

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan's ruling LDP pressures Religious Council to persecute Unification Church

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April 7, 2024



Satoshi Hamada in April 2024

Japanese lawmaker looking for evidence of Kishida administration pressuring council representatives



Sekai Nipp

Tokyo, 5th April 2024 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

Questioning the Role of Politics: Kishida Fears the Media Too Much Regarding the Disclosure of the Minutes from a Meeting of the Religious Juridical Persons Council

Part 2 of an interview with Senator Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡), member of the House of Councilors (Upper House of the Diet) (Part 1 was not about the [Family Federation](#))

by Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田剛)

- As a member of the Diet, what was your motivation for participating in a rally organized by members of the Family Federation?



From the Chiba Prefectural Convention of the "Symposium to Protect Freedom of Religion and Human Rights", held in Chiba City 20th March 2024. On the right is Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama, beside him Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa

At that time, I asked, "Is it inappropriate for a member of the National Diet to participate in a meeting of an organization ([Family Federation](#)) that the Liberal Democratic Party has declared it has severed ties with?" However, I also judged that it would be beneficial to hear the discussion since Pastor Haruhisa Nakagawa (中川晴久) and Lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama (中山達樹), who had originally been critical of the [Family Federation](#), were among the speakers.

Actually, attending the symposium was very enlightening. Pastor Nakagawa suggested that the issues surrounding the [Family Federation](#) might be inheriting the legacy of the Aum Shinrikyo incident. His argument that the public may not have fully addressed the Aum legacy and consequently failed to completely sever ties with it was indeed compelling.

- The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President Fumio Kishida has severed ties with the [Family Federation](#) and related organizations. What was your impression at the time?

It seemed that Kishida might have been overly fearful of the influential mass media, particularly, if television networks had a confrontational stance towards the [Family Federation](#). It's understandable that Kishida had to make a decision, but I have the impression that his approach was a bit harsh.

- You have heard the voices of the members of the [Family Federation](#) directly and have brought it up in the Diet, but what is the reaction of those around you?

There are neither particularly notable positive reactions nor negative ones. As for positive feedback, I believe it is significant that many are speaking up, primarily people associated with the [Family Federation](#).

With 700 members of parliament, it's strange that not a single one mentions the [Family Federation](#). It's not just the opposition parties, but also none from the ruling party. Parties like the Liberal Democratic Party have declared a severance of ties, so there aren't many parties willing to address the issue. Essentially, it's going to be tough unless not only myself, but other parties also take action.



I believe the key lies with the Komeito party. They have a policy of always siding with the ruling party in national politics and in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly. Even if the Soka Gakkai adheres to the policy of requesting a dissolution order to the [Family Federation](#), but not the Soka Gakkai, there is a risk that the Soka Gakkai will be forced to dissolve if it becomes an opposition party.

- The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has filed a request for an order to dissolve the Family Federation in the Tokyo District Court. What is your evaluation of the procedure?

Many question the sudden change in interpretation by Fumio Kishida during the October 2022 Senate Budget Committee meeting. Previously, he had stated that dissolution orders against religious corporations could only be pursued if they violated the Penal Code, but he suddenly expanded this to include civil law torts, leaving many skeptical.

In the past, only Aum Shinrikyo and Myokakuji Temple have faced dissolution orders. Aum was involved in multiple homicides, and Myokakuji Temple was clearly engaged in fraud, making dissolution orders appropriate in those cases. However, it is doubtful whether the [Family Federation](#) warrants such action. The fact that such a significant change in interpretation can be made through a cabinet decision is a major problem, and ultimately, it is considered necessary to amend the law accordingly.



The 182nd meeting of the Religious Juridical Persons Council held in-person (some online Participation)

In addition, despite the principle of openness, the deliberation records of the Religious Juridical Persons Council within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) are being kept confidential. I questioned this during the General Affairs Committee, and the response was that the records would be made public after the court decision. I conveyed a warning at that time that the more something is hidden, the more the public wants to know about it.

