

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: FFWPU Dissolution Case - Inflated Damages


Knut Holdhus
September 12, 2025



Real number:
**140 plaintiffs awarded damages
by court in civil cases**

Government-inflated number:
1559 "victims"

Inflated number




The Tokyo High Court appeal exposes Japanese government's forced logic and number of "victims" hugely inflated by hostile lawyers

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[Series] Order to Dissolve the Family Federation: Examining the District Court's Decision (Part 1)


No Rational Basis for Recognizing "Continuity"; Ministry of Education Inflates "Victim" Numbers

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



文部科学省
Ministry of Education, Culture,
Sports, Science and Technology
of Japan

The [appeal](#) hearing over the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)'s request to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU, formerly the [Unification Church](#)) is underway at the Tokyo High Court. On 25th March, the Tokyo District Court's 8th Civil Division - Presiding Judge Kenya Suzuki (鈴木謙也) - issued a [ruling ordering dissolution](#). But is there really a rational basis for recognizing the "continuity" of unlawful acts after the [church](#)'s 2009 Compliance Declaration? [See editor's note below] Based on the district court's written decision, we trace back to MEXT's original request for dissolution and examine the grounds.



The turning point when the government (MEXT) began moving toward dissolution came on 19th October 2022. Then-Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (岸田文雄) abruptly [shifted the government's interpretation](#) of the "violation of laws and regulations" requirement for dissolution under the Religious Corporations Act. Up until then, the interpretation followed a 1995 Tokyo High Court ruling on Aum Shinrikyo (confirmed by cabinet decision on 14th October 2022 and reaffirmed in the Diet on 18th October. Overnight, [Kishida expanded the scope](#) to include "torts under civil law" provided that the acts showed clear "organizational nature, maliciousness, and continuity."

However, the number of finalized civil rulings holding the [church](#) liable for damages stands at 26 cases (140 plaintiffs, with a total compensation of about 1.8 billion yen - in 2025, US\$12.2 million). Even adding 6 first-instance rulings (29 plaintiffs, about 377 million yen - in 2025, US\$2.55 million) that ended in settlements at the high court level, the total comes to 32 cases (169 plaintiffs, about 2.17 billion yen - in 2025, US\$14.75 million).

Former Prime Minister Fumio Kishida opened door to lawfare against [Family Federation](#) April 16, 2023

Of these 32 cases, 30 involved holding the [church](#) liable as an employer for members' unlawful acts, while only 2 recognized direct liability of the [church](#) itself. The plaintiffs' "donations, etc." at issue spanned from 1979 to 2014. Only 1 case (1 plaintiff, approx. 4.76 million yen - in 2025, US\$32,300) involved donations that began after 2010 - the period when the Compliance Declaration's [See editor's note below] effectiveness was being tested. Since 2015, no civil rulings have recognized the [church](#)'s liability for such donations.

Civil cases of court-awarded damages		
Time period for payments	Cases	Plaintiffs
From 1979 to 2009 Compliance Declaration	30	166
Concluding payments after Compliance Declaration	1	2
From 2010 to 2014	1	1
From 2015	0	0


Real number of civil cases with court-awarded damages

These facts indicate that the Compliance Declaration [See editor's note below] took root within the [church](#) organization and among believers, sharply reducing problems. In other words, the declaration has been effective. Even if "civil torts" were broadly included in dissolution criteria, "continuity" could not be proven - so in principle, no dissolution request should have been possible. To overcome this, MEXT employed two embellishments.

First was inflating the scale of "damage"

They counted plaintiffs in litigation settlements (94 cases, 419 people, totaling about 5.7 billion yen - in 2025, US\$38.6 million - in settlement payments) and parties in out-of-court settlements (971 people, about 12.5 billion yen - in 2025, US\$84.7 million) as "victims."

But the alleged wrongful acts by believers or the [church](#) in those cases were never legally recognized by courts. Moreover, the parties had already reached agreements, received settlement or compensation payments, and their attorneys had been paid. In short, they cannot properly be called "victims".



Persuaded the government: Masaki Kito, one of the hostile lawyers of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales and Nationwide Unification Church Damage Countermeasures Legal Team. He worked in league with faith-breakers forcing believers into lawsuits and exploiting them to fit narrative: One of the architects of new law and advisor to the Japanese authorities

Why did MEXT push through such a strained logic? Because finalized civil judgments recognized liability for only 140 plaintiffs, totaling 1.8 billion yen (in 2025, US\$12.2 million). That figure is far removed from the exaggerated claims spread by the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (Zenkoku Benren). For example, attorney Masaki Kito (紀藤正樹) told the Japanese Communist Party's Diet caucus that "the 123.7 billion yen (in 2025, US\$840 million) figure is only part of the damages" and that "even if it were only one-tenth, over 1 trillion yen (in 2025, US\$6.78 billion) in damages have occurred" (Shimbun Akahata, 27th July 2022).

