

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Yamagami Assassination Trial and the Act of Giving

Knut Holdhus
October 15, 2025



A Japanese woman offering a donation at a meeting. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator



What the soon upcoming Yamagami trial reveals about faith, forgiveness, and the forgotten purpose of religious giving

On 15th October 2025, the South Korean daily [Segye Ilbo](#) religion correspondent Jeong Seong-su (정성수) published a column which in English would be titled "[Tetsuya Yamagami and the True Meaning of Offerings](#)".



Tetsuya Yamagami, accused of assassinating former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The trial is due to start at the end of October 2025

The [article](#) opens with, "The first trial of Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也), accused of assassinating former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) in July 2022, is scheduled to open later this month. Yamagami's defense team is reportedly expected to argue that he was a 'victim of religious abuse'."

Jeong points out that the prosecution most likely will contend that the heinous act of terror "cannot be justified on religious grounds".

The [article](#) describes the background of the case. According to Japanese media reports and court documents, Yamagami's mother had made large donations to the [Unification Church](#), now called the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). He blamed this for his family's financial problems. In his police testimony, he described harboring resentment toward the [group](#) and toward Abe, whom he believed had connections to it. Jeong cautions readers against viewing Yamagami's act as a justified or understandable form of retribution.

Jeong describes how public anger toward certain religious groups has grown since the Abe assassination. Yet he frames the current climate in Japan as one of moral confusion, in which the original, spiritual purpose of offerings has been lost or distorted. Jeong's central question is not legal or political but theological: What does it mean to give?



To answer this, Jeong draws on a broad comparative perspective. He references both Christian and Buddhist teachings, positioning generosity as a universal spiritual discipline rather than a sectarian obligation. From the Christian Bible he cites two well-known passages: Jesus' praise of the poor widow who gave two small coins

- "all she had to live on" - and the Apostle Paul's injunction that giving should be voluntary and cheerful, not forced as "[God](#) loves a cheerful giver".



From Buddhist scripture, the writer invokes a scripture emphasizing that even a small act of giving, if performed sincerely, yields immeasurable merit. Across these traditions, Jeong identifies a common moral thread: that offerings are meaningful not for their monetary size but for the

intention and sincerity behind them.

The [column](#) also engages implicitly with the public debate surrounding religious donations in Japan and South Korea. In the years since the Abe assassination, many news outlets have examined the relationship between faith organizations and money, often casting suspicion on large-scale contributions or "devotional" giving. Jeong writes that it is important to understand what is often the "original intent" behind large donations,

"Properly understood, offerings and almsgiving (布施 / boshi) are channels of salvation that build healthy communities, help the poor, and spread peace throughout the world. Some even dedicate their entire fortune to a cause greater than themselves."



The widow of Zarephath offered her final meal to the prophet Elijah. Painting by Giovanni Lanfranco (Italian, 1582 - 1647)

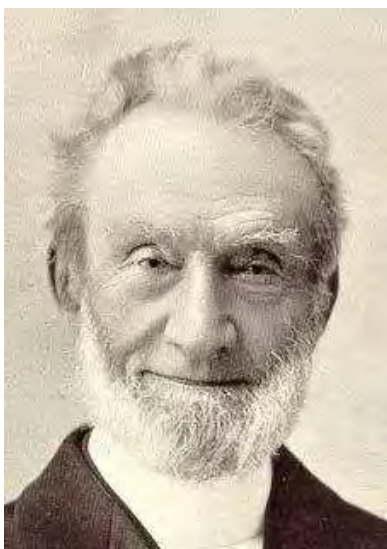
Jeong does not deny the possibility of abuse, but he warns against generalizing individual excesses to all religious activity. To do so, he suggests, risks turning justified concern into indiscriminate prejudice. For him, the more constructive response is to pursue transparency within religious institutions while recovering the spiritual essence of giving as an act of love, gratitude, and faith.

The [Segye Ilbo piece](#) describes how - throughout the Bible and the history of the Christian Church - there are countless stories that reveal the grace found in giving.

In the Old Testament, the widow of Zarephath offered her final meal to the prophet Elijah and, in return, received blessings that never ran dry.

In the New Testament, Barnabas sold his land and placed the proceeds at the apostles' feet,

earning the confidence and respect of the early Christian community.



George Müller (1805-1898), the Father of the Orphans of Bristol

Centuries later, in 19th-century England, George Müller, a humble pastor, ran orphanages without ever asking directly for donations - yet provision came unfailingly whenever it was needed. His life stands as a testament to the mystery of faith answered through tangible response.