There are also rumors that Tetsuo Gouda (合田哲雄), the Deputy Director-General of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, lobbied within the council to suppress opinions against pursuing a dissolution order, and then exerted pressure on various broadcasting stations. If evidence supporting these claims emerges, I intend to address it in the National Diet.

- Could the trend of the mass media and politicians viewing the [Family Federation](#) with hostility potentially influence the judiciary?

In principle, judgments should be made in accordance with the law. However, judges are human beings, so they are somewhat influenced by public opinion. Bearing that in mind, the [Family Federation](#) will need to fight.

Interviewer: Tsuyoshi Toyoda

Satoshi Hamada was born in Kyoto in 1977. He has served one term in the House of Councilors as a proportional representative for the NHK Party (The Party to Protect the People from NHK). After completing graduate studies in education at the University of Tokyo, he graduated from the Kyoto University School of Medicine in 2011. Despite experiencing defeat in various elections, including the House of Councilors election in 2019, he was appointed to the House of Councilors following the automatic resignation of Takashi Tachibana.

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March 24, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Lawyer points out how dissolution order sought at Tokyo District Court is not possible legally, only by politics influencing the court

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by the editorial department of the [Sekai Nippo](#)

The request for a court order to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the Unification Church) is unjust and represents a crisis in the religious world. On 20th March, the *Chiba Prefectural Convention of the "Symposium to Protect Freedom of Religion and Human Rights"* was held in Chiba City, sponsored by the *Chiba Citizens Association*. About 300 people participated.



Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa (中川晴久) at the convention in Chiba 20th March 2024.

Photo: Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田剛撮) / [Sekai Nippo](#).

One of the speakers, Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa (中川晴久), Pastor of Christian Church of the Lord's Sheep (主の羊クリスチャン教会), addressed how easy it is to apply the label of "cult" in Japan, stating, "The **memory and trauma of the Aum Shinrikyo incident are being exploited**. The religious community must heal that wound."

Pastor Nakagawa pointed out that the so-called "faith-breakers" who have been involved in **abduction and**

confinement of members of the Family Federation in order to forcibly de-convert them, have also **threatened mothers** of the [Family Federation](#) believers, saying, "**If you leave your children [grown-up sons and daughters] to themselves, they will become perpetrators like Aum [Aum Shinrikyo]**." In addition, he emphasized, "In order to heal the wounds of the Aum incident, 'comprehensive reflection' is necessary, but we must not leave it to those who have been **spreading nonsense and exploiting it for the faith-breaking business**."

Regarding the trial for the dissolution order request held behind closed doors at the Tokyo District Court, Tatsuki Nakayama, an international lawyer, said that although it is legally impossible to dissolve the [religious organisation](#), "**the trial does not move by the law alone, but is influenced**



Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama pointing out politics and public opinion may decide outcome of trial. Photo (2023): [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#)

by politics and public opinion." Furthermore, he appealed to the audience, saying, "Your support is needed. Those who can take risks should step forward, and those who cannot, should support those who can."



In addition, Senator Satoshi Hamada, who spoke on behalf of the guests of honour, said,

"There are still many things I don't know about the [Family Federation](#). I didn't know much about the

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Senator Satoshi Hamada at the convention in Chiba 20th March 2024. Photo: Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田剛撮) / Sekai Nippo.

abduction and confinement, and I thought that the dissolution order request was just about the loss of tax benefits for the religious corporation. I would like to tell the Diet about this.”

In a meeting of the *General Affairs Committee* of the *House of Councillors* on 12th March, Senator Hamada **questioned** the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* about the **harm caused to members of the Family Federation by the forcible faith-breaking.**

Meetings on the theme of religious freedom by members of the **Family Federation** have been held all over the country over the past year, but it's the first time that a current member of the national parliament (Diet) has participated.

Featured image above: From the Chiba Prefectural Convention of the “Symposium to Protect Freedom of Religion and Human Rights”, held in Chiba City 20th March 2024. On the right is Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama, beside him Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa. Photo: Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田剛撮) / Sekai Nippo.

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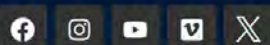
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