

**FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan Court - Verdict Predetermined - Evidence Hidden - Witnesses Silenced**

Knut Holdhus  
April 12, 2026



*Nonfiction writer Masumi Fukuda speaking at a press conference by the "Second Generation Association for Protecting the Human Rights of Believers," March 26, 2026, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo, Japan. Masumi Fukuda - Born in Yokohama in 1956. Graduated from the Faculty of Sociology at Rikkyo University. After working for specialized publications and editorial production companies, became a freelancer. Won the 6th Shincho Documentary Award for Fabrication: The Truth Behind the Fukuoka "Murderous Teacher" Case (Shinchosha). Other works include The True Nature of Political Correctness (Hojosha) and [Sacrificed by the State](#) (Asuka Shinsha).*



**Verdict by inference: Critics slam court's predetermined decision as evidence is silenced in controversial Japanese court ruling against religious minority**

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[Opinion Contribution]

[Part 1 of a Series] Nonfiction Writer Masumi Fukuda: Tokyo High Court Decision on the Family Federation

**Dissolution Was Decided from the Start**

by nonfiction writer Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ)

**Completely Ignoring Concrete Rebuttals and Counterarguments**

4th March 2026. The Tokyo High Court - Presiding Judge Motoko Miki (三木素子) - issued [its decision](#) regarding the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). The result, following the [first instance ruling](#), was once again a dissolution order.

See also [Believers' Social Exclusion, Loss of Civil Rights](#)

See also [Shocked Author: "Japan Ignores Basics of Justice"](#)

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Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto (福本修也), who represented the [Family Federation](#) in both the first and second trials, was left stunned. "I can't believe it." He said that the faces of sincere and earnest believers grieving in despair came to mind, and as the [religious organization](#)'s legal representative, he felt deep anguish.



"In past cases involving the [Family Federation](#), we have already faced numerous unreasonable treatments by the courts, but this time I even felt fear at the court's willingness to dissolve the [corporation](#) without hesitation. It felt as though state power, including the judiciary, had come together to crush the [Family Federation](#)."

The previous year's [Tokyo District Court decision](#) had also been extremely unreasonable. Due to a lack of evidence, it retroactively treated settlements and mediated agreements as unlawful acts, piling [inference](#) upon inference to reach a [forced conclusion](#). Furthermore, during that [first trial](#), it was revealed that the Ministry of Education (MEXT) had [fabricated](#) and [altered](#) multiple written statements by former believers.

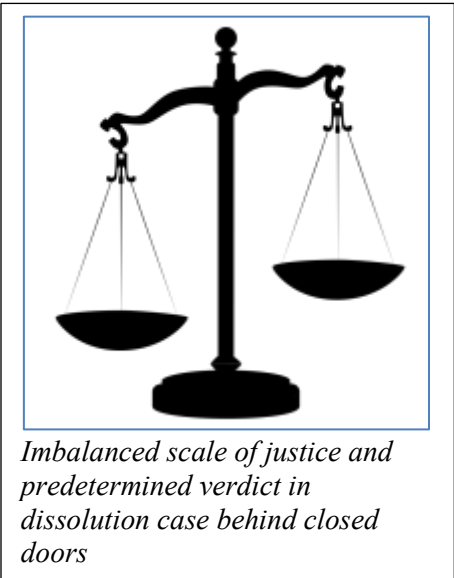
Meanwhile, the [appellate decision](#) - spanning 179 pages even without appendices - was even more astonishing. It interpreted everything the [Family Federation](#) did as malicious, recognized unlawful acts one after another without clear evidence, and rejected all of the [religious organization](#)'s counterarguments. In

principle, to establish an unlawful act, one must prove specific facts: who did what, when, how, and what harm resulted. None of that was present. I, too, was terrified by the court's apparent determination to dissolve the [organization](#) at any cost. The conclusion of dissolution had been decided from the outset.

**The High Court's Use of a "Magic Word"**

Attorney Fukumoto explains the ruling:

"The Tokyo District Court in the [first instance](#) determined a large number of 'unlawful acts' through a crude framework that abstractly derived 'illegality' from legal settlements and out-of-court agreements; however, the content (substance) of those acts was unclear, and there was no concrete evidence, so this clearly violates the principle of trial by evidence. So, in the appeal, the [Family Federation](#) thoroughly refuted these speculative findings by presenting concrete evidence for each case. However, the High Court completely ignored our rebuttals. Instead, it introduced a coined term: 'improper donation solicitation conduct'."



This term refers, apparently, to donation solicitations deemed to exceed socially acceptable limits.

"They used this coined term as a kind of magic word. But it is merely an abstract concept and does not identify specific facts."