Many believers likewise recount that even in times of struggle, after giving with sincerity, they have encountered unexpected grace - a new job, restored health, or blessings upon their families.

Though such acts of generosity may seem like loss in the moment, they often return as blessings, whether sooner or later, illustrating a timeless cycle of faith and divine reward that spans generations.

Yamagami's resentment may be partially understandable, yet a true grasp of the meaning of offerings reveals the error in judging his mother's donations so narrowly. Offerings are not products of

coercion or unthinking devotion, but expressions of sincere faith and love. They belong to the realm of the spirit, not mere human calculation, and should therefore be viewed through the lens of belief rather than material value. To reduce them to financial transactions or misguided loyalty is to overlook their deeper purpose - the personal and voluntary act of giving that connects believers to the divine and to one another.

Jeong's [column](#) also speaks to a wider social tension in East Asia, where modern secular values often collide with traditional religious practices. His reminder that offerings are not "coercion or blind

obedience" but "expressions of faith and love" challenges both critics who see all large donations as manipulation and believers who might confuse financial sacrifice with spiritual merit. In doing so, he restores moral complexity to a debate that too often oscillates between accusation and defense.

Ultimately, Jeong Seong-su's [essay](#) is less about one man's crime than about the fragility of trust between religion and society. By returning to scriptural and philosophical sources, he suggests that trust can be rebuilt only when faith communities embody sincerity and when the public approaches religion with fairness. In a media landscape quick to conflate scandal with essence, Jeong's call for balance and compassion offers a quietly persuasive alternative - a reminder that even amid tragedy, the deeper meaning of faith remains the pursuit of understanding and peace.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Abe Murder 3-Year Trial Delay: Calls for Truth](#)
Also related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Lone-Wolf Theory Disputed in Abe Assassination](#)
Also related to Yamagami trial and donations: ["Organized Terrorism, Not Lone Wolf, Killed Abe"](#)

Also related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Media Helping Terrorist Reach His Goal](#)
Also related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Kishida Administration Giving in to Terrorism](#)
And also related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Kishida Has Opened Can of Worms](#)

More, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Aiding Terrorist, Media Bashes Minority Religion](#)
And more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Bizarre Atlantic Report Condoning Terror](#)
Still more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Japan Times: Warning of Terror](#)

Yet more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Did constant hate-mongering cause terror?](#)
Even more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Inhuman Government-Supported Mass Deprogramming](#)
More, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights](#)

And more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"](#)
Still more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Japan Criticized for Glaring Rights Violations](#)
Even more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

And still more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan](#)
And even more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Conference on Religious Freedom Violations](#)
Still more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Japan: Threat to Religious Freedom](#)

Even more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Call to End Witch Hunt](#)
More, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Government's Foul Play Pointed Out](#)
More, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Japan: 4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions](#)

And more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Illegalities of Activist Lawyers Exposed](#)
Yet more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying](#)
Still more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Biased Information from Leftwing Lawyers](#)

Even more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions](#)
Even more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Kyodo News: 100s of Rights Violations Claimed](#)
Even more, related to Yamagami trial and donations: [Fabricated Torts Part of Wily Strategy in Japan](#)

Eradication of an Entire Faith Community". Slightly edited.

See another message from the side-event: [Using Schools to Break Faith: Japan's Policy](#)

See another message from the side-event: [UN Expert: "Japan's Illegal Dissolution Request"](#)

See another message from the side-event: [Japan: Ex-EU Envoy Warns of Religious Crackdown](#)

My topic today is "The Danger of Religious Eradication Based on Public Opinion Manipulation".

The official name of our church is [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). However, I think you are familiar with the former name the [Unification Church](#). So in my presentation, I will use the abbreviation of the former name: "UC". [\[See editor's note 1 below\]](#)

On 8th



Both opposed by left-leaning mainstream media: Here, former Prime Minister Shinzō Abe meeting with then President-elect Donald Trump at Trump Tower, 17th November 2016. Photo: [首相官邸ホームページ](#) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

July 2022, former Prime Minister Abe was assassinated. The suspect claimed his motive was his mother's donations to the [UC](#) two decades earlier, which had "led to the collapse of his family." He also resented Abe for sending a video message to UPF, an affiliated organization of the [UC](#).

But can such an excuse for murder really be accepted?

Nevertheless, an anti-[UC](#) lawyers network immediately took advantage of this incident to launch attacks on the [UC](#).

