

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japanese Court Decision Calls FFWPU Dissolution into Question

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Kousuke Yamabe (alias) speaks about his personal experience, in Sapporo, Hokkaido



"Mind control" argument rejected as unfounded in court win raising doubts about the logic behind the dissolution order against the Family Federation

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Inheritance Issue Recast as Donation Damage Case

Family Federation Wins in Sapporo High Court

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

See also [Court Dismisses Religious "Mind Control" Claims](#)

The Tokyo District Court's decision on 25th March to issue a [dissolution order](#) for the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) ([Family Federation](#), formerly the [Unification Church](#)) stirred controversy by recognizing the [organization's](#) conduct as unlawful based on "inference".

However, in a case heard the same month at the Sapporo High Court, the [Family Federation's](#) alleged "unlawful conduct" was completely dismissed, leading the plaintiff to abandon their claim. This was the case involving Kousuke Yamabe (a man in his 60s, alias), a [Family Federation](#) member living in Sapporo.

The collapse of the mind control theory

Yamabe was sued in September 2019 for approximately 26 million yen in damages by his two sisters and younger brother. They claimed he used the savings of their late father - who died in 2017 - for donations to the [religious organization](#). The plaintiff's lawyer, Masaki Gouro (郷路征記) from the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (Zenkoku Benren), also named the [Family Federation](#) as a defendant.

Lawyer Gouro, who had previously handled a similar "Return My Youth" case in Sapporo, accused the [religious organization](#) in the lawsuit of having incited Yamabe, asserting that they instilled faith in the Yamabe couple and used it to "extract money". In written arguments, the lawyer further claimed that [Family Federation](#) believers' entire personalities are permanently transformed into a "[Unification Church](#) personality" (統一協会的人格), making them subservient (隷属) and compelled to commit unlawful acts due to indoctrination.

Yamabe said, "I thought the issue would center on whether or not we had our father's consent." Yamabe was however angered when the plaintiffs took a stance completely denying his religious beliefs, essentially pushing a "mind control" theory. "It felt like they were mocking me," he said. He also felt it was wrong that "they use my family to their advantage by entangling the issue of religion into an inheritance dispute between siblings."

Yamabe and his wife Yachiyo (alias, also in her 60s) began living with his father - who had been living

alone - in 1994. They assisted with farming and supported him in daily life. While the father, a farmer, disliked religion, he rarely commented on his son and daughter-in-law's faith.

By 2015, due to old age, the father stopped driving and relied increasingly on the Yamabes for errands. Though strict with money, he gave them a cash card and said they could use it "in times of need". The couple used the funds for living and education expenses and made donations for ancestral rites held by the [religious organization](#).



The sisters ransacking the Yamabe's home - Illustration

Yamabe insists, "We had our father's approval." However, in 2016, when the father's health declined, the sisters visited the Yamabe's home. In the couple's absence, they searched the house and took the father's bankbooks and cash cards. They saw the withdrawal history and assumed most of it was for donations, leading to outrage and a family meeting.

There were also suspicious aspects: they took not only the father's passbooks but also Yamabe's own credit card and even a radio cassette player belonging to Yamabe's high school-aged child. Their justification was that the money might be used for "weird religious stuff" but that didn't explain taking the child's

belongings. Moreover, the eldest sister, after taking the father's passbook, was later found to have used up several million yen from the account.

The plaintiffs also exaggerated their claims. For example, a 500,000 yen repair for a self-inflicted car accident by the father was counted as a "loss" even though it clearly wasn't a donation - showing a sloppy approach.

"Baseless accusations" from the plaintiffs

In November of that year, the sisters escalated the conflict with physical violence. While Yamabe was away, the sisters confronted Yachiyo at home. When she explained the donations, one sister became furious, slapped her, pulled her hair "so hard that her body lifted off the floor," and splashed water from a pan on the stove on her. According to court records, the sisters claimed it was just "lukewarm water", but Yachiyo suffered significant fear and mental trauma.

However, according to Yamabe's testimony and recorded evidence, their late father - while trying to keep peace with the sisters - never demanded repayment or expressed disapproval toward Yamabe.



The Sapporo High and District Courts where the trial was held, in Sapporo, Hokkaido

In the first trial at the Sapporo District Court, all claims against the [Family Federation](#) were dismissed on 7th March last year. Though the plaintiffs appealed, on 12th March this year they acknowledged the claims lacked grounds and withdrew the case. Yamabe settled with them privately for 4 million yen.

A person involved in the defense commented, "Because the plaintiffs weren't the ones who made the donations, they had no grasp of the factual circumstances. Their claims were based on assumptions." One must wonder whether lawsuits like this, based on "inference" of wrongdoing by the [religious organization](#),

contributed to the Tokyo District Court's [decision](#) to dissolve the [Family Federation](#). If so, it raises serious questions.

Reflecting on the outcome, Yamabe said, "Since their demands weren't met, I see it as a victory."

See also [Court Dismisses Religious "Mind Control" Claims](#)

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of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), were forcibly detained by their relatives and confined in an apartment in Osaka. In 2020, the [Hiroshima High Court](#) ordered the Christian-affiliated individuals and relatives responsible for the confinement to pay approximately 1.7 million yen [Editor's note: ca. 11,360 US Dollars] in damages. Yukie Kanamori (pseudonym, in her 50s) spoke to [The Sekai Nippo](#) about what happened at the time.]



