

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Senator Satoshi Hamada criticizes Japanese government attack on FFWPU

Knut Holdhus
April 23, 2025



Quote from [article](#) in Asia Times April 21, 2025, along with picture by [Sekai Nippo](#) of Satoshi Hamada in March 2025



In interview with Asia Times, Japanese lawmaker Satoshi Hamada spells out the political forces pushing for the dissolution order against the Family Federation

Tokyo, 23rd April 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Japanese Lawmaker Hamada Expresses Concern Over Coercive De-Conversions and Human Rights Violations

Asia Times (Hong Kong)

by the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)



On 21st April, the Hong Kong-based online publication Asia Times published an [interview](#) conducted by Reitaku University [in Kashiwa, Chiba, Japan] Associate Professor of International Studies Jason Morgan with Japanese House of Councillors (Upper House) member Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡参).

The discussion focused on the government's request to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). In the interview, Hamada condemned the [abduction and confinement](#) used to [forcibly de-convert](#) believers of the [Family Federation](#) and expressed concern about the widespread biased media coverage surrounding the [organization](#).

Hamada described the [forced de-conversion](#) of [Family Federation](#) followers as a "grave problem" and stated that "the people of Japan ought to be informed about these things," emphasizing the background of his efforts to raise the issue in the National Diet (Japan's legislature).

He also mentioned the existence of individuals known as dakkaiya ("exit counselors" or "faith-breakers") who are involved in these [abduction](#) cases. He singled out Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻), stating that he had [contacts with a group of lawyers affiliated with the Constitutional Democratic Party](#) (CDP). Hamada argued that it was problematic for a national political party to be in cooperation with groups that engage in [violence and confinement](#) based on religious beliefs.

On the matter of religious freedom, Hamada noted that only a handful of "intellectuals and political commentators are speaking out about it," and expressed concern that "the mainstream media in Japan are still attacking free-speech advocates in a very aggressive way." He pointed to continued attacks on intellectuals who question the one-sided reporting related to the [Family Federation](#).

He further remarked that many television networks align with the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) and that "International Federation for Victory Over Communism" (IFVOC), an organization affiliated with the [Family Federation](#), is "greatly disliked by the Japanese Communist Party."

		
<i>Long-time communist and activist campaigning against the Family Federation, member of the National Diet for the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) until 2022: Yoshifu Arita here giving a speech on the street in front of Hachioji Station in Tokyo October 14, 2024</i>	<i>Professional faith-breaker Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻), responsible for hundreds of deprogrammings based on abduction and forcible detention. He is said to have been advisor to the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP)</i>	<i>The head office of Soka Gakkai, at Shinanomachi, Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan 2006</i>

Hamada, who has attended [Family Federation](#) events and given speeches, voiced frustration that the media refuses to report on these events despite his outreach. He criticized the media as "very far from fair", especially for ignoring key facts such as the drastic decrease in refund lawsuits since the [Family Federation's](#) 2009 "Compliance Declaration" [See editor's note 1 below] following issues related to [large donations](#).

Morgan also raised concerns about the Komeito Party, which is in coalition with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and has ties to the religious organization Soka Gakkai [See editor's note 2 below]. Hamada pointed out that, similar to the [Family Federation](#), it has been reported that Soka Gakkai received large donations, suggesting that "Soka Gakkai could meet the same fate as" the [Family Federation](#). He implied that if the [dissolution order](#) against the [Family Federation](#) is carried out, similar measures might be applied to other religious organizations.



Morgan interpreted the Liberal Democratic Party's stance against the [Family Federation](#) as a "political calculation" aimed at distancing itself from a [religious group](#) that originated in Korea, by labeling it as dangerous. He also emphasized that some lawyers and activists have "made a name for themselves by ginning up hatred against the [church](#) and its members."

Finally, Hamada expressed his concern about the current state of religious discourse in Japan, saying he was "struck by how little concern media and political leaders have shown" to fundamental principles such as freedom of religion and freedom of association, even amid reports of [human rights violations](#) against members of

the [Family Federation](#).