Notably, since the 2009 compliance declaration [See editor's note 1 below], there have been only two finalized court judgments involving unlawful acts (affecting three individuals), all from over a decade ago. Faced with the challenge of justifying dissolution on such a basis, the High Court devised this "magic word," making it appear plausible by even classifying settlements and mediated agreements as unlawful acts. It then categorized cases into those where unlawfulness was "established", "reasonably possible", or "cannot be ruled out", concluding that a total of 144 individuals fell into these categories.

"The decision uses hesitant language such as 'it cannot be definitively established that improper solicitation occurred → the possibility cannot be denied,' yet in its conclusion asserts that the facts have been established. Astonishingly, it also treated amounts merely claimed by former believers during settlements as actual damages." (Fukumoto)

The [Family Federation](#), as noted, presented concrete evidence in each case to demonstrate that unlawful acts did not occur. For example, they submitted numerous materials such as contracts showing voluntary donations, written pledges made during activities, photographs, and audio recordings. However, the court

rejected all of these.

The reasons given included statements such as: "These pieces of evidence are only fragmentary," and "The appellant ([Family Federation](#)), in an effort to reduce civil litigation, adopted measures such as preserving documents, photographs, and contracts; since these were prepared in anticipation of disputes, their evidentiary value is limited."

### Ignoring Fabricated Statements and Forced Apostasy

In one settlement case, the plaintiffs claimed they had been recruited under false pretenses. However, the church they attended displayed a sign clearly reading "[Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) - Suginami Family Church". By any reasonable standard, it was evident they were dealing with the [Family Federation](#). The [religious organization](#) argued that the plaintiff's claim was false, but the court dismissed this, stating that it had considered all evidence submitted by both parties and that isolating this single piece of evidence was insufficient to deny unlawfulness.

The [religious organization](#) also argued that many plaintiffs had been forcibly made to renounce their faith through [abduction and confinement](#) and later sued the [religious organization](#) under the direction of de-conversion brokers (faith-breakers) [See editor's note 2 below], presenting evidence that their claims were false. This too was ignored by the court.



*[Fabrications and alterations](#) committed by a government department are as Masumi Fukuda puts it, "a crime committed by a nation". Still the court simply seemed to imply, "It's fine since we didn't use it as evidence." Illustration: Chat GPT*

Regarding the written statements of former believers that had been [fabricated](#) and [altered](#) by the Ministry of Education (MEXT), the court merely stated that, in the four cases where [fabrication](#) is almost certainly evident, "they are not included in the list of settlements or out-of-court agreements." Despite it being a crime committed by a nation, they seem to be implying, "It's fine since we didn't use it as evidence."

### A State-Led Inquisition

The [ruling](#) ultimately concludes that improper donation solicitation continued even after the compliance declaration [See editor's note 1 below] and could occur again in the future, making dissolution unavoidable. The reasoning: the [religious organization](#) did not reduce its budgeted donation income after the compliance declaration and continued to collect 80-90% of those targets - therefore, such improper conduct can be inferred to be ongoing.

Furthermore, the court went so far as to examine the [organization's](#) doctrine, citing statements by its founder [Sun Myung Moon](#) and asserting that excessive donation demands stem from such teachings. In other words, as long as believers adhere to these doctrines, and unless the [organization](#) takes effective countermeasures, unlawful acts may occur in the future - thus, dissolution is the only solution.

However, intervening in religious doctrine during a trial infringes upon freedom of religion and freedom of thought, and has been considered taboo in past case law.

Thus, the [religious organization](#) was forcibly dissolved based on "[inference](#)", "possibility", and the assertion that it adheres to "harmful doctrine". This amounts to a state-led inquisition.

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To be continued. Part 2 coming soon.

See also [Believers' Social Exclusion, Loss of Civil Rights](#)

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**[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:** 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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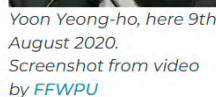
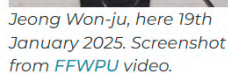
The logo of the Segye Ilbo

The South Korean daily [Segye Ilbo](#) published on 10<sup>th</sup> April an [article](#) by Kim Ju-yong (김주영) about a significant development in the long-running investigations into alleged political-religious collusion involving officials of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) – in Korea often called [Unificationism](#) (통일교).

*See also S. Korea's Troubling Pattern of Selective Probes*

The paper writes,

“The joint investigation team also decided not to indict Unificationism leader **Hak Ja Han** (한학자), former chief of staff **Jeong Won-ju** (정원주), and former director **Yoon** (윤영호), citing either lack of prosecutorial authority or insufficient evidence.”



The [article](#) reports on the conclusion of a high-profile investigation in South Korea into alleged financial ties between politicians and the [religious organization](#). At its core, the case revolved around accusations that several political figures across party lines had received money or valuables from representatives of [Unificationism](#) in exchange for influence or favorable treatment.

