#). On his eventual [release](#), he fled as a refugee to South

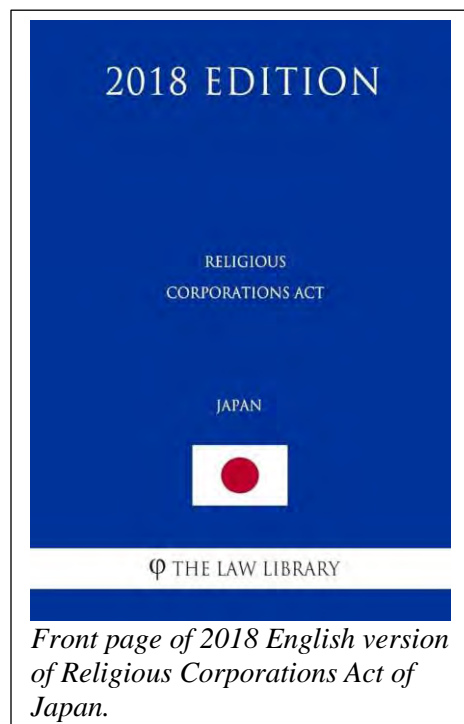
Korea, where he met [Mother Moon](#). The couple were [married in 1960](#) and continued their public ministry together.

The Japan chapter of [FFWPU](#) began in 1959, and membership took off during the country's 1980s economic boom.

Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe spoke at two online events hosted by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and his killer claimed he committed the assassination because Abe had "supported the [Unification Church](#)" with which the killer (who was not and had never been a member) had become obsessed.

When a dissolution of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) was pushed for in the UK, the UK government lost and ended up paying £4.75m in costs to the [Unification Church](#).

### Notes on Religious Corporation Act



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

Article 48-2 of the Religious Corporation Act of Japan ("RCA") sets out that "A religious corporation which has been dissolved is be deemed to continue to exist to the extent of the purpose of liquidation, until the completion of the liquidation". "The purpose of liquidation" above shall mean only to liquidate the religious corporation. Continuing to conduct religious activities is not included.

When a religious corporation has been dissolved pursuant to the dissolution order, the court appoints a liquidator (Article 49, paragraph 3 of the RCA). The incumbent Chairperson of the [Family Federation](#) of Japan, Tomihiro Tanaka, cannot serve as liquidator.

The duties of the liquidator appointed by the court are limited to the following three (Article 49-2, paragraph 1 of the RCA):

- conclusion of current business;
- collection of claims and performance of obligations; and
- delivery of the residual assets

Evidencing the above, two religious corporations once given dissolution orders in Japan (Myokaku-ji and Aum Shinrikyo) do not exist as a religious corporation now.

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# Collusion To Rob Minority Of Its Rights

January 22, 2024 • Knut Holdhus



*Japanese government in collusion with group hostile to Family Federation*

Third of six parts of Seiron report – More on [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 4](#), [part 5](#), [part 6](#)

The Japanese monthly opinion magazine Seiron (正論) published in its December 2023 issue a feature article on the **outrageous**



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Author: Japan's "Apartheid-Style Social

persecution of the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Japan.

One part of the report by Makiko Takita, well known journalist and editor-in-chief of the magazine, is an interview with Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Italian sociologist of religion and editor-in-chief of [Bitter Winter](#), the leading international online magazine on religious freedom and human rights.



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

**BITTER WINTER** [Bitter Winter](#) published this part of the report of *Seiron* on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024, as the **third of six parts** of the English version of the original Japanese article. Read the [whole Bitter Winter article](#). Read more on [article 1](#), [article 2](#), [article 4](#), [article 5](#), [article 6](#).

In the interview with Dr. Introvigne, he says he is concerned about the legal actions taken against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), formerly the [Unification Church](#), in Japan.

The sociologist of religion, famous globally for his work, expresses his worry about the Japanese government's request for a dissolution order against the [Unification Church](#), citing that the organization has not committed any crimes in Japan, a democratic country that guarantees freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). He emphasizes that, in his experience working globally to defend freedom of religion or belief, this is the **first time he has seen such a request for dissolution in a democratic country**.

"[...] and it is a great shock to me," the scholar says, expressing his concern about what he perceives as an **unusual and concerning legal action** against the [Unification Church](#) in Japan.

Introvigne draws comparisons with other countries, mentioning that even in countries where there is criticism of the [Unification Church](#), such as the United States and Italy, there is no government action to legally regulate or dissolve the organization. He also contrasts the situation with Russia and China, where religious organizations, including the [Unification Church](#), face persecution and dissolution by the government. However, he notes that China and Russia are not democratic regimes, and the criteria for what constitutes a crime differ from those in Japan.



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

Massimo Introvigne further discusses the situation in Japan where the government is pursuing the dissolution of the [Unification Church](#) under the *Religious Corporations Act*. He compares this to the dissolution of an organization called *Artgemeinschaft* in Germany in September 2023.

Introvigne points out that even in democracies, systems for dissolving organizations exist, but their application is typically limited to cases where a crime, punishable under the penal code, has been committed. He provides

an example of the dissolution of *Artgemeinschaft* in Germany, which he describes as a political organization rooted in Nazism rather than a religious movement. The dissolution of *Artgemeinschaft* was requested based on criminal activities, aligning with the general principle that **dissolutions in democracies are tied to criminal conduct**.

