

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Weaponization of Japan's courts – Lawsuits designed to destroy

Knut Holdhus
August 18, 2025



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Invented harm and weaponization of courts: Experienced lawyer unmasking the strategy behind lawsuits designed to destroy

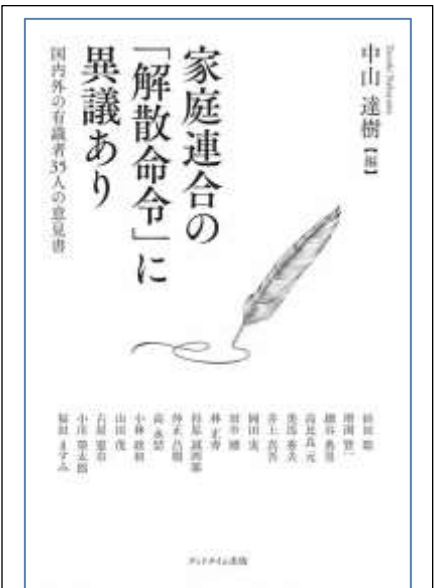
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[Part 1 of interview with International Lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama]

Declaring "Continuity" Based on Speculation Is Outrageous

Objection to the Dissolution Order for the Family Federation

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



Objection to the 'Dissolution Order' Against the Family Federation - Statements from 35 Experts from Japan and Abroad

We spoke with international lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama (中山達樹), who compiled the book [Objection to the Dissolution Order Against the Family Federation](#) (Good Time Publishing), which collects expert opinion papers criticizing request by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). (Interview by the Freedom of Religion Reporting Team)

- In [your book](#), 35 experts voice their objections.

I'm grateful that they submitted their opinion papers. But it's still far too few. I wish there were many more.

- On 25th March, the Tokyo District Court issued a decision [ordering the dissolution](#) of the [Family Federation](#). It held that the group's actions fell under Article 81, Paragraph 1, Item 1 of the Religious Corporations Act - namely, that the organization committed acts that "violated laws and regulations and were clearly recognized as seriously harming public welfare." What is your view of this decision?

It's a terrible decision. The court claimed that after the [Family Federation's](#) 2009 "Compliance Declaration" [See editor's note below], there was still so-called "continuity" of harm at a scale that "cannot be overlooked".

But since the Compliance Declaration [See editor's note below], there has only been one lawsuit involving a person who joined the [Federation](#) after that declaration. Even if you include lawsuits filed by members who had joined before but sued after the declaration, there are only two cases involving three people in total.

Despite that, the court claimed there was harm on a "non-negligible" scale. How? By "speculating" based on settlements and out-of-court agreements, and by "assuming" there must be potential harm - a recognition that goes against the principle that judgments must be based on evidence.



Young members of the [Family Federation](#) on a trash-picking campaign in the area around their national HQ in Shibuya, Tokyo August 18, 2025

"Non-negligible" literally means "cannot be overlooked", but by itself those six characters (in Japanese) set no standard and are vague. It's not even terminology usually used in judgments. It feels like wordplay - a way of presupposing the conclusion. This is the worst part.

- Is there any precedent for a court issuing a decision based on "assumptions" or "speculation"?

No. Because it violates the evidentiary principle in trials. To recognize a tort, you need concrete facts based on evidence. The court didn't do that. This is an unprecedented and abnormal ruling.

Why did they force it this way? Because they already had the conclusion in mind: they wanted to say there was "continuity", in other words, "non-negligible" harm. But there is almost no evidence of actual damage. In that way, cases where there was merely an out-of-court settlement, are against reason being treated as unlawful acts (torts).

- Most of the civil lawsuits used as evidence for the dissolution request involved harm from 30 years ago, yet the court concluded the same must still be happening today.

Exactly. The reasoning was: "There were problems in the past, so there must be problems now. The Compliance Declaration [See editor's note below] was only a stopgap measure, not a fundamental reform, so the 'problematic situation' remains." Even if I generously concede that much, they still claimed - without any basis - that the problems remained at a "non-negligible" scale. This vague and arbitrary "non-negligible" recognition comes from out of nowhere and is forced.

- Still, most major media supported the district court's decision. But now some experts are beginning to voice dissent.

Yes, I feel like at last, more people are starting to speak up.



Protesting the [dissolution order](#): Members of the [Family Federation](#) gathered for street-preaching and collection of signatures in the city of Kumamoto, Japan 17th August 17, 2025

There are other strange points too. For example, on 3rd March, the Supreme Court issued a [penalty ruling](#) regarding the Ministry's right to question the [Family Federation](#), and in that ruling it said that "civil torts under the Civil Code also count" as grounds for dissolution. That logic was terrible. They stretched "violation of legal norms" to mean "violation of laws and regulations", going beyond the plain meaning of the statute. Yet the media didn't make a fuss. Out of 47,000 lawyers, hardly anyone raised objections. As a lawyer, I find that very disheartening. The Tokyo District Court's [dissolution decision](#) simply followed this Supreme Court precedent.



Protesting the [dissolution order](#): Members of the [Family Federation](#) campaigning at Shibuya Station, Tokyo August 18, 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" (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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Rebuttals Submitted To Tokyo Appeal Court

- August 17, 2025
- Knut Holdhus

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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

世界平和統一家庭連合

From the header of the official webpage of the Family Federation of Japan

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Press release issued by the [Family Federation of Japan](#) 6th August 2025 concerning lawyers submitting written counterarguments to MEXT's evidence-free assertions. See [original article](#) in Japanese.

In the appeal proceedings concerning the [dissolution order](#), 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).

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:



From a demonstration in the city of Fukuoka, Japan on 16th August 2025 against the [dissolution order](#). Photo: [FFWPU](#)

① **Constitutional Violation**

We argue that the [dissolution order](#) 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.



From a demonstration in the city of Nagano, Japan on 16th August 2025 against the [dissolution order](#). Photo: [FFWPU](#)

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 [dissolution order](#) would have enormous consequences for members and the [organization](#), requiring cautious and fair judgment.

2. **Written Argument (7)**

Submitted on 5th August 2025, this brief addresses MEXT's written

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submitted on 7 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.



From a campaign collecting signatures at Nagoya Station, Japan
16th August 2025. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

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 [original decision](#), however, did not identify specific acts by the [Family Federation](#) 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.

③ Disregard for the Basic Structure of Trial

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

Featured image above: From a demonstration in Kyoto 16th August 2025 against the [dissolution order](#). Photo: [FFWPU](#)

[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 [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.

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