FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Family Federation Press Release Challenges Dissolution in Tokyo High Court

Knut Holdhus August 17, 2025



Demonstration in Kyoto August 16, 2025 against the dissolution order



Tokyo press release: Family Federation hands in rebuttals and challenges closed-door proceedings and lack of evidence in dissolution case at Tokyo High Court

Written Rebuttals Submitted Against MEXT's Claims, Which Are Not Based on Concrete Evidence

Press Release

Press release issued by the <u>Family Federation</u> of Japan 6th August 2025 concerning lawyers submitting written counterarguments to MEXT's evidence-free assertions. See <u>original article</u> in Japanese.

In the appeal proceedings concerning the <u>dissolution order</u>, on 30th July and 5th August we submitted Written Arguments (6) and (7) to the Tokyo High Court. Below is a summary of those submissions, and the full text (with some personal information redacted) is published in PDF format (Not attached here).



Demonstration in the city of Fukuoka, Japan on August 16, 2025 against the <u>dissolution order</u>

1. Written Argument (6)

Submitted on 30th July 2025, this brief sets out legal considerations and arguments regarding the closed nature of the proceedings, which violates the principle of public trial guaranteed by Articles 32 and 82 of the Constitution. The main points are as follows:

(1) Constitutional Violation

We argue that the <u>dissolution order</u> proceedings being conducted behind closed doors violates Articles 32 and 82 of the Constitution. By disregarding the principle of public trial, the fairness and credibility of the court are undermined.

(2) Freedom of Religion and Strict Standards of Review

Freedom of religion is a constitutionally guaranteed fundamental right. Any regulation requires

"compelling public interest" or the existence of a "clear and present danger." The original decision fails to meet these standards and is rough and unjust.

(3) Issues with Media Coverage of the Former Unification Church

The media imposed a biased reporting frame, unfairly demonizing members and the organization. Such coverage swayed public opinion and influenced the request for a dissolution order. We have presented claims based on data analysis supporting this point.



Demonstration in the city of Nagano, Japan on August 16, 2025 against the dissolution order

4 The Nature of Religion and Faith

Religion inherently contains elements that may not align with general social norms, and faith-based actions cannot be judged solely by rational criteria. A trial that fails to respect freedom of religion violates human dignity.

(5) Essential Difference from Other Cases

This case is fundamentally different from incidents like Aum Shinrikyo [See editor's note 1 below], as it concerns religion and the inner faith of believers. A <u>dissolution order</u> would have enormous consequences for members and the <u>organization</u>, requiring cautious and fair judgment.

2. Written Argument (7)

Submitted on 5th August 2025, this brief addresses MEXT's written rebuttal (response to our appeal) and presents counterarguments against both the original decision and the opposing party's claims. (A comprehensive rebuttal to MEXT's entire response will be submitted at a later date.) In this filing, we criticized the validity of the proceedings and judgments, calling for a fair trial based on concrete evidence.

(1) Problems with the Original Decision

Before applying the law, courts must establish concrete facts based on evidence. "Torts" are not raw facts, but legal evaluations made by judges. Thus, the facts alleged to constitute a tort must first be specifically shown (raw facts), after which it is determined whether they amount to a tort (legal evaluation).

The <u>original decision</u>, however, did not identify specific acts by the <u>Family Federation</u> or its members that would constitute grounds for dissolution, based on evidence. Instead, it inferred "torts" and "damages" merely from abstract facts such as notification letters or settlements, which is improper. In particular, no specific unlawful acts after the "Compliance Declaration" [See editor's note 2 below] have been identified.

2 Impropriety of the Opposing Party's (MEXT's) Response

Although the Tokyo High Court instructed MEXT to present specific evidence in rebuttal, they ignored this directive and continued with only abstract arguments, failing to provide concrete counterarguments.



Campaign collecting signatures at Nagoya Station, Japan August 16, 2025

(3) Disregard for the Basic Structure of Trial

Trials must be conducted based on facts and evidence, yet the <u>original decision</u> ignored this and relied on speculation. It used the term "tort" in an abstract way, issuing the <u>dissolution order</u> without concrete factual support. This violates fundamental principles of judicial process and demonstrates the harmful effects of a "closed-door trial".

