FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Against the Odds, Fujisawa Church Reopens

Knut Holdhus
September 12, 2026

Koasaburo Sasaki, pastor of Fujisawa Family Church, August 27, 2026 afternoon, Fujisawa, Kanagawa Prefecture

Sekai Nippo

Fujisawa Family Church returns to its members as they may now gather again at their dear place of worship they feared lost

Tokyo, 11th September 2026 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. Original article.

Family Federation Church Reopens as Believers Gather Despite Headwinds of Dissolution

NEWS Close-Up

by Takahide Ishii (石井 孝秀)

"We wanted to return as soon as possible" Even during liquidation

With the dissolution of the religious corporation of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU, formerly the Unification Church) now finalized, one issue troubling its members is the loss of the "places" where they can practice their faith. Many have been holding gatherings in members' homes or streaming worship services online, but some have experienced emotional distress because facilities to which they had become attached are no longer available for use.

At the same time, there have been cases in which churches located in rented properties have been able to resume religious activities. On 1st July, ahead of churches elsewhere in Japan, the Fujisawa Family Church of the Family Federation, located in Fujisawa, Kanagawa Prefecture, was returned to its members. We visited the church.

Fujisawa Family Church is located about a five-minute walk from JR Fujisawa Station. The church had originally occupied all but the first and third floors of a seven-story building. Since 1st July, however, it has been renting only the fifth through seventh floors and using them as church facilities.

The person responsible for the church, Koasaburo Sasaki (々木耕三郎), had spent many years working in education for second-generation members. Remarkably, he assumed his position as "church pastor" on 4th March - the very day the Tokyo High Court issued its decision ordering the dissolution of the religious corporation.

After quickly completing his introductory greetings, Sasaki was meeting with staff to discuss what to do next after seeing the news reports when, at around 2 p.m., two lawyers acting on behalf of the liquidator arrived at the church.

Inside Fujisawa Family Church of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification which reopened on July 1, 2026 after being under the management of a liquidator. Photo afternoon August, 27, 2026

Sasaki said, "I had mixed feelings about the situation, but there was no point in letting my emotions get the better of me."

> "Rather, because the church facility was a rented property, I thought that once the liquidator's work was completed, we might be able to use the church again. I firmly resolved that we should bring this to an end as quickly as possible - even by as little as one day sooner - and move on to the next stage."

After handing over everything to the liquidator, including cash, bankbooks and keys, mainly the staff responsible for general administration and accounting became involved in the liquidation process.

Because securing the assets of the church, which had been a religious corporation, was the liquidator's highest priority, members could no longer enter or leave the facility. To provide members with somewhere to go, Sasaki began renting outside venues and holding gatherings there.

> "Even in the face of these headwinds, we were grateful that so many members came to the gatherings."

Sasaki expresses his gratitude. Each time, equipment for streaming the services was also transported to the venue, with the help of second-generation members, so that those unable to attend in person could participate remotely.

However, unlike at a church facility, outside venues had to be cleared out as soon as the scheduled time approached its end.

> "I felt a sense of loneliness. At the church, even after worship had ended, everyone could stay and interact with one another. I imagine the members felt the same way."

Sasaki says he was also encouraged by the way members came together as one, voluntarily visiting one another's homes and checking on each other.

Regular gatherings were held at several different venues, but the inconvenience remained. Some members even went to the wrong meeting place. Sasaki and the members persevered through this period without a place where they could pray, driven by a single desire:

> "We wanted to return to our church as soon as possible, even by as little as one day sooner."

On 1st July, partly because the liquidator's side was also eager to complete its work quickly, the church was able to take over the facility in almost exactly its previous condition by purchasing the equipment and furnishings that had originally been inside it.

Another major factor was that the church members had built a relationship of trust with the owner of the property and were able to obtain the owner's consent to "continue using it just as before".

Among the Family Federation churches that had been closed, Fujisawa Family Church was therefore able to return to its facilities at a relatively early stage. Sasaki recalls:

> "Many members were truly delighted to be able to return to a place they had thought they would 'never be able to use again.'"

Some members had been shocked by the reports of the dissolution and had stopped attending gatherings. But with the church facility restored, some of them have begun coming back.

