

**FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Forced into Lawsuits and Exploited to Fit Narrative of Japanese Government**

Knut Holdhus  
May 26, 2025



*Soichiro Kobayashi and Pastor Haruhisa Nakagawa in discussion - Shibuya Ward, Tokyo, Japan*



**3-time victim of abduction and confinement and Christian pastor reflecting on dissolution order based on lawsuits following narrative of lawyers in league with professional faith-breakers**

Tokyo, 24th May 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

**Interview with Supporters of Victims of Abduction and Confinement**

**Issue of Dissolution Order for the Family Federation**

by Yasuhiro Uno (宇野 泰弘)

"Face the pain of the past" - Pastor Haruhisa Nakagawa (中川晴久)

"A chance for the religious organization to change" - Soichiro Kobayashi (小林宗一郎)

Haruhisa Nakagawa: Dropped out of Waseda University's School of Letters and dedicated himself to his church. Since 2007, he has been the head pastor of Christian Church of the Lord's Sheep. He is also active in public discourse through the Christian opinion site "SALTY" and YouTube.



*Professional faith-breaker and victim. Illustration*

**Soichiro Kobayashi:** Born in 1971 in Tokyo. A current member of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) and a three-time victim of [abduction and confinement](#). He now supports victims and their parents in rebuilding relationships damaged by such experiences.

The hearing on the [dissolution order](#) against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) has [moved to the Tokyo High Court](#). In this interview, we spoke with two individuals who work to repair family relationships broken by [abduction and forced de-conversion](#) (also known as "deprogramming" or "faith-breaking") [See editor's note below]:

**Soichiro Kobayashi** (小林宗一郎), an active believer and former victim of [abduction and confinement](#), and

**Pastor Haruhisa Nakagawa** (中川晴久) of the Christian Church of the Lord's Sheep in Yokohama.

Interviewer: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野 泰弘)



*Working in league with faith-breakers forcing believers into lawsuits and exploiting them to fit narrative: One of the architects of new law and advisor to the Japanese authorities: **Masaki Kito** one of the hostile lawyers of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales and Nationwide Unification Church Damage Countermeasures Legal Team*



*Working in league with faith-breakers forcing believers into lawsuits and exploiting them to fit narrative: **Hiroshi Yamaguchi**, activist leftwing lawyer and founder and leading member of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS)*

- What do you think about past court cases where individuals who left the [Family Federation](#) after being [abducted and confined](#) became plaintiffs, and how those cases influenced the Tokyo District Court's [decision](#)?

**Kobayashi:** People in [abduction and confinement](#) situations can't make sound judgments. Some were even coerced into lawsuits they didn't want to be part of and were exploited to fit a narrative. Using such trials as grounds for a [dissolution order](#) is highly questionable.

More about this: [Politicians, Lawyers, and Criminal Faith-Breakers](#)

- Is the [Family Federation](#) an organization deserving of

dissolution?

**Nakagawa:** Reading the court's decision, I sensed they were trying hard to construct a rationale by adding weight and reasoning to prove continuity [of wrongdoing]. That suggests there actually was no continuity. This is essentially a politically motivated trial. We should be broadcasting to the world:

"This trial is clearly unjust!"

**Kobayashi:** I choose to see the inclusion of civil issues in the dissolution criteria as an opportunity for the [religious organization](#) to repent for past shortcomings and undergo transformation.

- "Repentance" implies reflection and self-examination. What specifically do you mean?

**Kobayashi:** Through my experience of being [abducted and confined](#), I've worked to help heal relationships between similarly affected parents and their sons and daughters. I've faced both the Christian pastors who instructed the abductions, and the parents who carried them out. Through this, I've realized that both the [religious organization](#) and the opposing side had their own biases. The [organization](#) seemed to assume that any voice of opposition was entirely bad, thereby shutting down opportunities for dialogue.

- How was the [religious organization](#) viewed by the opposition?

**Kobayashi:** There was a deeply rooted assumption among parents and pastors that "the [Family Federation](#) was evil, and its members are mind-controlled." This often made meaningful communication impossible.

The widespread occurrence of [abductions and confinements](#) was likely due in part to issues with the [religious organization](#)'s evangelism methods and organizational structure. The same can be said for the current [dissolution order](#). At this point, it's essential for the [Family Federation](#) to sincerely ask itself, "Were there no problems on our side?"

