

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Yankee Stadium Put Sun Myung Moon in the Spotlight

Knut Holdhus
June 1, 2026



[Sun Myung Moon](#) speaking at Yankee Stadium, New York 1st June 1976, aided by translator [Pak Bo-hi](#)

50 years since milestone event that made headlines and brought Father Moon to national attention as he spoke to 50,000 at Yankee Stadium



From the Yankee Stadium event 1st June 1976

On 1st June 1976, a large outdoor rally was held at Yankee Stadium in New York. The event was one of the most significant public appearances of [Sun Myung Moon](#) - also known as [Father Moon](#) - in the United States and a major milestone in the history of the [Unification Church](#) - now called the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). Organized as the "[God Bless America Festival](#)," the gathering formed

part of [Father Moon](#)'s nationwide campaign during the American Bicentennial year, a period when questions about the nation's identity, purpose, and future were receiving widespread attention.



Cover of June 14, 1976 edition of Newsweek

The festival attracted approximately 50,000 participants and spectators to the famous baseball stadium in New York City. The event combined elements of a religious revival, a patriotic celebration, and a public rally. Attendees included members of the [Unification Church](#), supporters from various Christian backgrounds, curious observers, journalists, and critics. The scale of the gathering was remarkable, especially considering that [Father Moon](#) and his movement were still relatively unfamiliar to much of the American public. For many Americans, the festival represented their first substantial exposure to [Sun Myung Moon](#) and his message.

In the days leading up to the event, extensive publicity campaigns had been conducted throughout New York and other major cities.

The gathering received substantial media attention, including coverage by national and international news organizations. The international news magazine Newsweek used a photograph of [Father Moon](#) standing in front of the rally posters as its cover image,

accompanied by an extensive feature article inside the magazine. Newsweek also published one of the very few interviews [Father Moon](#) ever gave.

International journalists also followed the event closely, and it also marked the first time Korean media reported on [Father Moon](#)'s activities in the United States. A Korean reporter covering the event said,

["Reverend Moon](#) is truly the first Korean who has moved the world."

South Korea had only just begun to recover from the enormous devastation of the Korean War. The journalist simply could not understand how it was possible for a Korean to gather 50,000 people for such a tremendously successful event in the United States.



The Korean Folk Ballet at Yankee Stadium 1st June 1976 performing "The Royal Fan Dance"

A dramatic aspect of the day was the weather. Shortly before the program was scheduled to begin, heavy rain and strong winds threatened to disrupt the proceedings. Organizers feared that the event might be canceled or severely damaged. Refusing to be defeated, members led the stadium in singing "You Are My

Sunshine" until the storm would go away.

And it worked! The weather improved just before the main program commenced, allowing the gathering to proceed as planned. Among participants, the sudden clearing of the skies was often remembered as a sign from above. Jesus had felt abandoned by [God](#) on the cross. That was how members of the [Unification Church](#) felt when the storm was at its worst and threatened to tear down all the decorations they had put up around the stadium.

The centerpiece of the festival was [Father Moon](#)'s address, "[God](#)'s Hope for America." Speaking during the United States Bicentennial year, he presented America as a nation with a unique providential role in history and urged it to renew its relationship with [God](#).

[Reverend Moon](#) argued that human beings and nations face a fundamental choice between selfishness and selflessness. He maintained that lasting prosperity comes when individuals place the welfare of family, nation, humanity, and ultimately [God](#) above personal interests. According to his message, America's historical success was not accidental but the result of divine guidance. He praised the religious ideals of many early settlers and described the United States as a nation created from many races and nationalities, making it a model for a future world united beyond ethnic and national divisions.

A central theme of the speech was warning. [Father Moon](#) claimed that America was experiencing moral and spiritual decline because it had moved away from its religious foundations. He pointed to social disorder, family breakdown, and loss of faith as signs of a deeper crisis. He argued that America could maintain its strength and leadership only by returning to what he called a [God](#)-centered way of life. Without that foundation, he warned, the nation would become vulnerable to internal decay and to atheistic communism, which he portrayed as a major ideological threat.

[Father Moon](#) also called for greater unity among Christians, cooperation among religions, and the creation of "One World Under [God](#)". He presented [Unificationism](#) as part of a broader spiritual renewal intended to help achieve global harmony. The speech concluded with an appeal for Americans and people worldwide to dedicate themselves to [God](#), moral responsibility, and the building of a peaceful world united as one human family.



From the postering campaign in New York City in the weeks leading up to the event in Yankee Stadium on 1st June 1976. The day after the rally all the posters were taken down, making it one of the cleanest campaigns ever in New York City

In his speech, he argued that America's historical success and global influence were rooted in its religious heritage and commitment to [God](#). He warned that moral decline, materialism, and loss of spiritual purpose threatened the nation's future. At the same time, he expressed confidence that America could fulfill a special mission in the world if it renewed its faith and sense of responsibility.