Introvigne emphasizes that the situation in Japan, where the government is seeking to dissolve the [Unification Church](#) without it having committed any criminal acts, is unique and

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unusual in a democratic country that upholds freedom of religion. He points out that the current events in Japan are being highlighted in Chinese and Russian media as a form of propaganda, drawing parallels between Japan's actions and those of China in suppressing religious groups. Introvigne explains how the **situation in Japan is being used for propaganda purposes by China and Russia,**



*Persecution in China: Tibetan Monks arrested in 2008. Photo (5th April 2008): SFT HQ (Students for a Free Tibet) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 2.0 Gen. Cropped*

"I am the editor-in-chief of a daily web magazine called '[Bitter Winter](#),' which covers news about religious freedom violations around the world. I carefully watch the Chinese media, and every week an article about the dissolution of the [Unification Church](#) in Japan always catches my eye. The articles are full of claims that 'Japan is doing the same thing as China' 'We have been proven right,' 'Cults should be suppressed,' and so on. Similar arguments can be read in the Russian government-affiliated media, and the **current events in Japan are being used for propaganda purposes by China and Russia.** We would do well to keep this in mind."

The Seiron report provides an overview of events surrounding the [Unification Church](#) in Japan, particularly in the aftermath of the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe by an individual with a grudge against the [Unification Church](#). Introvigne expresses concerns about the way the government and certain groups have been handling the situation. Certain **important facts about the assassin seem to have been ignored completely by the media.** The general public appears to have been given a **slanted picture of the situation.** The Italian scholar points out,

"I noted that **the man [the assassin] had been interacting with journalists and other opponents of the [Unification Church](#) on social media before the incident.** Obviously, I do not believe that they encouraged him to kill Abe, but I wonder if they might have **excited his hostility** to punish the [Unification Church](#). Why did the man commit such a heinous act? I do not believe that this has been fully clarified."

And straightaway after the assassination on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2022, the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (全国霊感商法対策弁護士連絡会), a group of largely leftwing activist lawyers who have been fierce opponents of the [Unification Church](#) for decades, called a press conference where they **blamed the church** for what had happened.

Dr. Introvigne describes the tactic of the network of lawyers as a **"reversal phenomenon"**. **The perceived victim becomes the perpetrator, and the alleged perpetrator is treated as a victim.**



*Kingdom Hall in Hamburg-Alsterdorf, ten days after the killing spree on 9th March 2023: damaged door, flowers*

The scholar mentions similar cases in South

Korea and Germany

where so-called

anti-cult movements attempted to **shift blame** onto religious organizations,

and candles. Photo: NordNordWest / Wikimedia Commons. Licence: [CC BY-SA 3.0 Germany](#)

"Last March [2023] in Germany, a former member of the Jehovah's Witnesses broke into a place of worship of this religion, called Kingdom Hall, and killed eight people with a gun. Then, some members of the anti-cult movement, which opposes Jehovah's Witnesses, came forward and criticized the religion, saying that the cause of the incident was that 'the Jehovah's Witnesses have continued to abuse this man,' and called for the religious organization to bear the brunt of the blame. The anti-cult movement deflected the blame from the mistakes of the authorities [who had given a license to carry weapons to a mentally disturbed man] and tried to create a campaign against the Jehovah's Witnesses."

Introvigne **criticizes the Japanese government for joining forces with the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales** (全国霊感商法対策弁護士連絡会) in various procedures related to a dissolution order against the [Unification Church](#). He argues that such collaboration between the government and a so-called anti-cult movement is ideologically and politically strange.

The scholar says,

"Only in Japan has the **government totally jumped on the bandwagon**. In Korea and Germany, the media reports on the voices of anti-cult movements, and this can cause a lot of commotion. Sometimes there are campaigns to condemn these groups as 'cults.' However, there is no example of a democratic government reacting to such a campaign and moving toward the dissolution of the organization."

Dr. Massimo Introvigne **denounces the Japanese government for all of a sudden changing its policy** and allowing cases of tortious conduct to be sufficient ground for dissolving a religious organization. He explains,

"If religious corporations can be dissolved for torts under civil law, there is **no such thing as a safe organization**. This shows that this **was not a legal decision, but a political decision**. What the Japanese government has done is a **clear violation of the principle of religious freedom**. It is a move that should be strongly condemned."

Introvigne contends that the Japanese



*Blatant discrimination: "Colored" drinking fountain from mid-20th century with African-American drinking from water cooler in streetcar terminal, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA. Photo (1939): Russell Lee (1903-1986) / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image*

government's decision to pursue the dissolution of the [Unification Church](#) is a violation of the principle of religious freedom. He expresses concern that this move **may have a ripple effect and set a precedent for private entities to discriminate** against the [Unification Church](#),

"and start saying, 'We will have nothing to do with



them.' This is undeniable **religious discrimination**, which is unacceptable in light of international law, which stipulates that there shall be no discrimination based on ideology, creed, religion, or other such grounds."

Introvigne **questions the legitimacy of the government's decision**, stating that it appears to be a political decision rather than a legal one.

In fact, there have already been **instances of discriminatory incidents** in Japan, such as local governments refusing to rent public facilities to independent organizations connected with the [Family Federation](#) or passing resolutions to sever relations with such organizations in local government councils.

And what makes matters worse in Japan, is the fact that there might be **collusion between the Japanese government and the courts**. For more on that particular issue, see [Does Japan Have an Independent Judiciary?](#)

More on [part 2 of the interview](#) (part 4 of the Seiron report).

More on [article 1](#), [article 2](#), [article 4](#), [article 5](#), [article 6](#) in the Seiron report.

**Featured image** above: Dr. Massimo Introvigne in April 2023. Photo: [FOREF](#)

"Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights" – text: Knut Holdhus

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