One second-generation member, a man in his 20s, said:

> "The atmosphere is completely different from an outside venue. It was difficult to participate when you had children with you, but it is much easier to come to the church facility."

Nevertheless, Sasaki emphasizes that the situation remains difficult:

> "There are still people whose wounds have not healed. That is precisely why we need to make further reforms so that the church can become an even more comfortable and welcoming place."

He also spoke frankly about the situation nationwide:

> "If you look across Japan, there are churches with no prospect of returning to their facilities. The Fujisawa church was simply fortunate. The real challenge begins now."

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Lawyers Desperately Hunt For Japanese "Victims"

September 11, 2026 • The News Desk

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Masaki Nakamasa | Fumihiro Kato

Few claims; activist network of lawyers mobilizes Japan's main governing body for lawyers in desperate nationwide hunt for more "victims"

Tokyo, 30th August 2026 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished

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Desperate to "Uncover" More "Victims"?

JFBA Holds Telephone Consultation on Former Unification Church Allegations

Logo of the Sekai Nippo

by the editorial department of Sekai Nippo

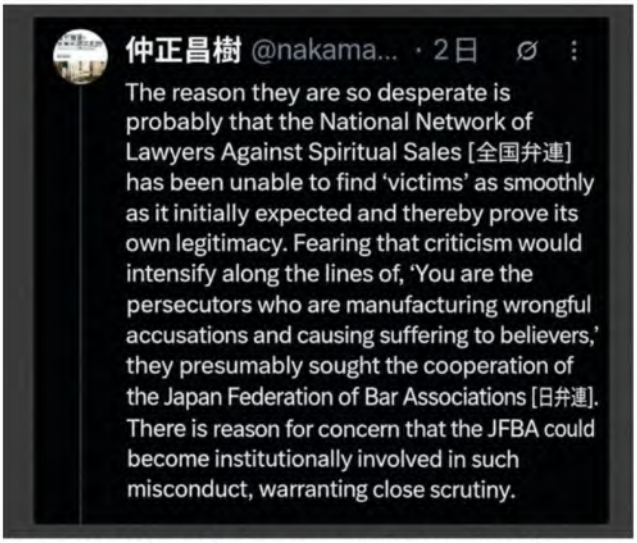
The logo Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA)

Amid the liquidation proceedings now under way for the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (FFWPU, formerly the Unification Church), the *Japan Federation of Bar Associations* (JFBA) [See editor's note 1 below] held a nationwide telephone consultation on 28th August in cooperation with bar associations across Japan. The consultations dealt with such questions as whether people could file claims for damages and how to submit such claims. The initiative prompted a series of skeptical reactions on social media, including questions such as, "Were there fewer claims than expected?" and, "Are they desperately trying to uncover victims?"

Fumihiro Kato (加藤文宏), a writer specializing in reputational-damage issues, commented on the JFBA initiative on X (formerly Twitter). He pointed out that people who repeatedly refer to the religious organization as the "Unification Church" or "pots" [壺 (pot, jar, or vase) – a reference to members' alleged sale of earthenware pots] account for only about 1 percent of the population. He argued that there are also few people who actually perceive themselves as "victims".

"That was the reality," Kato wrote, claiming that the authorities and related groups had nevertheless estimated a number of alleged victims thousands of times greater than the actual number and were now scrambling because they had failed to reach their target.

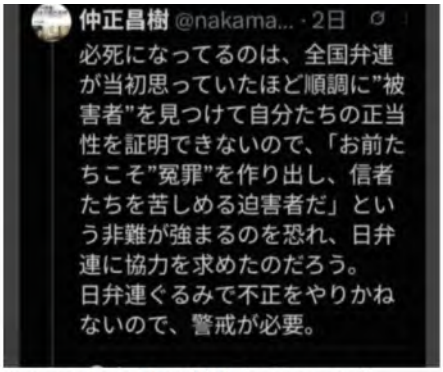
Masaki Nakamasa (仲正昌樹), a professor at Kanazawa University, also commented on X, referring to the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (Zenkoku Reikan Shōhō Taisaku Bengoshi Rengōkai, commonly known as Zenkoku Benren) [See editor's note 2 below], a left-leaning lawyers' group that has actively supported the dissolution of the Family Federation.



