

## FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japan's Government Shadily Sells Church Assets

Knut Holdhus  
April 16, 2026



Former staff members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) being interviewed in Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture, Japan



### **Calls grow for transparency and fair treatment in liquidation process with high human cost as believers are left in limbo**

Tokyo, 13th April 2026 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

[Part 5 of a Series] In Search of a Spiritual Anchor - One Month After the Dissolution of the Family Federation

#### **Concerns Over Opaque Land Transactions**

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

See part 1 of the series: [Beyond the Ban Believers Sustain Community](#)

See part 2 of the series: [Transparency Concerns: Non-Disclosure of Records](#)

See part 3 of the series: [Believers' Social Exclusion, Loss of Civil Rights](#)

See part 4 of the series: [Media's Role: Frenzy, Silence, and Consequences](#)

"It's impossible that the liquidator's representative could arrive in Okinawa from Tokyo just three hours after the ruling."

So says Mr. Satoshi Nagata (pseudonym, in his 50s), who worked as a church staff member of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Naha City.

At around 2:00 p.m. on 4th March, when the Tokyo High Court [upheld the order to dissolve](#) the [religious corporation](#), three attorneys acting as representatives of the [liquidator](#) visited the church in Naha. The [court decision](#) had been issued at 11:00 a.m. Although one of the attorneys came from Tokyo, it takes more than three hours to reach Okinawa by plane. Mr. Nagata, who dealt with them, said he believed "the attorneys must have arrived in Okinawa the day before." He felt that a [liquidation team](#) had already been organized in anticipation of dissolution, even for distant Okinawa.

More than a month has passed since the [High Court decision](#). After submitting cash, bankbooks, and keys managed by the church to the attorneys acting as representatives, staff members have remained on

standby at home. Mr. Nagata lamented,

"We can no longer use the church facilities, and it's extremely difficult for us."

The attorneys are not working inside the church facilities but instead from their own law offices. Only staff handling accounting are allowed to enter the facilities. In other words, even if believers were to use the facilities, it would not interfere with the [liquidation work](#) itself.

When one staff member asked the representatives when the facilities could be used again, they were told, "Given various public opinions, it will likely be difficult for several months." Mr. Nagata felt that the representatives were "concerned about the eyes of opponents and wary of being seen as too lenient toward the [Family Federation](#)." He emphasized that he "cannot accept their judgment at all." He made a heartfelt appeal:

"At the very least, please allow us to use the church facilities just for Sunday worship."

They are also deeply worried about the possible disposal of the facilities. Because there is no transparency in the [liquidation](#) process, staff members cannot grasp what will happen to the buildings and land from now on, heightening their anxiety.

Originally, the church had planned to rebuild the facilities and had already begun demolition work. However, with the start of [liquidation](#) procedures, reconstruction has been temporarily halted. Believers fear that the land might be put up for sale before the [Supreme Court](#) issues its decision.

Mr. Masaru Shimada (pseudonym, in his 40s), another staff member, said with a heavy heart:

"This land was purchased with donations collected by believers seeking a place for their faith. It holds decades of memories for them. If it were to be sold, it would cause unbearable emotional distress."



***The state took their places of worship. Must hold worship services in parks. Here, AI illustration of [Family Federation](#) members gathering in a Japanese park for their Sunday meeting 5th April 5, 2026.***

If the land is sold before the [Supreme Court](#)'s decision, it would not be returned even if the ruling were later overturned. For this reason, staff members are calling for greater transparency in the [liquidation](#) process.

Within the one month since [liquidation](#) began, a payment dispute with a real estate company has also occurred. According to prior explanations, payments for contracted properties were to continue under the instructions of the attorneys acting as representatives, but payments for one property had stopped. Angered by the unauthorized delinquency, the real estate company reportedly declared a unilateral

termination of the contract.

Despite the issue not being the fault of the church, it has damaged their reputation and made future contracts more difficult. Mr. Tadashi Nitta (pseudonym, in his 40s), another staff member, frowned and said,

"We are filled with frustration at the thought that we must bear the consequences, such as unwanted contract cancellations and damage to our reputation in the community."