Location of **Hiroshima and Osaka**, on the main island of Honshu. Image: Maximilian Dörrbecker (Chumhwa) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp

“They Can’t Think for Themselves,” Said Relatives

[Special Report] Abduction and Confinement of a Married Couple Who Were Family Federation Believers (Part 2)

See [part 1](#)

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

“So far, I have persuaded hundreds of [Unification Church](#) members to leave the church, and only about 30 have managed to escape (from confinement).”



Committed suicide after being sued: Pastor and faith-breaker Mamoru Takazawa (高澤守) of the [Christian Truth Church of Kobe](#) (キリスト教神戸真教会). Photo: Kazuhiro Yonemoto

In July 2014, Pastor Mamoru Takazawa (高澤守) of the [Christian Truth Church of Kobe](#) (a Protestant church) made this remark in front of Yukie Kanamori (alias) – then in her 40s – who was confined in an apartment in Osaka Prefecture.

Pastor Takazawa maintained a one-sided attitude throughout his interactions with Kanamori and her husband [Editor's note: while both were held in forcible detention, orchestrated by him. See [part 1 of the story](#)]. He would sometimes criticize the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) from 3 PM to 10 PM nonstop.

Kanamori not only endured the mental distress of being subjected to this “persuasion” endlessly but also had to withstand the physical pain of bruises – requiring two weeks to heal – inflicted when her relatives restrained her. When she could no longer bear the pain and lay down on a futon, Pastor Takazawa furiously exclaimed, “That’s no way to listen to someone talking!”

However, right after Kanamori and her husband were freed by the police, who arrived at the confinement site, Pastor Takazawa gathered her relatives and made them kneel, begging Kanamori not to take legal action. Without giving a response, she returned to her home in Hiroshima and initiated settlement negotiations with her relatives.

The settlement terms included acknowledging the facts surrounding the [confinement](#) incident and pledging never to repeat such acts of [coercive faith-breaking](#). Kanamori explained,

“I told them that if they adhered to these conditions, I wouldn’t file a lawsuit. The terms were actually quite favorable for them.”

However, her relatives refused the settlement and instead criticized her for even seeking one. Kanamori speculated,

“The pastors must have been manipulating my relatives behind the scenes to suit the pastors’ own agenda.”



Wounds on Yukie Kanamori's (alias) right elbow sustained during her restraint – provided by the victim.

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November 2014, about four months after the



Professional faith-breaker and victim. Illustration: Grok xAI, 20th April 2025

confinement, Kanamori and her husband filed a criminal complaint against Pastor Takazawa and others who played a central role in the [coercive faith-breaking](#). However, in 2015, Takazawa died by suicide. The prosecution ultimately decided not to indict anyone, citing prosecutorial discretion.

Unsatisfied with this decision and still unable to shake off fears of being [abducted and confined](#) again, Kanamori and her husband filed a civil lawsuit in May 2016 at the *Hiroshima District Court*, seeking approximately 7 million yen [[Editor's note: ca. 46,500 US Dollars](#)] in damages from the relatives involved in the [confinement](#) and Atsuyoshi Oshima (尾島淳義), a deacon at the *Aotani Evangelical Lutheran Church* in western Japan.

In February 2019, the district court ruled entirely in favor of Kanamori, ordering her relatives and the Christian officials to pay about 2.8 million yen [[Editor's note: ca. 18,600 US Dollars](#)] in damages.

During the trial, the defendants, including Kanamori's relatives and the Christian representatives, emphasized the "malicious nature" of the [religious organization](#) and the "love and concern" of the family. They argued that Kanamori and her husband had lost the ability to "think for themselves" due to the [influence](#) of the [organization](#), making it necessary to [physically restrain and persuade](#) them. However, the court rejected this claim, stating that the act of [confining and restraining](#) Kanamori and her husband posed a potential threat to their lives and constituted a "malicious criminal act".

In 2020, the *Hiroshima High Court* upheld the lower court's ruling, though it reduced the compensation amount to approximately 1.7 million yen [[Editor's note: 11,300 US Dollars](#)]. Since the defendants chose not to appeal further, the ruling was finalized.

Attempts at Reconciliation

With the trial behind her, Kanamori has attempted to reconnect with her and her husband's parents. While some contact has resumed, her mother still tells her,

"The fact that you joined the [Family Federation](#) is more abnormal than being [abducted and confined](#)."



Happy worshippers at a [Family Federation](#) Sunday service in Japan. Illustration: Grok xAI, 20th April 2025

Despite the [Family Federation](#) being a religious organization that conducts Sunday services – including hymns, sermons, and prayers – her family refuses to acknowledge it as a legitimate faith, leaving a deep divide between them.

Although the courts ruled that [abduction and confinement](#) were criminal acts, Kanamori continues to struggle with how to repair relationships with her parents, who still believe the propaganda about

"brainwashing" and "[mind control](#)" spread by pastors.

Kanamori expressed frustration, saying,

"The parents who were deceived into believing that [confinement](#) would surely lead to [de-conversion](#) were also victims [manipulated](#) by the pastors."

Since last year, she has begun sharing her experiences on social media, hoping to challenge the negative perceptions surrounding her [religious organization](#). She has also come to realize the power of words from someone who has personally experienced [abduction and confinement](#). She says,

"I sometimes regret not speaking out more about our faith and beliefs. Moving forward, I might have more opportunities to share my story."

See [part 1](#)

Featured image above: The apartment block where Yukie Kanamori was [confined](#) – Photo from 2014, provided by the victim.

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