

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan's Supreme Court Denies Religious Freedom to Unificationists

Knut Holdhus
June 23, 2026



The Supreme Court of Japan



A contested Japanese Supreme Court ruling predicting future misconduct: Can a religious organization be dissolved for what it might do?

Tokyo, 23rd June 2026 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

[Editorial]

Supreme Court Orders Dissolution of Family Federation Based on Speculation, Ignoring Religious Freedom

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

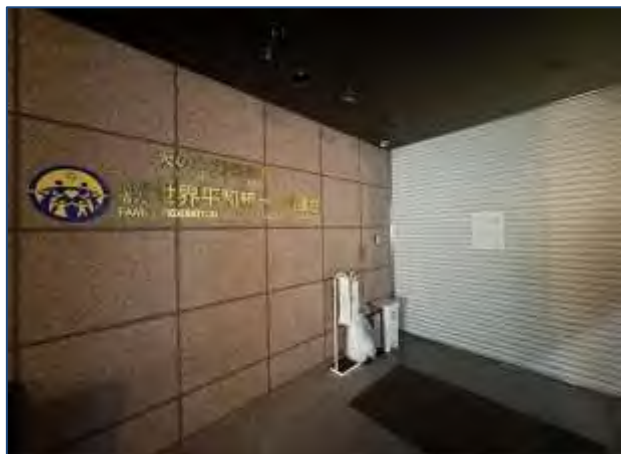


Forced to hold worship services at home members of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan (AI-illustration)

The Supreme Court has dismissed the [special appeal](#) filed by the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)), finalizing the dissolution of the [religious corporation](#). The [organization](#) had argued that the dissolution [violated the Constitution](#), which guarantees freedom of religion. It also maintained that lawsuits concerning excessive donations and related issues had become extremely rare after the [religious organization's](#) 2009 "Compliance Declaration" [See editor's note below] and therefore did not justify dissolution.

The Supreme Court's decision states that the dissolution "does not entail any legal effect whatsoever that prohibits or restricts believers' religious activities." However, since the Tokyo High Court's [dissolution order](#) on 4th March, which triggered the legal effects of [liquidation](#), believers have been unable to enter church buildings, and church funerals and weddings can no longer be held. Prohibiting such important events in people's lives is effectively equivalent to infringing upon fundamental human freedoms. Furthermore, the testimonies of many believers were not taken into consideration at all.

Regarding the [religious organization](#)'s past misconduct cited in the ruling, the improvements made after the "Compliance Declaration" [See editor's note below] were ignored. The Court reasoned that "in the future, with respect to believers", there remains a risk that the [organization](#) could "solicit donations by setting numerical targets that are difficult or impossible to achieve," and that it is "highly likely" such solicitation practices could occur. Based on this assessment, the Court decided to dissolve the [religious organization](#). Many experts - including lawyers, constitutional scholars, journalists, and commentators - have pointed out that a dissolution order based on [speculation](#) is problematic.



Japanese state closed down 260 churches of the [Family Federation](#) overnight. Here, the Japanese headquarters of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Shibuya, Tokyo, where a court-appointed liquidator had entered (March 4, 2026)

Most troubling of all is that the ruling has completely [fulfilled the objective of the defendant](#) in the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三), whose motive was to vent his resentment toward the [religious organization](#) to which his mother belonged. At the same time, public opinion has shown little criticism of the assassination of a politician itself.

[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" (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](#).]

Related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Lawfare: State Uses Legal System in War on Faith](#)

More, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Scholar Questions Secrecy in Dissolution Case](#)

And more, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Shocked Author: "Japan Ignores Basics of Justice"](#)

Still more, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Legal Inconsistencies A Blow to Democracy](#)

Even more, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Japan: Court Accused of Using Speculation](#)

Also related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [MEXT's Legal Spin and "Dissolution at All Costs"](#)

Also related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [UN Report: Japan's Lawfare Against Faith Minority](#)

And also related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Protesting No Transparency in Closed-Door Trial](#)

More, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Dangerous Flaws in Dissolution Order Decried](#)

Also related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: ["Lawyers Lying and Shaming Japan" for 50 Years](#)

And also related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

And also related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook](#)

More, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Media/Legal Expert: Communism Behind Persecution](#)

And more, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

More, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights](#)

