

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Norishige Kondo: Total absence of justice and fairness in Japanese Government case

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Norishige Kondo, Deputy Director of the Legal Affairs Office of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan, speaking at a side event organized by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council, in hall 25 of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland June 16, 2025.

Legal spokesperson points out the total absence of justice and fairness in Japan's dissolution case against Family Federation based on outdated civil harm claims and fabricated victims

Problems of the Tokyo District Court Decision on the Dissolution of the Family Federation



Norishige Kondo (left) and the panel of speakers at the side event to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland on June 16, 2025. From left: Kondo, Attorney Patricia Duval, Heiner Handschin, Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Dr. Hirohisa Koide

A speech by Norishige Kondo, Deputy Director of the Legal Affairs Office of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan, at a side event organized by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council, in hall 25 of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland June 16, 2025.

See also ["Religiocide" - Japan's "Murder" of a Religion](#)

The title of my presentation is "Problems of the Tokyo District Court Decision on the Dissolution of the

[Family Federation](#)".

As was explained, our official name is [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), but I believe that you are familiar with our former name [Unification Church](#). So in my presentation, I use the abbreviation [UC](#) to indicate our church.

After the former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated on 8th July 2022, the [lawyers' network](#) against the [UC](#) created the false impression that serious and widespread harm caused by the [UC](#) occurred across the country. It is because the suspect quoted his grudge against the [Unification Church](#) as motive of the murder.



*Hiroshi Yamaguchi, activist
leftwing lawyer and founder and
leading member of National
Network of Lawyers Against
Spiritual Sales (NNLASS)*

However, later we have found that the major lawyer [Hiroshi Yamaguchi] of the [network](#) stated in the July 2022 issue of a periodical [Consumer Law News] that the number of complaints [to the Consumer Affairs Agency] related to the [UC](#) has declined. [See [Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions](#)]

It was the same month as the Abe incident, and therefore the claims by the [network](#) appear to be merely propaganda.

However, in those days, the media pressured the government. As a result, an unnecessary [new law](#) to control donations was enacted. The government even [changed the legal interpretation](#) for dissolving the [UC](#). And finally it filed a lawsuit seeking the dissolution of the [UC](#).

The government tried to dissolve the [UC](#) based on the Religious Corporations Act, article 81, paragraph 3, item 1, [which says that] the requirements [for dissolution] are "violation of law" and "[harming public welfare](#) seriously and clearly".

Prime Minister Kishida [changed the legal interpretation overnight](#) and included civil torts [civil wrongs causing alleged harm] in the concept of "violation of law" to dissolve the [UC](#).

However, civil torts are too vague a concept to be grounds for dissolution, and such an interpretation violates ICCPR [[International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)] article 18, paragraph 3.



As for "[public welfare](#)", the UN Human Rights Committee recommended Japan three times not to restrict religious freedom by [concerns for] [public welfare](#).

The government ignored them. Surprisingly enough, the court accepted the [change of legal interpretation](#) and ignored the recommendation by the [UN Human Rights] Committee as well.

However, recently there were only a few tort [civil wrong causing alleged harm] cases related to the [UC](#).

As a result, the government submitted [fabricated written statements](#) under the names of alleged "victims". Yet the [UC](#) exposed the [fabrications](#) in the court.



*Sign outside Tokyo District
Court*

Finally, the court found grounds for dissolution based on [speculations](#) saying there must be unknown cases of victims, and it issued a [decision to dissolve](#) the [UC](#).