[**Editor's note 1:** Aum Shinrikyo, a Buddhist new religious movement founded in 1984 by Shoko Asahara, preaching apocalyptic prophecies. It was dissolved in 1996 due to its leaders' criminal acts, including the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack in 1995 and the Matsumoto sarin incident in 1994.]

[**Editor's note 2:** The 2009 compliance declaration of the <u>Unification Church</u> of Japan (now the <u>Family Federation for World Peace and Unification</u>) was a formal commitment by the <u>organization</u> to reform its practices in response to longstanding public criticism and legal challenges.

The <u>Unification Church</u> in Japan had faced numerous allegations related to recruitment tactics and donation solicitation, termed "spiritual sales" (霊感商法) by a hostile network of activist lawyers who had declared the <u>religious organization</u> an enemy. These issues led to multiple lawsuits orchestrated by the activist lawyers and significant media backlash. This prompted the <u>organization</u> to take measures to restore its reputation and demonstrate compliance with legal and ethical standards.

The <u>religious organization</u> 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 <u>Unification Church</u> 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 <u>Unification Church</u> - since 2015 called the <u>Family Federation</u>. The <u>religious organization</u> has used this as evidence that it has improved its practices and should not be subject to <u>dissolution</u>.]

Related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: Lawfare: State Uses Legal System in War on Faith

Also related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>UN Report: Japan's Lawfare Against Faith</u> Minority

And also related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Protesting No Transparency in Closed-Door Trial</u>

More, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Dangerous Flaws in Dissolution Order Decried</u>

Also related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: "Lawyers Lying and Shaming Japan" for 50 Years

And also related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: Japan Following the Way of China

And also related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook</u>

More, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Media/Legal Expert: Communism Behind Persecution</u>

And more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy</u>

More, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights

And more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"</u>

Still more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Japan Copying China: State Seizure of</u> Churches

And still more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan</u>

More, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: 4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions

And more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Japan: Families Fear for Graves of Loved Ones</u>

Yet more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying

Also related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Kishida Follows Anti-Family Federation Minister</u>

Also related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy

Still more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Malicious One-Sided Government Source Selection</u>

Yet more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Kishida's Self-Defeating Populist</u> Decisions

And still more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Japan Urged to Make U-Turn</u>

And yet more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions</u>

And even more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Tendentious Reporting by New York Times</u>

Still more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Japan Criticized for Glaring Rights Violations</u>

Even more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Japan Following the Way of China</u>

Yet more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: Japanese Communists' Final War

Still more, related to rebuttals submitted to appeal court: <u>Political and Social Activism behind Oppression</u>



Japan: New Book On Legal And Social Attacks

Share:

- August 16, 2025
- Knut Holdhus

Another Tragedy in Japan:

The Targeting & Dissolution of the Family Federation



HIGHER PURPOSE

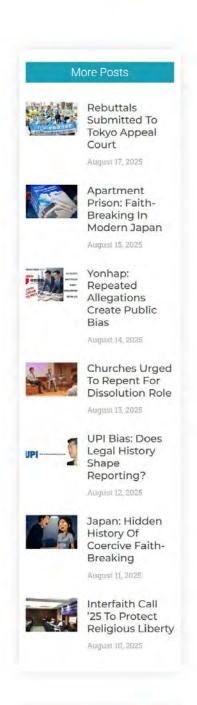
In his new book, James Edgerly delves into religious freedom on trial in Japan and the legal and social aspects of the 2025 dissolution order against the Family Federation

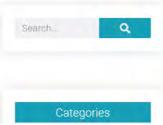
[Review]

Another Tragedy in Japan



Another Tragedy in Japan: The
Targeting & Dissolution of the Family
Federation, is the title of a 40-page
booklet moderated by James B. Edgerly
and published by Higher Purpose Forum
as a second edition in July 2025. The
publication presents a deeply considered
reflection on the legal and social
pressures confronting the Family







May 2024.

Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) – formerly the Unification Church – in Japan. Edgerly is founder and director of the Higher Purpose Forum, which according to him is an "independent project of the Unification Movement".

Edgerly dedicates the booklet to Toru Goto - a Unificationist who twice suffered abduction and forced confinement by his family, the second time for more than 12 years - from 1995 to 2008. After years of legal battle, he achieved a landmark Supreme Court victory in 2015. That court ruling did not end the coercive practices of dehumanizing faith-breaking entirely, but made it much more difficult for the professional deprogrammers to market their shady services. Goto's story serves as a testament to both the resilience of faith and the broader trajectory of rights for religious minorities in Japan.

Situational Context & Legal Background

Edgerly measures the recent dissolution order issued by a Tokyo court against a broader historical backdrop. In October 2023, Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)



The reality of faith-breaking:
Toru Goto, a member of the
Family Federation, in 2008, barely
able to move after being held in
forcible detention by his own
family in league with professional
faith-breakers for more than 12
years. Photo: Kazuhiro Yonemoto /
Japanese Victims' Association
against Religious Kidnapping
and Forced Conversion

filed a request to dissolve the *Family Federation* of Japan, citing allegations like "manipulative fundraising" and other civil violations. In March 2025, the *Tokyo District Court* granted that request – an unprecedented legal step against a religious organization that had no criminal convictions on record.

Edgerly contrasts Japan's legal and cultural response with that of other democracies, particularly the United States, where religious freedom, including for unpopular movements, remains more vigorously safeguarded. He underscores that the civil cases cited by the court in Japan stem largely from decades-old disputes – all predating a 2009 compliance reform [See editor's note below] – and that many plaintiffs are ex-members whose testimonies originated from "deprogramming" conditions now considered coercive and discredited.

The Media, Law, and Public Sentiment



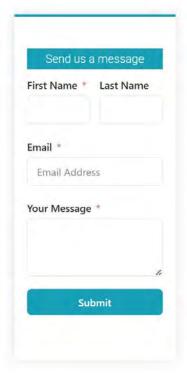
Tomihiro Tanaka ((田中富広)), President of the Family Federation in Japan, speaking at a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan on the afternoon of 26th March 2025 in Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝

One of the most striking elements in the booklet is the analysis of two press conferences at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan (FCCJ), held just two days apart in March 2025. On 26th March, Federation President Tomihiro Tanaka calmly and factually responded to criticism – highlighting, for instance, the disappearance of complaints and civil cases over the past seven years, and the overwhelming origin of plaintiffs from deprogramming scenarios.

In contrast, on 28th March, representatives from anti-Unificationist lawyer networks (e.g., NNLASS) made sweeping claims, calling the Federation's activities "fabrications" and labeling its ceremonies as forced mass weddings. Their tone was

triumphalist and dismissive of Federation perspectives – but received applause from the press, underlining a broader media bias.

Edgerly argues that this polarized messaging – and the absence of active Unificationist voices in the courtroom or investigative processes



 exemplifies a disturbing erosion of due process and fair representation.

Historical Campaign Against the Federation

Edgerly



From a conference by International Federation for Victory over Communism (IFVOC) in Japan 1972. Photo: IFVOC

situates the recent legal attack within a five-phase historical arc spanning over five decades:

- Late 1970s The Federation's affiliate International Federation for Victory over Communism (IFVOC) played influential roles in conservative politics, prompting backlash from Japan's left about its anti-communist activities.
- 1980s-2009 Fundraising methods, notably "spiritual sales," came under criticism. Meanwhile, the Federation slowly admitted excesses and eventually reformed by 2009.
- 1981-2025 Anti-Unification legal entities formed early, engaging in deprogramming referrals, lawsuits, and generating "manufactured victims" The so-called "Defection Business" grew into a significant civil litigation mechanism.
- 4. 2009-2022 The 2009 compliance measures [See editor's note below] marked a pivotal reform. Meanwhile, the Toru Goto case in 2015 reduced forced deprogramming significantly, setting a precedent for religious freedom protections.
- 5. 2022-Present The assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in July 2022 by Tetsuya Yamagami (who blamed the Federation for his family's bankruptcy) triggered a national backlash. Anti-Unification lawyers quickly framed the Federation as culpable, shifting public anger towards institutional dissolution rather than focusing on the assassin himself.