Segye Ilbo reporter Kim explains,

“Although it was acknowledged that they maintained some relationship with **Unificationism**, such as attending its events, there was no evidence beyond Yoon’s testimony to support the bribery allegations, and details such as the amount and circumstances of any transfer were unclear.”

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After an extended inquiry conducted by a joint prosecution-police task force, the authorities ultimately determined that the allegations could not be substantiated. This outcome – driven by insufficient evidence and the expiration of statutory time limits – has significant implications not only for the individuals directly involved but also for broader political and legal debates surrounding religion-state relations in South Korea.



Jeon Jae-soo (전재수). Photo (2023): 이데일리TV / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp. Cropped

The investigation centered on figures such as Democratic Party lawmaker Jeon Jae-soo (전재수), along with former lawmakers Lim Jong-seong (임종성) and Kim Gyu-hwan (김규환). These individuals had been accused of receiving illicit funds or gifts from **Unificationism** representatives, including cash payments and luxury items allegedly linked to lobbying efforts. One particularly prominent allegation involved claims that Jeon received 20 million won in cash and a high-end watch in connection with a proposed Korea–Japan **undersea tunnel project**. Additional



Former Democratic Party lawmaker Lim Jong-seong. Photo (2019): 경기도청방송국GTV / Wikimedia Commons. Source: YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0W02plAUoGQ>. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp. Cropped

suspicious arose over payments framed as bulk purchases of his autobiography, which critics suggested might have been a disguised transfer of funds.

However, as the joint investigation progressed, the evidentiary basis for these claims weakened considerably. Testimony from key witnesses – including **Yoon Yeong-ho** (윤영호), a former senior **Family Federation** official – proved inconsistent or lacked firsthand verification. Crucially, investigators were unable to corroborate the precise amounts allegedly transferred or to establish a clear transactional link between any benefits received and specific political actions. In legal terms, this failure to meet the burden of proof meant that prosecutors could not demonstrate the essential elements of bribery or illegal political financing.

An equally decisive factor was the statute of limitations. Under South Korean criminal law, bribery cases involving sums below a certain threshold are subject to a seven-year limitation period. Because investigators could not conclusively show that the value of the alleged bribes exceeded that threshold, the applicable time window had already expired. As a result, even if suspicions lingered, the state no longer retained the authority to bring charges. This dual finding – insufficient evidence combined with procedural time bars – led to the formal closure of the case with a decision not to indict any of the investigated figures.

The political ramifications of this conclusion are substantial. For months, the investigation had fueled calls – particularly from segments of the ruling camp – for the appointment of a special prosecutor to examine what was framed as systemic “political-religious collusion”. The narrative suggested a pattern of undue influence by religious organizations over elected officials, raising concerns about transparency, governance, and democratic accountability. With the central allegations now dismissed, momentum behind such proposals has significantly diminished. Critics argue that the case demonstrates the risks of politicizing unproven claims, while others maintain that structural concerns about church-state entanglement remain unresolved despite the lack of prosecutable evidence in this instance.

At the same time, the investigation did not end entirely without consequence. Four aides associated with Jeon Jae-soo were indicted – albeit without detention – on charges of destroying evidence. They are accused of wiping computer data in a local office after media reports surfaced and in anticipation of a search and seizure operation. While authorities have not established that Jeon himself ordered these actions, the episode underscores the sensitivity of the case and the degree of concern among those involved about potential legal exposure.

The **article** also references the broader scope of ongoing investigations into religious organizations, including allegations involving other groups such as Shincheonji [See editor’s note below]. Authorities have indicated that they will continue to pursue cases involving unlawful political donations, coercive practices, tax evasion, and embezzlement where evidence supports such claims. This suggests that, although the current case has been closed, scrutiny of religious institutions’ interactions with political and financial systems is far from over.



The Shincheonji (신천지) Peace Palace in Cheongpyeong-myeon, on the same lake where the **Family Federation** has large facilities, in Cpyeong, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea. Photo (2020): Jhcbs1019 / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int

See also **S. Korea’s Troubling Pattern of Selective Probes**

**Text:** Knut Holdhus, editor

**Featured image** above: Alleged **Unificationism** influence case collapses. Illustration: ChatGPT, 11th April 2026.

[**Editor’s note: Shincheonji**, officially known as *Shincheonji Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony*, is a new religious movement founded in South Korea in 1984 by Lee Man-hee, who claims to be the promised pastor mentioned in the Bible’s Book of Revelation. Shincheonji teaches that the Book of Revelation is being fulfilled through its church and that Lee Man-hee has received divine revelation to interpret it.]

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