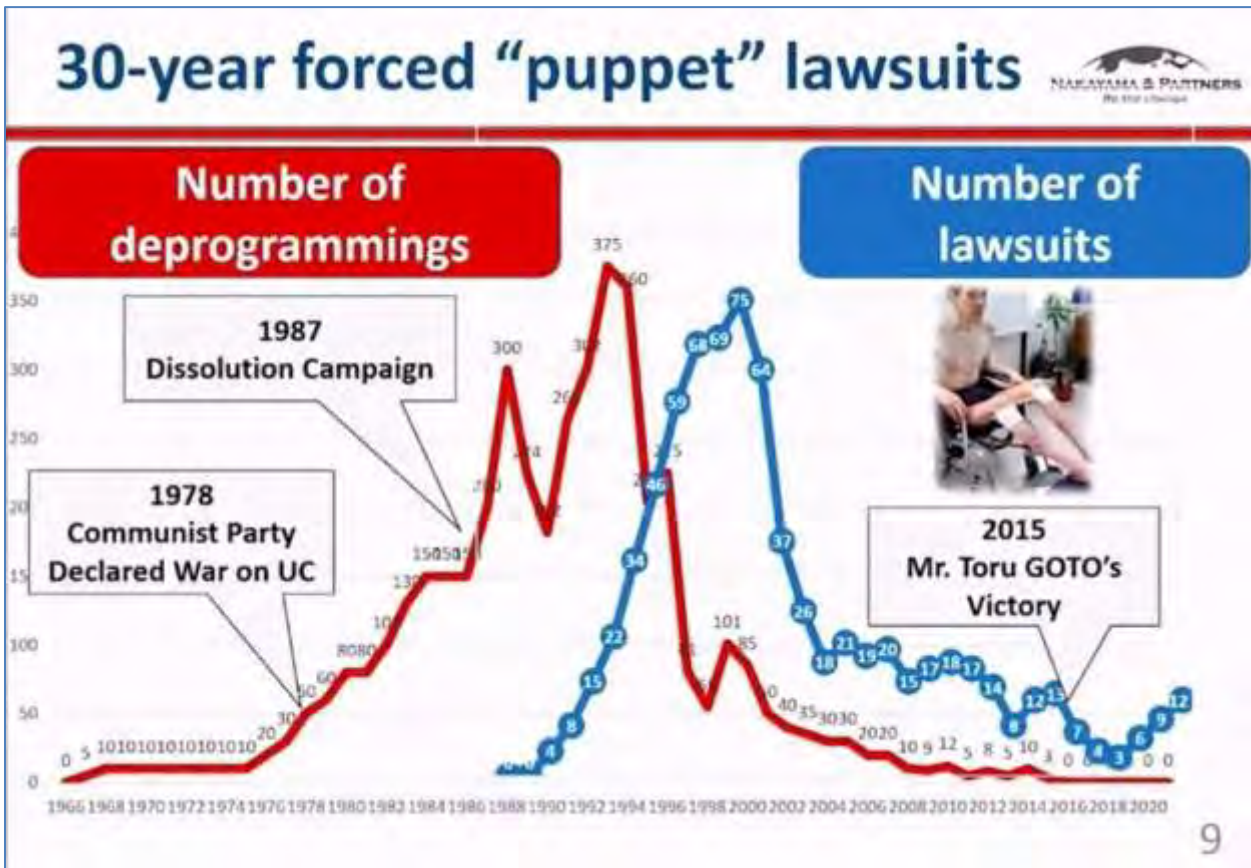
Regarding the civil cases, the [UC](#) instructed its members not to accept large amount of donations in 2009, and the number of the cases declined.

The Tokyo District Court found tortuous acts [civil wrongs causing alleged harm] based not only on civil judgments but also settlements. Even so, the total amount declined to 5% after 2009.

For dissolving a religious cooperation, there must be a presently existing motive. So the court found torts [civil wrongs causing alleged harm] based on speculation, violating the principle of judgment based on evidence.

Regarding the past tort cases, the majority of the plaintiffs were victims of deprogramming [See editor's note 1 below].

The court relied only on deprogrammed apostates [See editor's note 2 below] for facts dating back from 20 to 40 years before. In violation of international law, the court found what they according to social norms considered to be "illegalities".



Strong proof of intentionally created court cases: correlation between number of deprogrammings and number of lawsuits

In this graph, the red line shows the number of believers who suffered deprogramming [See editor's note 1 below], and the blue line shows the believers who sued the [UC](#). These two lines show similarity. It means that even the past cases were intentionally created cases.

From every perspective, the decision to dissolve the [UC](#) can be deemed unjust.

We sincerely request the international community's attention and monitoring regarding this issue.

Thank you for your attention.

Slightly edited for publication.

See also ["Religiocide" - Japan's "Murder" of a Religion](#)



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of Soka Gakkai. Here students belonging to the faith in 2001

[Editor's note 1: Coercive faith-breaking ("deprogramming") in Japan refers to the practice of coercively attempting to separate individuals from their religious affiliations or beliefs, typically through intervention by family members, professional faith-breakers (deprogrammers) or organizations hostile to new religious movements (NRMs). This phenomenon often targets members of such movements, e.g. relatively large faiths like the [Family Federation](#) or Jehovah's Witnesses, but also smaller groups like Happy Science (Kōfuku no Kagaku) and other newer religious movements.