Nevertheless, while feeling the situation is unreasonable, the [religious organization](#) has chosen to cooperate with the [liquidators](#), making it difficult to voice demands regarding the [liquidation](#) work. Staff members said they are being careful "not to interfere with the [liquidation](#) process".

The church in Naha City has about 600 believers. Mr. Nitta emphasized that the church facilities are not merely places for worship. Many believers who have lost a place to learn their doctrine and practice their faith are "deeply hurt", he said. He added,

"I would like the attorneys acting as [liquidators](#) to see firsthand how seriously believers value their faith. Perhaps then something might change."

Currently, some believers are offering their homes as places for study, but long-term use is difficult.

---

See part 1 of the series: [Beyond the Ban Believers Sustain Community](#)

See part 2 of the series: [Transparency Concerns: Non-Disclosure of Records](#)

See part 3 of the series: [Believers' Social Exclusion, Loss of Civil Rights](#)

See part 4 of the series: [Media's Role: Frenzy, Silence, and Consequences](#)

Related to liquidation without transparency: [Lawfare: State Uses Legal System in War on Faith](#)

More, related to liquidation without transparency: [Scholar Questions Secrecy in Dissolution Case](#)

And more, related to liquidation without transparency: [Shocked Author: "Japan Ignores Basics of Justice"](#)

Still more, related to liquidation without transparency: [Legal Inconsistencies A Blow to Democracy](#)

Even more, related to liquidation without transparency: [Japan: Court Accused of Using Speculation](#)

Also related to liquidation without transparency: [MEXT's Legal Spin and "Dissolution at All Costs"](#)

Also related to liquidation without transparency: [UN Report: Japan's Lawfare Against Faith Minority](#)

And also related to liquidation without transparency: [Protesting No Transparency in Closed-Door Trial](#)

More, related to liquidation without transparency: [Dangerous Flaws in Dissolution Order Decried](#)

Also related to liquidation without transparency: ["Lawyers Lying and Shaming Japan" for 50 Years](#)

And also related to liquidation without transparency: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

And also related to liquidation without transparency: [Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook](#)

More, related to liquidation without transparency: [Media/Legal Expert: Communism Behind Persecution](#)

And more, related to liquidation without transparency: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

More, related to liquidation without transparency: [Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights](#)

And more, related to liquidation without transparency: [State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"](#)

Still more, related to liquidation without transparency: [Japan Copying China: State Seizure of Churches](#)

And still more, related to liquidation without transparency: [12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan](#)

More, related to liquidation without transparency: [4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions](#)

And more, related to liquidation without transparency: [Japan: Families Fear for Graves of Loved Ones](#)

Yet more, related to liquidation without transparency: [Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying](#)

Also related to liquidation without transparency: [Kishida Follows Anti-Family Federation Minister](#)

Also related to liquidation without transparency: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

Still more, related to liquidation without transparency: [Malicious One-Sided Government Source Selection](#)

And still more, related to no transparency: [Japan Urged to Make U-Turn](#)

And yet more, related to no transparency: [Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions](#)

Even more, related to no transparency: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

Yet more, related to no transparency: [Japanese Communists' Final War](#)

