

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Appeal Launched in Japan After Contentious Court Ruling

Knut Holdhus
April 8, 2025



Norishige Kondo - left - Deputy Director of the Legal Affairs Bureau of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), responds to questions from the media on the morning April 7, in Kasumigaseki, Tokyo



Norishige Kondo answering questions from the media outside Tokyo High Court 7th April 2025

Contentious and allegedly unlawful verdict by Tokyo District Court promptly appealed to higher court as uphill battle against blatant state persecution continues

Tokyo, 7th April 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Family Federation Files Immediate Appeal Against Tokyo District Court's Dissolution Order

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

On 7th April, the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) filed an immediate appeal with the Tokyo High Court, opposing the Tokyo District Court's decision to [order its dissolution](#). This is the first [dissolution order](#) based on a "wrongful acts according to civil code", and the [religious organization](#) had previously indicated its intention to challenge the ruling.

In a statement, the [organization](#) said:

"The [dissolution order](#) is a predetermined conclusion that disregards both law and facts."

Norishige Kondo (近藤徳茂), Deputy Director of the [religious organization](#)'s Legal Affairs Office, spoke to reporters in front of the Tokyo District Court, emphasizing that the court's finding of unlawful acts was based on presumptions, rather than proven facts:

"This is something that must not happen in a democratic society. We have no choice but to fight to the very end."

He stated that the written reasons for the appeal would be submitted within two weeks, adding:

"We will take our time to thoroughly respond."

In its 25th March [verdict](#), the Tokyo District Court stated that "an unprecedented, massive scale of harm had been caused," concluding that those acts constituted the "violations of the law" that are the legal requirements for dissolution set out in the Religious Corporations Act.

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website of [Family Federation of Japan](#), where [statement about appeal in dissolution case](#) was published. See [original statement](#) in Japanese.

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Excerpt from the [Statement](#) Issued by the [Family Federation](#):

Before the shooting of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍 晋 三), the number of consultations received by consumer centers regarding [our organization](#) in 2020 and 2021 made up only about 0.003% of total cases.

The 32 civil rulings cited by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) as reasons for dissolution all pertain to donation-related cases from over 11 years ago, with the average time since the plaintiffs were proselytized being about 32 years.

Since our 2009 compliance declaration [See editor's note below], we have promoted internal reform, resulting in a reduction of over 90% in both the number of lawsuits and claims via written notices. Complaints to the Consumer Affairs Agency have also become virtually nonexistent.

The group strongly opposes what it calls an unnecessary request for dissolution, stating that even discussing the group's dissolution is merely a political maneuver or pandering to public opinion.



The Tokyo District Court, while acknowledging the clear decline in incidents since the compliance declaration [See editor's note below], nonetheless ruled based on speculative reasoning about potential undisclosed cases - an action that the [Family Federation](#) says clearly violates the principle of evidence-based trials.

"This [decision](#) seems to have reached a preordained conclusion, ignoring both facts and law."

According to the [statement](#), following the court decision, persecution against the [organization](#)'s churches and believers has intensified, threatening Japan's democracy and violating the human rights and right to life of its followers - Japanese citizens.

The [Family Federation](#) concludes with a warning:

"The judiciary's role is to make impartial decisions, regardless of political motives or public opinion pressures. We sincerely hope that the judiciary will not break the foundational principles of democracy - such as the rule of law and legalism - or assist in religious persecution in defiance of international law."

[Editor's note: 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](#).]

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FFWPU Files Appeal, Citing Speculative Verdict

• April 7, 2025 • Knut Holdhus



The Family Federation of Japan files appeal against Tokyo District Court's dissolution order decision described as preordained and speculative verdict

Press release issued by the public relations department of the *Family Federation of Japan* **7th April** concerning the *appeal* to the Tokyo High Court of the *dissolution order* case lost in Tokyo District Court. See *original article* in Japanese.

