

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Unification Church Dissolution Request Shows Weakness Of Japan's PM Kishida

Knut Holdhus
March 26, 2024



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida delivering a speech at the COP26 in November 2021

Experienced LDP politician claims Prime Minister's attack on religious minority exposes weakness of Kishida



Toshikazu Masubuchi

[Bitter Winter](#), the online magazine for human rights and religious freedom, published as a series of three articles a report titled "The [Unification Church](#) Case in Japan: A Politician Speaks Up." It was written by a member of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Toshikazu Masubuchi, who served as speaker of Tochigi Prefectural Assembly 1991-2011.



On 29th February 2024, [Bitter Winter](#) published the 3rd of its 3 articles. It was headlined "[Political Motivations Behind the Request of a Dissolution Order](#)". There, Masubuchi expresses his view that the current Kishida administration

is merely a politically pragmatic government cloaked in conservative attire. The author also claims that Kishida's request for a dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#) "showed

his weakness".

On [part 1](#) in [Bitter Winter](#) series, [part 2a](#), [part 2b](#), [part 3a](#)

During his youth, Masubuchi read the novel "Jashumon" (邪宗門) by Kazumi Takahashi (高橋 和巳). Then the LDP politician grasped the significance of religious liberty as a cornerstone of democratic societies and became adamant that it should not be manipulated by authorities as they pleased. Subsequently, he came to understand that the inclusion of "freedom of religion" in the current Japanese Constitution, in line with democratic principles, was caused by the maltreatment of Judaism in the Christian world up through history.

Being well aware of such a historical injustice, Masubuchi regarded Prime Minister Kishida's discussion of a dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#) merely as a political gesture aimed at boosting his approval ratings. Therefore, the experienced Tochigi politician never entertained the thought that the Kishida administration would in fact pursue an order to dissolve the [religious organisation](#).

Still, on 13th October 2023, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) submitted such a request to Tokyo District Court.



Kazumi Takahashi (1931-1971), Japanese novelist and scholar of Chinese literature

Upon reading an article in the Japanese paper Sankei Shimbun the day before that request was made, Masubuchi was taken aback. He wondered whether the Kishida administration aimed to intertwine the dissolution of the House of Representatives with a dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#). According to the newspaper report, Prime Minister Kishida in October 2022, all of a sudden altered the interpretation of the requirements for a dissolution order spelt out by the Religious Corporations Act, sparking dissent among members of the Agency for Religious Affairs.



Under pressure from Kishida administration not to voice opposition: the Agency for Cultural Affairs

Despite this, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) pressed agency members, citing potential cabinet repercussions, and looked for consensus. Upon reading this piece, Masubuchi concluded that the Kishida administration was merely a politically pragmatic government cloaked in conservative attire.

Toshikazu Masubuchi explains,

"Other conservative supporters had similar impressions. How can the people trust a Prime Minister who violates freedom of religion for personal protection without adequately countering attacks from opposition parties and the media? For many conservative supporters of the LDP, Prime Minister Kishida's actions showed his weakness [...]."

In spite of the religious persecution he contributed a lot to for the sake of votes, the downward trend in his approval ratings continued.

Masubuchi recalls how the powerful Kishida faction Kochikai within the Liberal Democratic Party decided to dissolve in January 2024 because of political upheavals and the political funds scandals last year,

"The fate of those who deny the 'Heavenly Will' can only be described as tragic. How ironic that their faction dissolves while contemplating the dissolution of a [religious organization](#). It is not too late to stop religious persecution immediately."

The crimes perpetrated by Aum Shinrikyo in the sarin gas terror in Tokyo subway and other incidents would typically be deemed grave offenses tantamount to "subverting the state". In addition, other crimes associated with that group, such as the murder of adversarial lawyers, are classified as serious offenses even by already existing laws.