And more, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"](#)

Still more, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Japan Copying China: State Seizure of Churches](#)

And still more, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan](#)

More, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions](#)

And more, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Japan: Families Fear for Graves of Loved Ones](#)

Yet more, related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying](#)

Also related to Supreme Court upholding dissolution: [Kishida Follows Anti-Family Federation Minister](#)

Also related to Japanese court upholding dissolution: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

Still more, related to Japanese court upholding dissolution: [Malicious One-Sided Government Source Selection](#)

And still more, related to Japanese court upholding dissolution: [Japan Urged to Make U-Turn](#)

And yet more, related to Japanese court upholding dissolution: [Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions](#)

Even more, related to Japanese court upholding dissolution: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

Yet more, related to Japanese court upholding dissolution: [Japanese Communists' Final War](#)

Still more, related to Japanese court upholding dissolution: [Political and Social Activism behind Oppression](#)

Still more, related to Japanese court upholding dissolution: [Dissolution Case: Rule of Law on Trial 4th March](#)

Japan: Only Freedom To Believe, Not To Practice

June 21, 2026 • The News Desk

Share:













The dissolution order preserves private faith and freedom to believe while undermining the communal and public dimensions of religious freedom



More Posts



Supreme Court Upholds Dissolution Of Federation
June 23, 2026



Charitable Rice Campaign For Vulnerable Groups
June 20, 2026



Mother Han Trial Set To Conclude On 10th July
June 19, 2026



Official Statement On Recent Media Coverage
June 18, 2026



Federation Expands Community Service Efforts
June 17, 2026



Burden Of Successor: Founders And Their Heirs
June 16, 2026

[Editorial]

Japanese-Style Religious Persecution

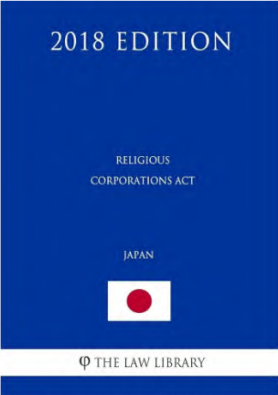
by the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

Persecution refers to the act of suppressing or excluding people through the use of power. Religious persecution is perhaps its most typical form. Not only church facilities but also the lives and property of believers may be violated by the state. In prewar Japan as well, persecution occurred under the *Peace Preservation Law*. In the case of the Ōmoto movement [See editor's note below], facilities were destroyed and many senior believers were imprisoned.

See also *Supreme Court Upholds Dissolution of Federation*



Accused of making false claims: MEXT. Here, its logo. Photo: 文部科学省 (MEXT Japan) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int



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

Although there has been no such overt repression since the war, it should be understood that its essential nature has not changed.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has repeatedly emphasized that under the *Religious Corporations Act*, freedom of religion would continue to be guaranteed for the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (formerly the *Unification Church*) even after its dissolution. However, the falsehood of that claim is obvious.

Freedom of religion includes not only inward belief but also gatherings and social activities. Since the *dissolution decision*, *Family Federation* facilities have not been permitted for use, and in many cases even the use of public facilities has become difficult.

Believers have complained that “our places of worship have been taken away, and we no longer have places for prayer or community.” Others report that “the change in circumstances has made me lose my appetite” and that they “cannot sleep.”

Yet the reality that freedom of religion is being seriously infringed is scarcely reported at all. There is probably an underlying sentiment that, because the *religious organization* was subjected to a dissolution order, this is simply the punishment it deserves.

In the Japanese view of religion, emphasis is placed on inward faith, while the social and political activities of religious organizations are subjected to strict scrutiny. This is because such activities are seen as challenges to the established order and, ultimately, to the system itself.
As it is said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s” (*Gospel of*



Defense Challenges Core Claims Of Indictment
June 15, 2026



Categories

Send us a message

First Name *

Last Name *

Email *

Your Message *

Submit

Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Gospel of Matthew). Perhaps the application of the existing "rule of law" should itself be called into question.

See also [Supreme Court Upholds Dissolution of Federation](#)

Featured image above: Only free to believe, not to practice.
Illustration Grok xAI, 5th May 2026.

[**Editor's note:** The **Ōmoto (Oomoto) religious movement – Omotokyo** (大本教).

