

**FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japanese Government's Nest Legal Spin and Dissolution at All Costs**

Knut Holdhus  
September 15, 2025



Japan's Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Masahito Moriyama speaks after signing an historic agreement between the United States and Japan to advance sustainable human exploration of the Moon, April 9, 2024, at the NASA Headquarters Mary W. Jackson Building in Washington



**Legal spin: Education Ministry stretched law to justify Family Federation dissolution, building their case on past violations alone**

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[Series] Order to Dissolve the Family Federation: Examining the District Court's Decision (Part 2)

**Citing Own Legal Interpretation, Education Ministry Disregards Reforms**

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

See [part 1: Dissolution Case: Inflated Damages, Forced Logic](#)

The second major issue with 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](#)) lies in its peculiar interpretation of the dissolution requirements.

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MEXT interpreted Article 81, Paragraph 1, Item 1 of the Religious Corporations Act - which states that dissolution can be ordered if a group has "committed acts in violation of laws and regulations that are clearly recognized as seriously harming public welfare" - as not requiring any current violation. Presumably because the clause ends in the past tense "committed," the ministry went so far as to assert:

"It is sufficient to establish the existence of past legal violations, and whether subsequent improvements

have been made or whether there is a risk of recurrence should not be questioned."

This position is explicitly recorded in the Tokyo District Court's [decision](#) under "Summary of the Petitioner's Claims." However, it was absent from the document MEXT released to the press on 12th October 2023, titled "On the Request for a Dissolution Order for the Religious Corporation [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)." It seems unlikely that the court would misstate such a basic point of fact, so this wording must indeed reflect MEXT's actual argument.



*Front page of 2018 English version of Religious Corporations Act of Japan.*



*Professor Tsutomu Nishioka.  
Photo: U.S. Department of State*



*Changed the interpretation of the law: Former Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, here, on 14th August 2024*

If so, MEXT's stance is that the [Family Federation](#) meets the dissolution criteria simply by virtue of legal violations committed decades ago, mainly reflected in past civil court judgments. By relying on the past-tense wording "committed acts" in the statute, the ministry effectively declared from the outset that it would ignore any improvements after the group's 2009 "Compliance Declaration". [See editor's note below] This reveals a "dissolution at all costs" approach - a strained and forced argument.

Did journalists who relayed MEXT's announcement to the media understand this position? And was the Religious Corporations Council aware of it when it unanimously endorsed the request for dissolution as "appropriate" (per the [statement of then-Education Minister Masahito Moriyama](#) (盛山正仁 - see featured image above) on the same day)?

Professor Tsutomu Nishioka (西岡力) of the Institute of Moralogy's Moral Science Research Center [wrote in the December 2023](#) issue of Seiron magazine that many religious committee members found it unbelievable that no dissent was raised, and that they even "felt fear". A thorough review seems necessary.

In any case, MEXT's request for dissolution contained a serious omission. When former Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (岸田文雄) [revised the interpretation of the law](#) to include "torts under civil law" as grounds for dissolution, he emphasized prerequisites such as the organizational nature, maliciousness, and continuity of the acts. Yet there was no examination of "continuity" in particular, especially after the 2009 Compliance Declaration. [See editor's note below]

According to the court decision, MEXT argued in the alternative:

"Even if it were necessary to assess the situation after the Compliance Declaration [...] the measures have not proven effective, there has been no essential reform of the organization's nature, and the conclusion would not be affected."

But the ministry provided no concrete verification of this claim.

Instead, it submitted evidence such as 261 written statements from former believers. However, excluding the eight second-generation former believers who drafted their own statements, only 19 of the 253 first-generation former believers joined the [Family Federation](#) after the Compliance Declaration. [See editor's note below] About 90% had joined more than 15 years earlier, and some had left decades ago.

Of those 19, 18 statements were not self-written but drafted by MEXT staff after interviews, with the names later added by the supposed declarants (according to the [website](#) of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan).

Furthermore, some former members named as declarants even [filed criminal complaints](#) against ministry staff, claiming that their statements included things they had never said. This ultimately undermines public trust in a national institution.

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See [part 1: Dissolution Case: Inflated Damages, Forced Logic](#)

[**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 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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# Dissolution Case: Inflated Damages, Forced Logic

• September 12, 2025  
• Knut Holdhus



MEXT

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

**Government-inflated number:**  
**1559 “victims”**

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



Logo of the  
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Tokyo, 12th September 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

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# “Victim” Numbers

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

See *part 2: MEXT’s Legal Spin and “Dissolution at All Costs”*

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 25<sup>th</sup> March, the Tokyo District Court’s 8<sup>th</sup> 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.



Symbol of the **Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology** of Japan. Photo: 文部科学省 (MEXT Japan) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)



Former Prime Minister **Fumio Kishida** opened door to lawfare against **Family Federation**. Here, 16th April 2023. Photo: 首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

The turning point when the government (MEXT) began moving toward dissolution came on 19<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022 and reaffirmed in the Diet on 18<sup>th</sup> 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).

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
<b>From 1979 to 2009 Compliance Declaration</b>	30	166
<b>Concluding payments after Compliance Declaration</b>	1	2
<b>From 2010 to 2014</b>	1	1
<b>From 2015</b>	0	0

**Real number** of civil cases with court-awarded damages. Illustration: *Sekai Nippo*. Translated from Japanese.

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.”

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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”.

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*, 27<sup>th</sup> 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.



**Persuaded the government: Masaki Kito** (紀藤正樹), one of the hostile lawyers of *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (全国霊感商法被害対策弁連) and *Nationwide Unification Church Damage Countermeasures Legal Team* (全国統一教会被害対策弁護団). 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. Photo: Screenshot / [Bitter Winter](#)

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**Featured image** above: Inflated number. Illustration: Knut Holdhus

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