The Yankee Stadium rally marked a turning point for the [Father Moon](#)'s and [Mother Han](#)'s movement in the USA. It demonstrated the [organization](#)'s capacity to stage a major national event, attracted extensive press coverage, and helped establish [Sun Myung Moon](#) as a controversial but increasingly visible religious figure on the American public stage during the 1970s.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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... article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Part 1a of opinion contribution by Hiroshi Kurose, Pastor of Tokyo West Baptist Church



Logo of the *Sekai Nippo*

“It Is Rash to Conclude That ‘Laws and Regulations’ Includes the Civil Code”

Response to Shiori Yamao in the June Issue of Monthly Hanada

by Hiroshi Kurose, Pastor of Tokyo West Baptist Church

On 4th March 2026, the *Tokyo High Court* upheld the dissolution order against the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (formerly the Unification Church). It had previously been issued by the district court. Liquidators are currently seizing and liquidating the organization's assets and property.



Eitaro Ogawa, here on 19th Oct. 2025. Screenshot from video by “[Second-Generation Association for the Protection of Believers’ Human Rights](#)”.

See also [Warning of Dangerous Precedent: “Like Inquisition”](#)

Concerning this matter, I felt considerable discomfort with remarks made by attorney and former House of Representatives member **Shiori Yamao** (山尾志桜里) and literary critic **Eitaro Ogawa** (小川榮太郎), chairman of the *Japan Institute for Peace Studies*, in their dialogue published in the June 2026 issue of *Monthly Hanada*, titled: “Great Clash Debate Series 4: Dissolution of the

Former Unification Church – What Was Actually Judged?”

Accordingly, I would like to summarize my objections to Yamao’s arguments (along with several other points).

First Issue: Does “Laws and Regulations” Include the Civil Code?

The first issue concerns Yamao’s statement on page 44 of the magazine:

“The provision for dissolution orders in the Religious Corporations Act was established in 1951. At the time of enactment, the government understood the term ‘laws and regulations’ as a broad concept encompassing laws and ordinances. ... If it were intended to be limited to criminal law violations, the statute would have explicitly stated so. Since it deliberately uses the term ‘laws and regulations,’ the natural reading is that it includes all laws and ordinances – not only



The front cover page of the June 2026 issue of *Monthly Hanada*. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)



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The question is whether, prior to the dissolution order against the **Family Federation**, it was generally understood that the interpretation of “laws and regulations” included the Civil Code.



Vehemently opposed to the **Family Federation**: **Shiori Yamao**, née Kanno, here in 2025. She is a former member of the Japanese House of Representatives, for the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) 2014-2016, the Democratic Party (DP) 2016-2017, Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) 2017-2020, and the Democratic Party for the People (DPP) 2020-2021. She became well-known for her fierce opposition to former prime minister Shinzo Abe. Photo: 外務省 (MOFA) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

Yamao argues that because the *Religious Corporations Act* uses the expression “laws and regulations”, which includes civil law, it is only natural that violations of civil law can serve as grounds for a dissolution order.

This explanation is misleading.

The



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

Religious Corporations Act was enacted about seventy years ago. Naturally, the term “laws and regulations” used at that time included the Civil Code, but it was also an extremely broad term encompassing cabinet orders and local ordinances.

Yet Yamao has not even attempted to investigate why, throughout the subsequent history of the law, the interpretation that civil-law violations could serve as grounds for dissolution orders was never adopted.

The *Religious Corporations Act* was created primarily to grant legal personality to religious organizations. Accordingly, dissolution orders (Article 81) were not among its principal objectives, as is evident from the fact that they appear in Chapter 9, “Supplementary Provisions.”

Why, then, were dissolution orders included?

Primarily because there existed religious corporations that had ceased activities. The provision was intended to enable the dissolution of such inactive entities lacking real substance. That is likely why the lawmakers chose the extremely broad term “laws and regulations” as a basis for dissolution.

However, because this provision was not meant to be casually applied to active religious corporations, strict limiting conditions such as “significantly” and “clearly” were attached as safeguards against excessive use of dissolution orders.

The first dissolution order against a religious corporation based on violations of laws and regulations was the 1996 dissolution order against **Aum Shinrikyo** [[See editor’s note below](#)].

That case was fundamentally different from the type of dissolution originally contemplated by the *Religious Corporations Act*. One might question whether legislation such as the *Religious Corporations Act* was truly adequate

for dealing with such a situation, but perhaps no alternative existed.

Application of the *Subversive Activities Prevention Act* was also considered. Ultimately, however, dissolution proceeded under the *Religious Corporations Act*, and the Supreme Court ruled that doing so did not violate freedom of religion.

Even afterward, no dissolution orders were issued for civil-law violations.

Given the statutory language concerning “violations of laws and regulations”, one might have expected numerous dissolution orders, yet in reality there were none. Why was that?

Likewise, why have many legal interpreters maintained that civil-law torts do not qualify as grounds for dissolution orders?

Ignoring those interpretations and focusing solely on the words “laws and regulations” in order to argue that civil law should be included only in the case of the former [Unification Church](#) seems excessively simplistic.

See also [Warning of Dangerous Precedent: “Like Inquisition”](#)

To be continued. Part 1b coming soon.

Featured image above: Hiroshi Kurose (黒瀬博): Born in 1951 in Hiroshima Prefecture. Completed a master’s program in legal philosophy at the Graduate School of Law, Waseda University, in 1975. He graduated from Tokyo Theological University in 1978, completed advanced studies at Seinan Gakuin University’s Faculty of Theology in 1979, and graduated from the Zurich Baptist Seminary in 1984. He currently serves as pastor of Tokyo West Baptist Church. His major publications include *A New Development of Christianity* (Good Time Publishing). Photo (2025): [Sekai Nippo](#)

[Editor’s note: 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.]

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