Democratic & Human Rights Stakes

Edgerly warns that dissolving a religious organization without criminal violations – primarily based on civil claims and hostility – sets a dangerous precedent for Japan's democratic ethos and for religious freedom globally. He notes how international bodies like the U.S. State Department, the U.N., and religious freedom advocates have raised alarm,



Tetsuya Yamagami, the suspect for the assassination of Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister of Japan. Photo: Andrew2592009 / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int. Cropped

emphasizing that such actions deviate from both Japan's constitution and international obligations under instruments like the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR).

He particularly highlights the lack of transparent dialogue, the "herd mentality" of media-fueled public sentiment, and the marginalization of the *Family Federation*'s narrative – all signaling a broader slide toward ideological conformity and against pluralism.

Analysis

Edgerly's booklet offers more than documentation; it is a care-filled plea for balance, justice, and empathy. This narrative:

- Humanizes the believers showcasing their victimization and the trauma of harassment, job loss, evictions, and social octracism.
- Elevates legal awareness by clearly showing that those bringing suit were beneficiaries of coercive methods, undermining the integrity of evidence.
- Connects modern events to long-standing tradition of pluralistic suppression, reminding us that the tensions predate the Abe assassination.
- Champions democratic resilience, highlighting voices –
 journalists, international advocates, and faith leaders who
 reject the punitive dissolution order and stand for religious
 liberty.

In doing so, it challenges readers to consider whether a truly

democratic society should retaliate against religious minorities through legal means based on prejudice rather than fair adjudication.

Conclusion

In Another Tragedy in Japan, James Edgerly provides a powerful, compassionate account of a religious community caught in the crossfire of decades-long ideological warfare, public outrage, and legal overreach. The booklet goes beyond chronicle – it is a call for empathy, justice, and vigilance. It affirms that democratic values and religious freedoms are fragile, especially when public pressure eclipses critical thinking and fair treatment.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Edited version of "Another Tragedy in Japan: The Targeting & Dissolution of the Family Federation" by James Edgerly, 2nd edition published by the Higher Purpose Forum, July 2025

[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" (霊感商法) 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.]

Related to new book on persecution in Japan: Japan Following the Way of China

Also related to new book on persecution in Japan: Media Stereotypes and Misinformation Challenged

Also related to new book on persecution in Japan: Media Criticized for Stereotyping Minorities

Also related to new book on persecution in Japan: After the N-Word: Is "Cult" Next Term to Be Banned?

Also related to new book on persecution in Japan: Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook

And also related to new book on persecution in Japan: "Lawyers Lying and Shaming Japan" for 50 Years

More, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Lawfare: State Uses Legal System in War on Faith

Also related to new book on persecution in Japan: Media/Legal Expert: Communism Behind Persecution

And more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy

And more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Media Helping Terrorist Reach His Goal

Related to new book on persecution in Japan: Kishida Administration Civing in to Terrorism

And more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: 12 Religious

Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan

Yet more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Japanese Communists' Final War

Still more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Political and Social Activism behind Oppression

And yet more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Opposition Inciting Regime to Excessive Steps

And still more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Journalist Reveals Ugly Leftwing Conspiracy

And even more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Gingrich: Kishida Joining Communist Campaign

Yet more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: The 3
Enemies of Religious Liberty

Still more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Lawyer Exposes Dirty Leftwing Plot

And yet more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Inhuman Government-Supported Mass Deprogramming

And still more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Bias: No Right to Respond for Religious Minority

And even more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights

Yet more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"

Still more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Japan Criticized for Glaring Rights Violations

And yet more, related to new book on persecution in Japan: Two European Scholars Warning Japan

Previous Next Apartment Prison: Faith-Brea... Rebuttals Submitted To Toky...