On 7th April, our



Sign outside Tokyo District Court. Photo: Screenshot from FFWPU video.

organization filed an appeal regarding the decision made by the

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organization filed an appeal regarding the decision made by the Tokyo District Court on 25th March concerning the request for a dissolution order.

Since being certified as a religious corporation 60 years ago, our organization has not been involved in a single criminal case. In terms of civil cases, only two instances over these 60 years have resulted in findings of unlawful conduct allegedly committed by our organization.



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

However, in October 2022, then-Prime Minister Fumio Kishida **overnight abruptly reversed** the government's previous legal interpretation overnight, declaring that civil law violations could also constitute grounds for dissolution of a religious corporation under the *Religious Corporations Act* as a "violation of laws and regulations".

We believe that dissolving a religious corporation based on such vague civil

infractions should never be permitted. The series of actions by the government – from the exercise of the "right to question" to the petition for a dissolution order – are nothing short of religious persecution by the state, specifically targeting our organization, and are in violation of the Constitution.

Before the shooting of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the number of consultations received by consumer centers regarding our organization in 2020 and 2021 made up only about 0.003% of total cases. Moreover, the 32 civil rulings cited by the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* (MEXT) as reasons for dissolution all pertain to donation-related cases from over 11 years ago, with the average time since the plaintiffs were proselytized being about 32 years.

Since our 2009 compliance declaration [\[See editor's note below\]](#), we have promoted internal reform, resulting in a reduction of over 90% in both the number of lawsuits and claims via written notices. Complaints to the *Consumer Affairs Agency* have also become virtually nonexistent. There is no necessity for a dissolution petition, and even discussing the dissolution of our organization is purely a political move or pandering to public opinion.



Norishige Kondo (rear) and another FFWPU representative leaving Tokyo High Court after **delivering the appeal documents** 7th April 2025. Photo: Screenshot from FFWPU video.

The *Tokyo District Court* acknowledged that cases of misconduct have clearly decreased since our compliance declaration [\[See editor's note below\]](#). Yet it went so far as to issue a **dissolution order** based on speculative recognition of unreported cases, thereby violating the principle of evidentiary trial. This **decision** seems to have reached a preordained conclusion, ignoring both facts and law.

Furthermore, the court ignored several critical facts: that more than half of the plaintiffs in the 32 civil cases were former members who left the faith under coercion, such as **abduction and forcible faith-breaking**; that some of the statements by former members compiled by MEXT were **fabricated**; and that testimonies by so-called "apostates" lack credibility.

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The most noteworthy aspect of this [decision](#) is its blatant disregard for UN recommendations and violation of international law. The *United Nations Human Rights Committee* has issued three recommendations to the Japanese government, stating that religious expression should not be restricted on the grounds of "public welfare". Yet, Article 81, Paragraph 1, Item 1 of the *Religious Corporations Act*, which MEXT cited as the legal basis for the [dissolution order](#), includes "infringement of public welfare" as a requirement. Thus, using this provision as a basis for a dissolution order is a clear violation of these recommendations, and the *Tokyo District Court's* decision constitutes a direct breach of international law.

Following this [ruling](#), persecution against our churches and members has intensified. Democracy in Japan is under threat for the personal gain of a handful of politicians and bureaucrats, while the human rights and right to live of our believers, who are Japanese citizens, are being violated.

The judiciary's role is to make impartial decisions, regardless of political motives or public opinion pressures. We sincerely hope that the judiciary will not break the foundational principles of democracy – such as the rule of law and legalism – or assist in religious persecution in defiance of international law.

[Our organization](#) is committed to fighting with all our strength to prevent this.

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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](#).]

Featured image above: Norishige Kondo (近藤徳茂), Deputy Director of the Legal Affairs Office at the *Family Federation* headquarters, outside the Tokyo High Court answering questions from media after handing in the appeal documents on 7th April 2025. Photo: Screenshot from [FFWPU](#) video.

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