**Nakagawa:** I've heard that the [Family Federation](#) went through a phase of pushing too hard "for the sake of the ideal". That said, there is a teaching that says, "Cherish (Put) your family first." If there is pain from the past, then facing it honestly is crucial.

- Mr. Kobayashi, you've now reconciled with your mother, who carried out your [abduction and confinement](#).

**Kobayashi:** My mother told me, "Everyone went through it. Everyone was a victim." In other words, the parents were [deceived](#). She added, "If people just realized that, they'd all understand."

Even parents who had a deeply negative view of the [religious organization](#) were able to understand the truth once we had calm, open conversations. They realized they'd been [misled](#). I believe the same could be said for public opinion.

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**[Editor's note 1:** Coercive faith-breaking ("deprogramming") in Japan refers to the practice of coercively attempting to separate individuals from their religious affiliations or beliefs, typically through intervention by family members, professional faith-breakers (deprogrammers) or organizations hostile to new religious movements (NRMs). This phenomenon often targets members of such movements, e.g. relatively large faiths like the [Family Federation](#) or Jehovah's Witnesses, but also smaller groups like Happy Science (Kōfuku no Kagaku) and other newer religious movements.



*Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of Soka Gakkai. Here students belonging to the faith in 2001*

However, also Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist-based lay organization with more than 8 million Japanese members, and affiliated with Nichiren Buddhism, has occasionally been subject to faith-breaking attempts.

The practice gained attention in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Parents or concerned family members often hired faith-breakers who taught them how to abduct and forcibly detain believers. Almost all such cases involved confining the individual believer and cutting him or her off from the religious community. During the confinement, the believer was subjected to intense questioning or indoctrination designed to break his or her faith. The aim was to "rescue" the person from what the family often had been tricked by faith-breakers or lawyers to regard as harmful influence from the religious organization.

Critics of forced de-conversion argue that it violates fundamental human rights, including freedom of thought, religion, and association. Reports of psychological trauma and accusations of unlawful detention have sparked debates over its ethical and legal implications. In response, some religious groups, particularly NRMs, have lobbied for greater protections against such practices.

Japanese courts have been inconsistent in addressing cases of coercive faith-breaking. While some verdicts have condemned the practice as illegal detention, others have been more lenient, citing family concerns about "mental health" or alleged "exploitation" as mitigating factors.]

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# Media As Weapon: Deadly Echoes Of Bias On Air

• May 25, 2025  
• Knut Holdhus



From Myanmar to Japan: How media as weapon in narrative wars fuels global persecution through distorted stories, turning media from watchdog to attack dog

The Fragile Balance of Press Freedom and Religious Liberty

## The Dangerous Power of a Distorted Press



Part 2 of an article by Peter Zoehrer, journalist and Executive Director of FOREF Europe, originally published 7th May 2025 by Forum for Religious Freedom Europe (FOREF), republished 9th May 2025 by Human Rights Without Frontiers, and by Bitter Winter on 16th

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Peter Zoehrer.  
Photo: [FOREF](#)

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**Global consequences: Media as an  
accelerant**

The consequences of distorted media narratives are felt worldwide – and are often deadly.

In Myanmar, anti-Muslim rhetoric helped lay the groundwork for the Rohingya genocide. In Pakistan, media-fueled accusations of heresy against Ahmadi Muslims often end in mob violence.

**China: Media-driven cultural genocide**



**Falun Gong protesters about to be arrested in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in the early phase of the persecution.** Source: [Falun Dafa Information Center](#).

In China, state propaganda systematically [demonizes religious minorities](#) that are considered a threat to the ideology of the Communist Party. *Falun Gong* practitioners have been vilified as members of an “evil cult” since the 1999 ban, a label that justifies mass detention, torture, and organ harvesting. The *China Tribunal*, an independent panel, documented that *Falun Gong* adherents and other minorities such as Uyghurs are targeted victims of state-organized organ trafficking.

Since 2017, over a million Uyghurs in Xinjiang have been interned in so-called “re-education camps”, where they are subjected to forced labor, cultural eradication, and political indoctrination. State media portray this as “vocational training”, while reports of torture, forced sterilization, and the demolition of mosques are ignored. Tibetans suffer a similar fate: monasteries are destroyed, the Tibetan language is suppressed, and the Dalai Lama is defamed as a “separatist”. These narratives, spread by state-controlled media, legitimize cultural genocide.