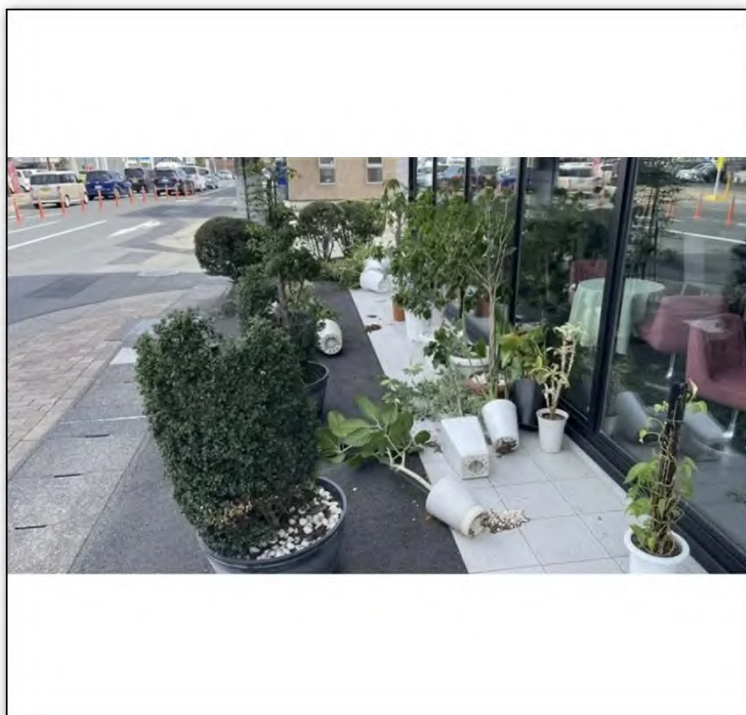
Still more, related to no transparency: [Political and Social Activism behind Oppression](#)

Still more, related to no transparency: [Dissolution Case: Rule of Law on Trial 4th March](#)










# Ordered Out: The Human Cost Of Dissolution

April 14, 2026 • Knut Holdhus



Share: f t wa in e

### More Posts

-  **Liquidation Without Transparency Sparks Anxiety**  
April 16, 2026
-  **Collusion Narrative Unravels As Probe Closes**  
April 15, 2026
-  **Rapid Liquidation Implies Prearranged Verdict**  
April 13, 2026
-  **Japan: Verdict Predetermined, Evidence Silenced**  
April 12, 2026
-  **Alleged Unificationism Influence Case Collapses**  
April 11, 2026
-  **Media's Role: Frenzy, Silence, And Consequences**  
April 10, 2026
-  **Believers' Social Exclusion, Loss Of Civil Rights**  
April 9, 2026



*As liquidators arrived and 260 churches closed, thousands of staff and believers were ordered out within hours, confronting an uncertain future*

Tokyo, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2026 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article.*

Logo of the *Sekai Nippo*

**[Opinion Contribution]**

## [Part 3 of a Series] Nonfiction Writer Masumi Fukuda: Tokyo High Court Decision on the Family Federation

### Believers Moved to Tears by Landlord's Encouragement

by nonfiction writer Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ)

See part 1 in the series: *Japan: Verdict Predetermined, Evidence Silenced*

See part 2 in the series: *Rapid Liquidation*



Search... Q

### Categories

Send us a message

First Name \* Last Name

What was the situation at the local churches at that same moment? The leader of a church in the Chubu region recounts:

“I didn’t think dissolution would happen. The Family Federation has absolutely no criminal cases involving senior leadership. On the contrary, the Ministry of Education fabricated and altered statements from former members. I also heard that Presiding Judge Motoko Miki (三木素子) declared that the High Court would adhere strictly to evidentiary principles. Furthermore, after the trial had concluded, the court even contacted us to say they wanted to use the content of the resignation press conference of former President Tomihiro Tanaka (田中富広) from last December as evidence. I assumed that would work in our favor.”



Masumi Fukuda (福田 ますみ) – Japanese investigative journalist and award-winning nonfiction writer. Photo (2024): Sekai Nippo

However, the outcome was again a betrayal, following the first trial.

This same church leader had actually served as a pastor at another church for two years, and it just so happened – almost fatefully – that he was assigned to his new post as church leader on 4th March. He says,

“The decision came while I was still at my previous church. I was so shocked that the scene before my eyes seemed to lose all color. The successor pastor was also shaken, and a young woman in charge of accounting was crying, asking the head of the women’s division, ‘What should we do?’ I then set out by car for my new post. Liquidators had already arrived there around 12-1 p.m., and I reached just before they began explaining the situation to the staff.”

There were two liquidators, and their demeanor was polite:

“We will proceed with operations in an orderly manner. Is the accountant here? We will take custody of the ledgers as they are. Please leave the keys. Take your personal belongings with you, but even personal computers should be left here for now. This facility can no longer be used. Vehicles are corporate property, so they cannot be used either.”