Let me explain the basic stance of the major media in Japan. Japan's major media outlets are in general left-leaning. They tend to be hostile to conservative politicians such as former Prime Minister Abe. In fact, just as the mainstream media in the United States strongly opposed President Trump, the Japanese major media consistently opposed Prime Minister Abe.

Minority religions also became convenient targets for such attacks since criticizing "cults" was a way to boost rankings.

Because the [UC](#) and its affiliated organizations took an anti-communist stance and actively campaigned for the enactment of an anti-espionage law, the media were particularly eager to criticize the [UC](#).



3 leading activist leftwing lawyers from the anti-UC lawyers' network called National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales – from left: Masaki Kito, Hiroshi Watanabe, Hiroshi Yamaguchi. Photo: Screenshot / [Bitter Winter](#)

Knowing the tendencies of the media, the anti-[UC](#) lawyers' network exploited the Abe incident to attack the [UC](#), creating a false impression of the [UC](#). They categorically labeled the [UC](#) as a "great evil" and the cause of Abe's assassination. They gave the impression that the [UC](#) was still causing massive economic damage nationwide. The lawyers' network spread propaganda that the [UC](#) was a "dangerous cult", that all [UC](#) members were victims under "mind control", and that all donations constituted victimization.

Send us a message

First Name *

Last Name

Email *

Email Address

Your Message *

Submit

The lawyers' manipulation of public opinion succeeded, and the Japanese society came to be dominated by the perception that the UC was nothing less than a heinous criminal organization.

In Japan, being an island nation, society places strong pressure on individuals to conform. During World War II, anyone who opposed the war was condemned as unpatriotic.

Likewise, after the Abe incident, members of the Diet who had attended UC-related events or even just sent a simple congratulatory message, were harshly criticized in the media and pressured to issue apologies.

Under this sustained campaign, Prime Minister Kishida finally declared that the *Liberal Democrat Party* (LDP) would cut ties to the UC.

Later, we found a table published on the website of the *Consumer Affairs Agency*, showing the number of consultations received by consumer centers concerning the UC compared to the total number of consultations.

According to this data, in June 2022, just before the Abe incident, consultations concerning the UC accounted for merely 0.003% of the total.

This bar chart compares the number of consultations handled by consumer centers regarding Japanese major new religious groups, including the UC.

Our lawyer recently researched it and according to it, in 2021, the year before the Abe assassination incident, the number of consultations concerning the UC was 27, whereas Japan's largest new religious group accounted for 67 cases, more than twice as many as the UC. The UC was only third or fourth among them.

Later, a periodical [Consumer Law News] was found in which a major lawyer of the anti-UC network stated that the number of consultations related to the UC had declined. He said they were struggling, being overwhelmed with consultations from small unfamiliar groups rather than UC-related consultations.

The fact that only the UC became the target of attacks can be explained by nothing else than political motives.

In principle, when the government finds its decision was wrong, it should correct its course. However, like large objects such as a train, once it begins to move, it cannot stop easily. And the government didn't stop.

In October 2022, the government abruptly changed its interpretation of the *Religious Corporations Act* overnight, declaring that even civil torts [civil wrongs causing alleged harm] could constitute grounds for dissolution.

The government enacted new laws and policies:

- a new law to restrict solicitation of donations
- a new law to promote claims against the UC
- a governmental decision on anti-UC instruction in schools.



Finally, on 13th October 2023, the government filed a lawsuit seeking the dissolution of the UC. They even submitted fabricated evidence to the court.

Instead of giving up the lawsuit, in court, the UC exposed the fabrication of evidence.

消費者庁

Consumer Affairs Agency, Government of Japan
Logo of the Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA) of Japan, an administrative agency under the Ministry for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety. Under a law enacted on 10th December 2022, the Consumer Affairs Agency gained authority over matters related to donations between religious organizations and their followers. Previously, the Agency for Cultural Affairs held sole jurisdiction over all administrative matters involving religious organizations. This legislation aims to address issues such as donations to new religious movements like the *Unification Church*. Photo: 消費者庁 / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image



Changing the law overnight: Former Prime Minister **Fumio Kishida**. Here, at press conference 14th August 2024. Photo: 首相官邸 (PMO) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int. Cropped



Taro Kono, government minister who brought extreme leftwing lawyer Masaki Kito, who is hostile to the [Family Federation](#), in as special advisor to the Kishida government. Photo (2019): Kuhlmann / MSC / Wikimedia Commons.
License: [CC Attr 3.0 Ger](#)

Normally, the courts should have dismissed the dissolution petition (request).