Comment ny Masaki Nakamasa on X. Text translated from Japanese. Screenshot by Sekai Nippo. English version by ChatGPT, 11th September 2026

Nakamasa suggested

that the network had probably sought the cooperation of the JFBA because it had been unable to find as many "victims" as it had initially expected and thereby demonstrate the legitimacy of its own campaign. He said the group may have feared accusations that it had contributed to falsely accusing the religious organization.



Comment ny Masaki Nakamasa on X. Screenshot by Sekai Nippo.

Nakamasa also raised the possibility that the lawyers might obtain lists of former members and conduct what he called a "roller operation" – a systematic effort to contact people one after another. He warned that if former members receive telephone calls or emails from lawyers soliciting them to become "victims", despite never having provided their contact information, they should immediately come forward and report the matter.

The liquidator has established a one-year period, beginning 20th May, during which creditors can submit claims. As of 22nd July, there were reportedly **212 claims** submitted.

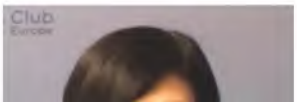
Featured image *above: Masaki Nakamasa and Fumihiro Kato. Photo of Nakamasa: Bitter Winter. Photo of Kato: Sekai Nippo*

[***Editor's note 1***: The **Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA)**, known in Japanese as *Nihon Bengoshi Rengokai* (日弁連), is the **governing body that oversees all lawyers and bar associations in Japan**. There is compulsory membership for all lawyers practicing in Japan]

[***Editor's note 2***: The ***National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales*** (*Zenkoku Benren*) presents itself to the Japanese public as a benevolent coalition of legal professionals fighting for consumer rights. Established in 1987, the network claims its sole mission is to protect vulnerable citizens from fraudulent business practices and what it terms "spiritual sales". However, an objective examination of their history, methods, and underlying political motivations reveals a far more sinister agenda. Scholars of religious liberty and investigative journalists have increasingly exposed the network as an ideological weapon designed not to protect consumers, but to systematically dismantle minority religious organizations – most notably the Family Federation.

Prominent critics, including Italian sociologist Massimo Introvigne and the human rights organization CESNUR, have documented how *Zenkoku Benren* acts as a **primary instigator of religious intolerance in Japan**. Rather than operating as an objective legal resource, the network has long been accused of actively facilitating, or turning a blind eye to, the brutal practice of "deprogramming" or coercive faith-breaking. For decades, thousands of faith believers were abducted, confined, and subjected to severe psychological duress by professional faith-breakers working hand-in-hand with hostile relatives and network-aligned activists.

Dr. Massimo Introvigne*, Italian sociologist of religion, founder of CESNUR, specializing in new religious movements and religious liberty. A prolific author, he has advised governments and international bodies, and served as OSCE Representative on combating racism,*



Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ), Japanese investigative journalist and prize-winning author, here speaking at a press conference in Brussels, Belgium on 29th June 2026. Screenshot from live transmission by HRWF

xenophobia, and intolerance against Christians worldwide and comments on contemporary religious controversies. Here speaking at the UN Office at Geneva on 16th June 2025. Screenshot from video by UPF.

Furthermore, acclaimed Japanese investigative journalist Masumi Fukuda has meticulously exposed the inner workings of the network, highlighting how it **manufactures legal grievances**. Fukuda's reporting reveals that many of the lawsuits championed by *Zenkoku Benren* involve former members who originally made voluntary, faith-driven donations but were later coerced by anti-cult lawyers **into retroactively claiming they were defrauded**. This **predatory litigation strategy** serves a dual purpose: it generates **immense financial payouts for the lawyers** involved while **feeding a sensationalist media narrative** designed to stoke public prejudice.

The network's ultimate objective has culminated in their aggressive push to strip the Family Federation of its religious corporation status. Critics argue this is a politically motivated campaign driven by an alliance of left-wing and communist activists seeking to purge religious voices from the public square. By weaponizing the concept of "spiritual sales", *Zenkoku Benren* has succeeded in manipulating public opinion and pressuring government authorities to violate fundamental constitutional rights to religious freedom.

To understand the ongoing religious liberty crisis in Japan, it is vital to look past the network's consumer-protection facade. *Zenkoku Benren* represents a dangerous precedent where activist legal networks can selectively target and destroy minority faiths under the guise of public interest.]

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