The state took their places of worship. Must hold worship services in parks. Here, AI illustration of Family Federation members gathering in a Japanese park for their Sunday meeting 5th April 2026.

That day, all staff were required to remove their personal belongings and vacate the premises by around 5-6 p.m. However, it was impossible for everyone to take everything in a single day.

At that point, the landlord of the church parking lot offered help:

“You can store your things in my apartment.”

He also encouraged them, saying,

“You haven’t done anything wrong. This is tough – hang in there.”

Some believers were moved to tears by these words.

### Even the Church Leader Could Not Hold Worship

The church leader had originally planned to hold an inaugural service that day. Instead, he gave a greeting via the believers’ group messaging app. From 5<sup>th</sup> March onward, over several days, he visited 17 locations and met 70–80 believers, who were all happy he had come.

“What impressed me was how everyone was already saying, ‘This isn’t the end, is it?’ and were trying to move forward. Of course, it’s sad and painful not being able to enter the church. The biggest difficulty is that we can’t use the prayer room, so we can’t hold prayer vigil sessions. During those, people cry out and shed tears while praying, so such meetings can’t be done outside the church.”

As for worship, believers can gather outdoors, but church staff, now considered employees of the liquidation entity after the dissolution, are not allowed to conduct worship during working hours, even outside.

“We expect dismissal notices from the liquidation entity soon. However, religiously, I am still the church leader.”

He remains determined to stay close to the believers.

Email \*  
Email Address  
Your Message \*  
Submit

## Concerns Over Cemeteries



The “Central Japan (Chu-Nihon) Cemetery” spreads across a mountain area in Suzuka City, Mie Prefecture. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀); image partially edited.

One of the biggest concerns among those involved in the [religious organization](#) was what would happen to its [cemeteries](#). There are currently eight [cemeteries](#) nationwide where believers are buried. Of these, five are registered under the [Family Federation](#)’s name: [Oze Cemetery](#), Chū-Nihon Cemetery, Hokuriku Cemetery, Osaka Peace Cemetery, and Kochi Cemetery.

A believer, Mr. T, manages [Oze Cemetery](#). Originally, the land in Katashina Village, Gunma Prefecture, belonged to his grandfather, who donated it to the former [Unification Church](#). It opened as [Oze Cemetery](#) in 1982. Since then, three generations of his family have maintained the [cemetery](#) and assisted visitors.

“The [cemetery](#) is about the size of two soccer fields. Around 420 people are buried in graves with headstones, and the cremated remains of about 1,070 people are also housed here. On 5<sup>th</sup> March, the day after the [dissolution decision](#), three [liquidators](#) came to inspect the site. We had concerns beforehand, but in practice, access remains free – people can visit graves, the columbarium keys haven’t been taken, and the chapel is accessible. However, these decisions seem to vary depending on the liquidators.”

### Avoiding a Forced Auction?

The [liquidators](#) requested to view building registries. With dissolution, property tax exemptions are removed, and the [liquidators](#) must now pay those taxes. While the keys to a microbus were confiscated, work vehicles such as a HiAce van and a light truck can still be used. Burials and interments that had been reserved before 4<sup>th</sup> March are allowed to proceed.

However, large-scale religious events such as the annual joint memorial service attended by the president have been prohibited.



In Katashina Village, Gunma Prefecture: Oze Cemetery, owned by the [Family Federation](#). Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

What lies ahead? It seems likely that the worst-case scenario – auctioning off the [cemeteries](#) – can be avoided. Legally, [cemetery](#) management is typically conducted by local governments, religious corporations, or foundations, so transferring them to another religious organization is now a possibility.

However, ownership of remains and gravestones lies with the bereaved families. Any transfer must satisfy the families and align with the president’s intentions, making selection of a recipient organization difficult.

(According to the [religious organization](#)’s legal department, the group has designated Tenchi Seikyō (天地正教) [[See editor’s note below](#)] as the recipient of its assets after dissolution, meaning the [cemeteries](#) would also go there. However, [National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales](#) argues that any remaining assets should not be transferred to Tenchi Seikyō [[See editor’s note below](#)] and is calling for special legislative measures, so the outcome remains uncertain.)