Instead, it recognized as ground for dissolution – based merely on speculation – that there must be unknown victims, while it recognized that there were few actual civil cases. Thus, they valued false impression over facts.

The manipulation of public opinion also reached local governments. Several local assemblies adopted resolutions declaring the cutting of ties with the [UC](#).

In Fukuoka City, the government decided not to allow [UC](#) and its related groups to [rent public facilities](#). As a result, the [UC](#) could no longer hold Christmas gatherings and even

peaceful marches were considered obstructive.

In Shimane Prefecture, support for volunteer activities by [UC](#) members was terminated. In fact, local authorities went as far as to order the removal of flowers planted by children as part of their volunteer work.

In Yamaguchi Prefecture, [UC](#) members were refused to eat at a restaurant.

When the [UC](#) or its affiliated organizations filed defamation lawsuits to restore their honor, the courts dismissed them all.



Protesting the coercive faith-breaking (deprogramming) business in Japan. Toru Goto (second from the right, front row) and others from the [National Association of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion Victims](#) participating in a protest march, 10th February 2025, Sugunami Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

One of the abnormal cases was [UC](#) member Toru Goto's case. He had been a victim of deprogramming [\[See editor's note 2 below\]](#) for 12 years and five months and he sued the deprogrammers. In 2014, during his case, the UN recommended that Japan act against deprogramming [\[See editor's note 2 below\]](#).

As a result, he ultimately won his case at the Supreme Court in 2015. However, after the Abe assassination case, an anti-[UC](#) journalist announced in a TV program that Mr. Goto had simply been a social recluse (hikikomori), which meant that he had won the deprogramming [\[See editor's note 2 below\]](#) case by a false claim.

Mr. Goto [filed a defamation lawsuit](#). At the [first instance](#), he won, but at the second instance, the court [reversed the ruling](#) based on the testimonies of the very defendants of the deprogramming [\[See editor's note 2 below\]](#) case – the deprogrammers.

It can be said that Japan as a whole is completely dominated by false impressions of the [UC](#). This problem has even influenced actions in a neighboring country. Under the prevailing social climate that "cults" must not be allowed to influence politics, even Mrs. [Hak Ja Han](#), the Co-Founder of the [UC](#), was [arrested](#) in South Korea.

Persecuting people who hold a certain faith based solely on manipulated impressions is like the Holocaust.

We sincerely request the protection of our human rights from the international community.

Thank you for your attention.

See another message from the side-event: [Using Schools to Break Faith: Japan's Policy](#)

See another message from the side-event: [UN Expert: "Japan's Illegal Dissolution Request"](#)

See another message from the side-event: [Japan: Ex-EU Envoy Warns of Religious Crackdown](#)

Featured image above: Norishige Kondo, Legal Affairs Director of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan, delivering his message at a civil society side event 26th September in room 11 in the UN Office at Geneva, Switzerland.

[Editor's note 1: In Japan, the approval by the authorities for the [Unification Church](#) to change its name to [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) was given in 2015.]

[Editor's note 2: 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. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp](#). Cropped

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.]

Related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Lawfare: State Uses Legal System in War on Faith](#)

Also related to media-driven religious cleansing: [MEXT's Legal Spin and "Dissolution at All Costs"](#)

Also related to media-driven religious cleansing: [UN Report: Japan's Lawfare Against Faith Minority](#)

And also related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Protesting No Transparency in Closed-Door Trial](#)

More, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Dangerous Flaws in Dissolution Order Decried](#)

Also related to media-driven religious cleansing: ["Lawyers Lying and Shaming Japan" for 50 Years](#)

And also related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

And also related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook](#)

More, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Media/Legal Expert: Communism Behind Persecution](#)

And more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

More, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights](#)

And more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"](#)

Still more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Japan Copying China: State Seizure of Churches](#)

And still more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan](#)

More, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions](#)

And more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Japan: Families Fear for Graves of Loved Ones](#)

Yet more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying](#)

Also related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Kishida Follows Anti-Family Federation Minister](#)

Also related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

Still more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Malicious One-Sided Government Source Selection](#)

Yet more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Kishida's Self-Defeating Populist Decisions](#)

And still more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Japan Urged to Make U-Turn](#)

And yet more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions](#)

And even more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Tendentious Reporting by New York Times](#)

Still more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Japan Criticized for Glaring Rights Violations](#)

Even more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

Yet more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Japanese Communists' Final War](#)

Still more, related to media-driven religious cleansing: [Political and Social Activism behind Oppression](#)

« Previous

Arbitrary Detention Of Mothe... Korean Crisis: "True Democra...

Next »