**Russia: State media as a tool of repression**

In Russia, Jehovah’s Witnesses were banned as an “extremist organization” in 2017, a move that was prepared by years of state-orchestrated media campaigns. State media outlets such as Rossiya 24 and RT portrayed the group as a threat to national security, despite no evidence of criminal behavior. After the ban, over 180,000



**A public warning against the Jehovah’s Witnesses in the town of Torzhok in Tver Oblast, Russia in 2012.** The headline says “Caution, sect!!!” The text goes on to say, “Brothers and sisters! As became known recently, near the walls of our holy monastery, followers of the sect Jehovah’s Witnesses secretly preach their teachings. Be careful and vigilant! Don’t let yourself be fooled! You can get answers to all questions about faith and the Church from the brotherhood of the monastery at any time and every Sunday within the framework of Boris-Glebsk conversations.” Photo: Artyom Svetlov / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

members were forced underground, hundreds were detained, and many reported torture and house searches. State media played a central role in rallying public support for the persecution and suppressing dissent. This case shows how media can be used as a tool of state repression.

In India, nationalist outlets inflame religious tensions, targeting Christians and Muslims. The 2022 *U.S. State Department Report*

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warns that media bias plays a growing role in triggering violence.

### Nigeria: The hidden tragedy of Christians

In Nigeria, the persecution of Christians remains one of the least reported human rights crises. Between 2020 and 2024, according to Open Doors, over 14,000 Christians were killed by extremist groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, and radicalized Fulani militias. In 2023 alone, over 5,000 Christians were murdered, thousands of churches destroyed, and hundreds of thousands displaced. Yet global media coverage remains patchy, and the religious motive is often omitted. This silence promotes impunity and signals to persecutors that the world will look away. In regions with weak state protection, the media's failure to report the truth allows suffering to continue unabated.

Silence is complicity. When the media remain silent about the persecution of Christians in Nigeria, they are not only failing as journalists – they are complicit. Over 14,000 dead in four years, thousands of churches destroyed – and hardly any reporting. Democracy dies in darkness. When journalists conceal “crimes against humanity”, they violate their ethical duty to truthfulness. Silence does not protect the victims but encourages the perpetrators.

### Japan: Media witch hunt with global consequences



**Victims of state persecution:** [Family Federation](#) believers protesting in the Japanese city of Chiba 18th May 2025. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

In Japan, media smear campaigns have reached unprecedented levels. Following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2022, the [Unification Church](#) was branded a “cult” in over 4,000 articles, even though there was no connection to the crime. The assassin, Tetsuya Yamagami, acted out of personal motives, but the media used the tragedy to unleash a witch hunt.

Under this pressure, the government took legal action, which led to the [dissolution](#) of the [church](#) by the *Tokyo District Court* on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025. The [appeal](#) is pending, but the social damage is immense: children are being bullied, companies are [terminating contracts](#), and banks are refusing to provide services. If the appeal fails, all [assets will be seized](#), and churches will be closed – an unprecedented destruction of a legal religious community without any criminal basis.

This process is a wake-up call for democracies worldwide. Japan, the third-largest economy and a supposedly stable democracy, is trampling on fundamental principles such as religious freedom and the rule of law. Dictatorial and autocratic regimes are rubbing their hands with glee as they watch a democratic nation set such precedents. The “copycat effect” is inevitable: authoritarian states could use Japan’s actions as a blueprint to suppress religious minorities under the guise of media and political unpopularity.

International voices, including former US Ambassador [Sam Brownback](#), former Speaker [Newt Gingrich](#), and USCIRF Co-Chair [Katrina Lantos-Swett](#), condemn this as a direct attack on democracy. European experts such as [Massimo Introvigne](#), [Willy Fautré](#), and [Aaron Rhodes](#) also warn that Japan is [opening a Pandora’s box](#) that could have global repercussions.

To be continued. Part 3 coming soon.

See [part 1](#)

**Featured image** above: Media as weapon: Angry Chinese man accusing woman after reading about cult in a newspaper. Illustration: Grok xAI, 25th May 2025.

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**Warning that Japan’s dehumanizing treatment of [Family Federation](#) members could have global repercussions: Dr. Massimo Introvigne, april 2023. Photo: [FOREF](#)**



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