### Future of Employees

The [religious organization](#) currently employs 1,933 staff members. It is easy to imagine how difficult it will be for them to find new employment after dismissal by the liquidation entity.

The [court decision](#) merely notes that they may receive unemployment insurance or welfare benefits. Is this really how one should address innocent believers? It can only be described as utterly lacking in compassion.

(Although Mr. Masaichi Hori (堀正一) is officially referred to as “former president”, the term “president” is used here in accordance with believers’ usage.)

See part 1 in the series: [Japan: Verdict Predetermined, Evidence Silenced](#)

See part 2 in the series: [Rapid Liquidation Implies Prearranged Verdict](#)

**Featured image** above: The front yard of the Hamamatsu Family Church of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) on 9th March 2026, after being vandalized following the [High Court decision](#). Photo provided by a related party.

**[Editor’s note: Tenchi Seikyo (天地正教)**, translating to “True Teachings of Heaven and Earth,” was founded in 1987 by **Kawase Kayo** as the *Spiritual Stone Worshipers Club*. In 1988, it was reorganized and officially registered as a religious corporation under Japan’s Religious Corporations Law. The group venerates a pure white marble statue of the Seated Maitreya (Miroku Bosatsu), aligning with certain Buddhist traditions. According to researcher Thomas H. Pearce, as of 1994, Tenchi Seikyo reportedly had approximately 111,000 members across 73 centers throughout Japan.]

**Related to shock of being ordered out:** [Lawfare: State Uses Legal System in War on Faith](#)

More, related to shock of being ordered out: [Scholar Questions Secrecy in Dissolution Case](#)

And more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Shocked Author: “Japan Ignores Basics of Justice”](#)

Still more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Legal Inconsistencies A Blow to Democracy](#)

Even more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Japan: Court Accused of Using Speculation](#)

Also related to shock of being ordered out: [MEXT’s Legal Spin and “Dissolution at All Costs”](#)

Also related to shock of being ordered out: [UN Report: Japan’s Lawfare Against Faith Minority](#)

And also related to shock of being ordered out: [Protesting No Transparency in Closed-Door Trial](#)

More, related to shock of being ordered out: [Dangerous Flaws in Dissolution Order Decried](#)

Also related to shock of being ordered out: [“Lawyers Lying and Shaming Japan” for 50 Years](#)

And also related to shock of being ordered out: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

And also related to shock of being ordered out: [Japan’s Dissolution Case Echoes China’s Playbook](#)

More, related to shock of being ordered out: [Media/Legal Expert: Communism Behind Persecution](#)

And more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

More, related to shock of being ordered out: [Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights](#)

And more, related to shock of being ordered out: [State and Media Creating “Today’s Non-Citizens”](#)

Still more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Japan Copying China: State Seizure of Churches](#)

And still more, related to shock of being ordered out: [12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan](#)

More, related to shock of being ordered out: [4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions](#)

And more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Japan: Families Fear for Graves of Loved Ones](#)

Yet more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying](#)

Also related to shock of being ordered out: [Kishida Follows Anti-Family Federation Minister](#)

Also related to shock of being ordered out: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

Still more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Malicious One-Sided](#)

[Government Source Selection](#)

And still more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Japan Urged to Make U-Turn](#)

And yet more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions](#)

Even more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

Yet more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Japanese Communists' Final War](#)

Still more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Political and Social Activism behind Oppression](#)

Still more, related to shock of being ordered out: [Dissolution Case: Rule of Law on Trial 4th March](#)

« Previous  
Rapid Liquidation Implies Prearr... Collusion Narrative Unravels As P... Next »



**FAMILY FEDERATION**  
FOR WORLD PEACE AND UNIFICATION  
EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

GET STARTED

[Home](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

First Name

Last Name

Your Email Address

Subscribe

I consent to have this website store my submitted information so they can respond to my inquiry.

Follow us