[Editor's note 1: The 2009 compliance declaration of the [Unification Church](#) of Japan (now the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)) was a formal commitment by the [organization](#) to reform its practices in response to longstanding public criticism and legal challenges.

The [Unification Church](#) in Japan had faced numerous allegations related to recruitment tactics and donation solicitation, termed "spiritual sales" (靈感商法) by a hostile network of activist lawyers who had declared the [religious organization](#) an enemy. These issues led to multiple lawsuits orchestrated by the activist lawyers and significant media backlash. This prompted the [organization](#) to take measures to

restore its reputation and demonstrate compliance with legal and ethical standards.

The [religious organization](#) pledged to stop possibly unethical donation practices, including what the hostile network of lawyers claimed amounted to "pressuring members into making large financial contributions under spiritual pretexts."

This was in response to accusations from the same activist lawyers that followers "were being manipulated into giving away substantial amounts of money or property."

The [Unification Church](#) stated it would enhance internal oversight to ensure compliance with ethical and legal standards. Measures included better training for leaders and stricter guidelines for evangelization and solicitation of donations.

After this compliance declaration, there was a significant decrease in the number of lawsuits against the [Unification Church](#) - since 2015 called the [Family Federation](#). The [religious organization](#) has used this as evidence that it has improved its practices and should not be subject to [dissolution](#).]



[Editor's note 2: Soka Gakkai, a global lay Buddhist organization originating in Japan, aims to create an "ideal world" based on the principles of Nichiren Buddhism, which emphasizes individual empowerment, inner transformation, and societal harmony. Their vision is often framed as kosen-rufu, meaning the widespread propagation of Buddhist values to establish peace and happiness for all.

Soka Gakkai promotes peace, culture, and education through initiatives that focus on personal transformation (human revolution) - the belief that changing oneself positively impacts

society; peace activism - anti-nuclear campaigns, human rights advocacy, and interfaith dialogue; education - institutions like Soka University emphasize value creation and global citizenship; community engagement - social welfare programs, disaster relief, and environmental sustainability efforts.



To actualize these ideals in governance, Soka Gakkai founded the Komeito party in 1964 (now known as New Komeito or simply Komeito). The party's purpose was to translate Buddhist-based humanistic values into public policy. While legally separate from Soka Gakkai, Komeito has long been backed by members of Soka Gakkai and focuses on peace-oriented diplomacy (e.g., supporting

Japan's pacifist constitution); social welfare policies (benefiting education, healthcare, and the elderly); grassroots democracy (reflecting the voice of ordinary citizens)

Since 1999, Komeito has been a coalition partner with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), influencing policies while maintaining a centrist stance.

Despite its contributions, Soka Gakkai's political role has been controversial, with critics accusing it of blurring the lines between religion and politics. Some also argue that Komeito's alliance with the conservative LDP compromises its original pacifist ideals.

Soka Gakkai envisions an ideal world through personal empowerment, education, and political engagement. While its approach is rooted in Buddhist ethics, its political involvement remains a complex and debated issue.]

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Court Win Calls Dissolution Case Into Question

• April 21, 2025
• Knut Holdhus

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“Mind control” argument rejected as unfounded in court win raising doubts about the logic behind the dissolution order against the Family Federation



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See also [Court Dismisses Religious “Mind Control” Claims](#)

The *Tokyo District Court*’s decision on 25th March to issue a **dissolution order** for the **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** (**Family Federation**, formerly the **Unification Church**) stirred controversy by recognizing the **organization**’s conduct as unlawful based on “inference”.

However, in a case heard the same month at the *Sapporo High Court*, the **Family Federation**’s alleged “unlawful conduct” was completely dismissed, leading the plaintiff to abandon their claim. This was the case involving Kousuke Yamabe (a man in his 60s, alias), a **Family Federation** member living in Sapporo.

The collapse of the mind control theory

Yamabe was sued in September 2019 for approximately 26 million yen in damages by his two sisters and younger brother. They claimed he used the savings of their late father – who died in 2017 – for donations to the **religious organization**. The plaintiff’s lawyer, Masaki Gouro (郷路征記) from the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (Zenkoku Benren), also named the **Family Federation** as a defendant.