Masubuchi asks,

"In contrast, what heinous crimes has the [FWPU](#) committed? Donating to a religious cause is a 'common practice', and terms like 'tithing' in Christian churches are customary. Moreover, other religious groups have boasted about collecting tens of billions of yen overnight or within a few days. From the perspective

of individuals from other religions, I may spend hundreds of thousands of yen on nothing more than a 'posthumous Buddhist name written on a piece of paper'. Is my action a result of being 'brainwashed'? If such actions were considered crimes, then every religious organization would be subject to dissolution."

Toshikazu Masubuchi's younger brother, who has been the chairperson of the Tochigi Bar Association, emphasizes that most executives in the bar associations of Japan lean towards the left politically. The request to dissolve the [Family Federation](#), based on the assertions of organizations like the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, which asserts that "religion is an opiate," is absurd.

According to Masubuchi,

"However, if the Kishida administration persists in not withdrawing the dissolution request, the last hope lies with the judiciary. I believe in the integrity of Japan's judiciary, trusting that it has not become corrupt like the judiciary in South Korea. I want to believe that the courts will not ignore the fundamental human rights of freedom of religion and freedom of thought and conscience."

The LDP politician from Tochigi says that he has previously, on 31st October 2023, articulated his viewpoints in a blog post titled "I Stand Firmly on the Side of Protecting Fundamental Human Rights!"

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Kishida Swayed By Communist Dictatorial Policy

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Fumio Kishida (right) with four top members of Japanese Communist Party (JCP), Photo: 首相官邸ホームページ License: CC BY 4.0 Int.

Politician claims Kishida has copied dictatorial policy of the communists as he violates the freedom of religious minority

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Politician Speaks Up." It was written by a member of the *Liberal Democratic Party* (LDP), Toshikazu Masubuchi, who served as speaker of *Tochigi Prefectural Assembly* 1991-2011.

On 29th February 2024, [Bitter Winter](#) published the 3rd of its 3 articles. It was headlined "[Political Motivations Behind the Request of a Dissolution Order](#)".

There, Masubuchi explains that if Fumio Kishida had responded to calls from left-wingers to cut ties with the [Family Federation](#), in a similar way that former Prime Minister Nakasone did in 1987, the *Liberal Democratic Party* would have avoided many of the problems it faced after the Abe assassination in July 2022.



On part 1 in Bitter Winter series, part 2a, part 2b



Toshikazu Masubuchi.
Photo: [Bitter Winter](#)

Masubuchi points out that the media may manifestly advocate for human rights and champion justice, but at the same time they readily overlook the human rights of those who deviate from their narratives. The media exhibit no hesitation in branding the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU, formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)) as an "anti-social" organization. The majority of the **media uses such a defamatory term despite it originally being reserved for certain groups identified by the National Police Agency, such as "yakuza and pseudo-yakuza" and "political extortion groups"**.



The Japanese headquarters of Chosen Souren (General Association of North Korean Residents in Japan) in Chiyoda, Tokyo, Japan. Photo: GcG / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 3.0 Unp](#). Cropped

In addition, organizations like the *Japanese Communist Party* (JCP), "Chosen Souren" (*General Association of North Korean Residents in Japan*), violent extreme left-wing groups, and *Aum Shinrikyo* have been pointed out by the police as "groups to be monitored" under the *Subversive Activities Prevention Act*, whereas the [Family Federation](#) **has not received such a designation**. Nonetheless, the media report on the [Family Federation](#) seemingly assuming that it is an "anti-social group", demonstrating a lack of introspection.

The LDP politician draws attention to the fact that in the groups of lawyers aggressively hounding the [Family Federation](#) and demanding its dissolution, there are individuals who vehemently opposed the "*Subversive Activities Prevention Act*" being applied to *Aum Shinrikyo*. It appears they were **intent on preventing a precedent being established** for applying the Act. Essentially, they **sought to safeguard the Communist Party, which is labeled a "group to be monitored"** under the Act.