It is a Japanese new religious movement that originated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was founded by Nao Deguchi (1836–1918), a peasant woman who claimed to have received divine revelations, and her successor Onisaburo Deguchi (1871–1948), who played a significant role in shaping the religion's teachings and structure.



Nao Deguchi (出口なお) in 1916.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons.
[Public domain](#) image

Omotokyo emphasizes universal salvation, spiritual purification, and the ultimate unity of all religions. The religion stresses the importance of living in harmony with divine will and nature.

The **Ōmoto Incident** (大本事件 Ōmoto jiken) refers to two major crackdowns by the prewar Japanese government against Omotokyo. There were **two incidents**. The **first Ōmoto Incident (1921)** was triggered by government suspicion that Ōmoto teachings were socially disruptive. Authorities raided Ōmoto facilities, arrested leaders, and charged them with *lèse-majesté* (insulting the emperor) for certain religious texts. This was part of a broader pattern of suppressing new religions seen as politically or ideologically threatening.

The second Ōmoto Incident (1935) was far more severe, and is usually what people mean by "the Ōmoto Incident". The military and police launched a large-scale crackdown. Temples and buildings were destroyed (including with explosives). Leaders and many followers were arrested. The state accused the group of subversion, criticizing the emperor system, and spreading dangerous ideas. Essentially, it was an attempt to eliminate Ōmoto as a movement.

It is considered one of the most extreme examples of **state suppression of religion** in prewar Japan. It's often referenced today in discussions about **religious freedom**, **state control**, and **the role of new religious movements in Japan**.

Today, Omotokyo remains a small but active religious group in Japan. It has also inspired the foundation of Aikido, the martial art developed by Morihei Ueshiba, who was a follower of Omotokyo.

Omotokyo holds a significant place in the history of Japanese religion, not only as a spiritual movement but also as a symbol of resistance to religious persecution during Japan's militaristic period.]

Related to only freedom to believe: [Lawfare: State Uses Legal System in War on Faith](#)

More, related to only freedom to believe: [Scholar Questions Secrecy in Dissolution Case](#)

And more, related to only freedom to believe: [Shocked Author: "Japan Ignores Basics of Justice"](#)

Still more, related to only freedom to believe: [Legal Inconsistencies A Blow to Democracy](#)

Even more, related to only freedom to believe: [Japan: Court Accused of Using Speculation](#)

Also related to only freedom to believe: [MEXT's Legal Spin and "Dissolution at All Costs"](#)

Also related to only freedom to believe: [UN Report: Japan's Lawfare Against Faith Minority](#)

And also related to only freedom to believe: [Protesting No Transparency in Closed-Door Trial](#)

More, related to only freedom to believe: [Dangerous Flaws in Dissolution Order Decried](#)

Also related to only freedom to believe: ["Lawyers Lying and Shaming Japan" for 50 Years](#)

And also related to only freedom to believe: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

And also related to only freedom to believe: [Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook](#)

More, related to only freedom to believe: [Media/Legal Expert: Communism Behind Persecution](#)

And more, related to only freedom to believe: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

More, related to only freedom to believe: [Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights](#)

And more, related to only freedom to believe: [State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"](#)

Still more, related to only freedom to believe: [Japan Copying China: State Seizure of Churches](#)

And still more, related to only freedom to believe: [12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan](#)

More, related to only freedom to believe: [4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions](#)

And more, related to only freedom to believe: [Japan: Families Fear for Graves of Loved Ones](#)

Yet more, related to only freedom to believe: [Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying](#)

Also related to only freedom to believe: [Kishida Follows Anti-Family Federation Minister](#)

Also related to only freedom to believe: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

Still more, related to only freedom to believe: [Malicious One-Sided Government Source Selection](#)

And still more, related to only freedom to believe: [Japan Urged to Make U-Turn](#)

And yet more, related to next target after dissolution: [Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions](#)

Even more, related to next target after dissolution: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

Yet more, related to next target after dissolution: [Japanese Communists' Final War](#)

Still more, related to next target after dissolution: [Political and Social Activism behind Oppression](#)

Still more, related to next target after
dissolution: [Dissolution Case: Rule of Law on Trial 4th March](#)

«

Previous

Charitable Rice Campai...

Supreme Court Upholds ...

Next

»