Thus, MEXT expanded the "damage" figures to "at least 1,559 victims and more than 20.4 billion yen (in 2025, US\$138.4 million) in total losses" by including settlements. In the case of out-of-court settlements, they estimated about 913 million yen (in 2025, US\$6.2 million) paid to 167 people even after the Compliance Declaration [See editor's note below].

The mass media, without questioning how plaintiffs in settlements or private agreements could qualify as "victims of civil torts", simply repeated the government's announcement uncritically. In that sense, MEXT's strategy succeeded.

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[Editor's note 1: 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 long4standing 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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陳述書には書かれてますが
- 私の口からは言ってないですね



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In connection with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's (MEXT) request to the court for a dissolution order against the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (FFWPU, formerly the *Unification Church*), several former members filed a criminal complaint on 5th September against six ministry officials, including the former head of the Religious Affairs Division of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. They allege that written statements submitted as evidence of legal violations justifying dissolution were fabricated.



Logo of Agency for Cultural Affairs. *Public domain* image

The charges filed with the *Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office* include forgery of private documents with official seals and use of forged documents. This sheds light on misconduct by the ministry that had been hidden behind closed-door proceedings.

One of the complainants, a former male believer referred to as Mr. A, testified via video at the press conference that discrepancies existed between what he had actually said and what was written in his statement. Mr. A explained that he joined the church after being advised by relatives, as he was the eldest son of a farming family and had difficulty finding a marriage partner, and he studied the teachings with the purpose of finding a spouse.



However, the written statement submitted to the court by MEXT claimed he had participated in a mass wedding after being told that "joining would absolve the misdeeds of his ancestors," and that he had been made anxious and pressured to participate. It also described him as having been threatened with talk of ancestral sins and "squeezed for donations." But Mr. A insists he had no such perception.

While he did exchange documents with the ministry for confirmation purposes, he later discovered that wording he did not recall ever saying – such as "I want the church to be dissolved" – had been added. "I never said that. It wasn't even in the documents that MEXT sent me," he said, expressing deep distrust.

Another complainant, a former female believer referred to as Ms. B, was also troubled by fabricated content. Her statement included a passage claiming she "was persuaded by her daughter to make donations." But her daughter, Ms. Oyama (pseudonym), who had actually joined the church at her mother's invitation, denied ever saying such a thing when she spoke with her mother about the statement: "What is that? Where did it come from?" Ms. B herself had no memory of making such testimony, and when her daughter explained the details of the statement, she was shocked.

Ms. B had been interviewed by phone by MEXT officials around November 2023. Her statement, under her name, was 34 pages long in small 9-point font – too difficult for an elderly person to check thoroughly on her own. No reading aloud or confirmation work was conducted. The complaint asserts, "From the beginning, there was no intention of having Complainant B confirm the content," and harshly criticizes the ministry's sloppy procedures.

As a co-complainant, Ms. Oyama spoke at the press conference:

"Donations are branded as shady, and as people age, religious practitioners are dismissed easily. Watching my mother, it feels like her whole life is being denied. I want to stop a society where such injustice prevails."

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Another complainant, Mr. Hiroshi Ogasawara (小笠原裕 – 62), a current member living in Yachiyo City, Chiba Prefecture, also attended. He had filed a complaint in December last year over suspected forgery of two statements discovered during questioning procedures at the *Tokyo District Court*. Former believers whose statements had been submitted testified in court but repeatedly gave accounts contradicting the written statements or said they had “no memory” of the contents.



Hiroshi Ogasawara.
Photo (June 2025):
Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

Of the 123 statements prepared and submitted by MEXT, four have now come under suspicion of fabrication based on the testimony of the supposed authors, leading to the complaints. To ensure fairness, the defense argues, all 123 authors should be called to testify. Attorney Shinichi Tokunaga (徳永信一), representing the complainants, declared:

“This suggests systematic involvement. If the government fabricated evidence, it would be a huge scandal.”



Toshiko Abe (阿部俊子), Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Photo (2023): 首相官邸ホームページ/
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Meanwhile, Education Minister Toshiko Abe (阿部俊子), at a February press conference, argued that publicizing the alleged forgeries “goes against the purpose of keeping proceedings closed” and said it was inappropriate. However, she avoided commenting on the truth of the forgery allegations.

Attorney Tokunaga stressed,

“This must never be buried in history. It should become a case studied in textbooks.”

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Featured image above: On 5th September 2025, Mr. A, the complainant, testifies via video during a press conference on the criminal complaint against Ministry of Education staff. Screenshot from YouTube channel “Association of Second-Generation Members for the Protection of Believers’ Human Rights.”

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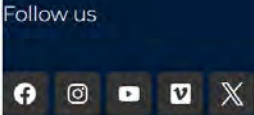
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