

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Media Demonizes FFWPU for their Faith

Knut Holdhus

September 16, 2025



Featured image above: At the head of the demonstration after the rally (from front left) Shingo Inoue, Kitakyushu City Council member; Ryuichi Sunagawa, pastor of Tsukishiro Christian Church; attorney Tatsuki Nakayama; and Tomihiro Tanaka, president of the [Family Federation](#), September 15, 2025, Chūō Ward, Fukuoka City, Japan



**Media's demonization of religious minority brought up at symposium calling for fair and impartial trial for Family Federation in appeal hearings at Tokyo High Court**

Tokyo, 16th September 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

**"Demonization by Media"**

**Family Federation Symposium in Fukuoka Calls for Fair and Impartial Trial**

by editorial staff of [Sekai Nippo](#)

A symposium of Kyushu intellectuals and religious leaders calling for a fair and impartial trial regarding the government's request to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) was held in Fukuoka City on 15th September, with about 800 people attending. The

symposium was also streamed on YouTube.



*From the symposium in Fukuoka, Japan September 15, 2025. From left: Shingo Inoue, Ryuichi Sunagawa, Masumi Fukuda, Tatsuki Nakayama, Tomihiro Tanaka, and unknown*

At the symposium, nonfiction writer Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ), author of the book *Fabrication: The Man Called a Murderous Teacher*, greeted the audience, saying, "Over 20 years ago, I came to Fukuoka many times to cover that case." She noted that in the fabricated case, the narrative was quickly set that the school or teacher was at fault, with the media deciding the storyline. Criticizing biased reporting, she added,



*Masumi Fukuda speaking at the symposium in Fukuoka September 15, 2025*

"When it comes to the [Family Federation](#) as well, the media has completely demonized it."

Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama (中山達樹) commented on the dissolution order having been decided through non-contentious proceedings [See editor's note below], saying,

"The problem starts from here. It is strange that even the High Court hearings are closed to the public."

After the symposium, about 600 people, led by [Family Federation](#) President Tomihiro Tanaka (田中富広) and attorney Nakayama, marched around Hakata Station, chanting slogans such as

"Please listen to what the believers really say!" and "Closed-door hearings are unfair! We demand a fair and impartial trial!"

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**[Editor's note:** A non-contentious case refers to a legal matter where there is no dispute between parties. These cases typically involve administrative, procedural, or uncontested legal actions, such as probate

(handling a deceased person's estate), uncontested divorces, adoption, or registering a trademark. Since there are no opposing parties or legal conflicts, these cases usually proceed smoothly through the legal system without litigation.]

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# MEXT's Legal Spin And "Dissolution At All Costs"

• September 15, 2025  
• Knut Holdhus



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



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

Tokyo, 15th September 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

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

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

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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.

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.”*



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

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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

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 Morality’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.



Professor **Tsutomu Nishioka**. Photo: U.S. Department of State / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped.



**Changed the interpretation of the law:** Former Prime Minister **Fumio Kishida**, here, on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2024. Photo: [首相官邸 \(PMO\) / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

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:

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"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.



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

See also [Demonization by Media of Faith Minority Decried](#)

**Featured image** above: 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, 9th April 2024, at the NASA Headquarters Mary W. Jackson Building in Washington. Photo: NASA Headquarters / NASA/Bill Ingalls / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

**[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" (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.]

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