Lawyer Gouro, who had previously handled a similar “Return My Youth” case in Sapporo, accused the **religious organization** in the lawsuit of having incited Yamabe, asserting that they instilled faith in the Yamabe couple and used it to “extract money”. In written arguments, the lawyer further claimed that **Family Federation** believers’ entire personalities are permanently transformed into a “**Unification Church** personality” (統一協会的人格), making them subservient (隷属) and compelled to commit unlawful acts due to indoctrination.

Yamabe said, “I thought the issue would center on whether or not we had our father’s consent.” Yamabe was however angered when the plaintiffs took a stance completely denying his religious beliefs, essentially pushing a “mind control” theory. “It felt like they were mocking me,” he said. He also felt it was wrong that “they use my family to their advantage by entangling the issue of religion into an inheritance dispute between siblings.”

Yamabe and his wife Yachiyo (alias, also in her 60s) began living with his father – who had been living alone – in 1994. They assisted with farming and supported him in daily life. While the father, a farmer, disliked religion, he rarely commented on his son and daughter-in-law’s faith.

By 2015, due to old age, the father stopped driving and relied increasingly on the Yamabes for errands. Though strict with money, he gave them a cash card and said they could use it “in times of need”. The couple used the funds for living and education expenses and made donations for ancestral rites held by the **religious organization**.

Yamabe insists, “We had our father’s approval.” However, in 2016, when the father’s health declined, the sisters visited the Yamabe’s home. In the couple’s absence, they searched the house and took the father’s bankbooks and cash cards. They saw the withdrawal history and assumed most of it was for donations, leading to outrage and a family meeting.



The sisters ransacking the Yamabe’s home.
Illustration: Grok xAI, 21st April 2025.



Location of Sapporo on the northern island of Hokkaido. Illustration: Maximilian Dörrbecker (Chumhwa) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp

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donations, leading to outrage and a family meeting.

There were also suspicious aspects: they took not only the father's passbooks but also Yamabe's own credit card and even a radio cassette player belonging to Yamabe's high school-aged child. Their justification was that the money might be used for "weird religious stuff" but that didn't explain taking the child's belongings. Moreover, the eldest sister, after taking the father's passbook, was later found to have used up several million yen from the account.

The plaintiffs also exaggerated their claims. For example, a 500,000 yen repair for a self-inflicted car accident by the father was counted as a "loss" even though it clearly wasn't a donation – showing a sloppy approach.

"Baseless accusations" from the plaintiffs

In November of that year, the sisters escalated the conflict with physical violence. While Yamabe was away, the sisters confronted Yachiyo at home. When she explained the donations, one sister became furious, slapped her, pulled her hair "so hard that her body lifted off the floor," and splashed water from a pan on the stove on her. According to court records, the sisters claimed it was just "lukewarm water", but Yachiyo suffered significant fear and mental trauma.

However, according to Yamabe's testimony and recorded evidence, their late father – while trying to keep peace with the sisters – never demanded repayment or expressed disapproval toward Yamabe.

In the first trial at the Sapporo District Court, all claims against the [Family Federation](#) were dismissed on 7th March last year.

Though the plaintiffs appealed, on 12th March this year they acknowledged the claims lacked grounds and withdrew the case. Yamabe settled with them privately for 4 million yen.



The Sapporo High and District Courts where the trial was held, in Sapporo, Hokkaido. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

A person involved in the defense commented, "Because the plaintiffs weren't the ones who made the donations, they had no grasp of the factual circumstances. Their claims were based on assumptions." One must wonder whether lawsuits like this, based on "inference" of wrongdoing by the [religious organization](#), contributed to the Tokyo District Court's [decision](#) to dissolve the [Family Federation](#). If so, it raises serious questions.

Reflecting on the outcome, Yamabe said, "Since their demands weren't met, I see it as a victory."

See also [Court Dismisses Religious "Mind Control" Claims](#)

Featured image above: Kousuke Yamabe (alias) speaks about his personal experience, in Sapporo, Hokkaido. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

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