Masubuchi emphasizes the huge paradox of resisting applying the Act to *Aum Shinrikyo*, responsible for numerous casualties, while **fanatically insisting on the Family Federation being dissolved, even though it has committed no criminal**

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absolved, even though it has committed no criminal offenses. The actions of those lawyers **prioritize their own political interests.**



The Central Committee Building of the Japanese Communist Party (JPC) in Shibuya, Tokyo May 2006. Photo: Lombroso / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#). Cropped

Moreover, the **media harshly criticize politicians with ties** to the purportedly "anti-social" **Family Federation** or its affiliates, alleging that such relations endorse their anti-social activities. Nonetheless, Masubuchi commends those politicians solely for their **unwavering commitment to safeguarding**

Japan from left-leaning tendencies. As secular political experts, Masuchi and fellow politicians cannot endorse the religious beliefs of the **Family Federation**. This is yet another instance of the left's typical misdirection.

The Tochigi politician writes that members of the **Family Federation** place their faith in **Sun Myung Moon** as the Messiah of the Second Coming, not in politicians who are ordinary persons. Masubuchi asks rhetorically if there is even one member who contributes to the **Family Federation** because some of its gatherings involve LDP politicians.

Furthermore, even if such contributors exist, it is unclear why that would be unlawful. **Those troubled by donations to the Family Federation are according to Masubuchi predominantly leftists.** He claims their **underlying message is, "Do not support anti-communist groups!" Labeling a donor as a "victim" is manipulative.** It is not the consumer, but the *Japanese Communist Party* that suffers.

However, members of the *Liberal Democratic Party* (LDP), possibly wary of media disinformation, consistently feigned not knowing when questioned if they had ties to the **Family Federation** and affiliated groups. The politicians are without doubt in a demanding situation as they must secure electoral victories in the next elections.

Nevertheless, on 31st August 2022, to everyone's surprise, even Prime Minister Kishida announced during a press briefing that he, as the head of the governing party, had given instructions to the party's secretary-general to **sever connections** to the **Family Federation**.

Subsequently, Kishida's large party amended its governance code, articulating a policy of "**completely cutting off connections** with **FFWPU** and its affiliated organisations". According to *Chief Cabinet Secretary* Hirokazu Matsuno's statement in the Diet, the term "affiliated organisations" encompasses *International Federation for Victory Over Communism* (IFVOC).



Hirokazu Matsuno (松野博一), *Chief Cabinet Secretary* from Oct. 2021 till Dec. 2023. Photo: [内閣官房内閣広報室 / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

Masubuchi is puzzled by what Prime Minister Kishida may be contemplating,

“What is Prime Minister Kishida thinking when he decides to **sever ties with those who have fought at the risk of their lives to prevent Japan from leaning left** since before he entered university? Wasn't there peace in society afterward thanks to them?

Has Prime Minister Kishida ever fought for Japan with the same dedication as they have? It is unavoidable to conclude that Prime Minister **Kishida's actions go against the 'essence of conservatism'.**”

During a parliamentary questioning session in 1987, Yasuhiro Nakasone, who was Prime Minister at the time, firmly rebuffed *Communist Party* members' demand to cut ties with *International Federation for Victory Over Communism* (IFVOC), asserting,



Yasuhiro Nakasone (1918-2019), Japanese Prime Minister 1982-1987. Photo: [首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

“I consider it a **serious violation of freedom of thought and action**. I think this is a **manifestation of the Communist Party's dictatorial policy**. I would like them to refrain from making such unconstitutional statements that violate freedom of thought and action.”

Toshikazu Masubuchi claims,



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](#)

“If Prime Minister Kishida had responded with such a reasonable argument, there would have been no problem, and the situation of demanding the dissolution of **FFWPU** would not have arisen. **I hoped that Prime Minister Kishida, once in office, could transform into a courageous politician like former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe – but it was a miscalculation.**”

To be continued. Part 3b coming soon.

On [part 1](#) in *Bitter Winter* series, [part 2a](#), [part 2b](#)

Featured image above: Fumio Kishida (right) with four top leaders of Japanese Communist Party (JCP), from left: Keiji Kokuta, Tomoko Tamura, Akira Koike, Kazuo Shii. Photo (30th March 2023): [首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

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