However, also Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist-based lay organization with more than 8 million Japanese members, and affiliated with Nichiren Buddhism, has occasionally been subject to faith-breaking attempts.

The practice gained attention in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Parents or concerned family members often hired faith-breakers who taught them how to abduct and forcibly detain believers. Almost all such cases involved confining the individual believer and cutting him or her off from the religious community. During the confinement, the believer was subjected to intense questioning or indoctrination designed to break his or her faith. The aim was to "rescue" the person from what the family often had been tricked by faith-breakers or lawyers to regard as harmful influence from the religious organization.

Critics of forced de-conversion argue that it violates fundamental human rights, including freedom of thought, religion, and association. Reports of psychological trauma and accusations of unlawful detention have sparked debates over its ethical and legal implications. In response, some religious groups, particularly NRMs, have lobbied for greater protections against such practices.

Japanese courts have been inconsistent in addressing cases of coercive faith-breaking. While some verdicts have condemned the practice as illegal detention, others have been more lenient, citing family concerns about "mental health" or alleged "exploitation" as mitigating factors.]

[Editor's note 2: Apostates here refer not just to someone who have left the religion, but who are now being used to undermine the group. The apostates in the text above are being used by hostile and cynical lawyers for malicious reasons to cause harm to the faith they were forced out of, when they had their faith broken coercively by so-called faith-breakers (deprogrammers), working in league with activist lawyers.]

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Dr. Massimo Introvigne addressing the side event to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland on 16th June 2025. From left: Attorney Patricia Duval, Heiner Handschin, Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Dr. Hirohisa Koide. Photo: Screenshot from video recording by UPF.

A speech by **Dr. Massimo Introvigne** at a side event organized by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council, in hall 25 of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland 16th June 2025. Massimo Introvigne is an Italian sociologist of religion and editor-in-chief of *Bitter Winter*, and one of the most well-known scholars of religion internationally. He is Managing Director of CESNUR, Center for Studies on New Religions, Torino, Italy.

As you have heard, on 25th March, the Tokyo District Court [ordered the dissolution](#) of the [Unification Church](#) [\[See editor's note below\]](#), and the case is [under appeal](#).

You may have heard, however, in the international media a lie that being dissolved only means you lose your tax-exempt status. This is false.

If you are dissolved in Japan, all the assets are transferred to a liquidator – bank accounts and places of worship. The believers could still believe in their heart, but they cannot meet in any place, they cannot own property, they cannot function. So it's a homicide.

And **some scholars have even coined the word “religiocide” for this case.**

We don't have much time left, so I will try to answer **four questions about the “religiocide”**: **Why, when, by whom, and how was this, or is this crime being perpetrated?**



About to become victim of “religiocide”, the “murder” of a religion, in Japan: The [Family Federation](#), formerly the [Unification Church](#). Here, its flag waving in Tokyo. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

Why? There are many colleagues who have studied the general hostility of Japan to religion. Japan is a very secular society, but it also has a long tradition of scapegoating foreign religions for all the problems of the country.

It was once Christianity, during the interwar period. But up until now, what's going on now, it was the *Jehovah's Witnesses* which are of course an American religion. And now it's the [Unification Church](#) [\[See editor's note below\]](#), which is Korean. And there is a lot of anti-Korean racism going on as a subtext of this story.



Tetsuya Yamagami, the man who killed Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister of Japan. Photo: Andrew2592009 / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int. Cropped](#)

In 2022, Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister, was assassinated by a man whose mother is a member of the [Unification Church](#). The assassin, Tetsuya Yamagami, was never a member, but he claimed he had killed Shinzo Abe to punish him for his sympathy for the [Unification Church](#) [\[See editor's note below\]](#). 20 years before, in 2002, Yamagami's mother went bankrupt – he said – because of excessive donations to the

[church](#).

Never mind that he waited for 20 years. Never mind that members of the [church](#) gave back to the family half of the donations when the relatives started complaining.

But that [the assassination] was a golden opportunity, which leads me to the third question – **who?**

Who promoted this? This was promoted not by politics. Politics initially tried to resist it – the government. It was promoted by the media, and the media had been agitated for more than 20 years by an anti-[Unification Church](#) [\[See editor's note below\]](#), an anti-cult



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association called the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales*.

And we know this association, as hinted before, was founded by members of the Socialist and Communist parties to eliminate the [Unification Church \[See editor's note below\]](#), an anti-communist organization, but then to fight conservative religion in general.

And that's why they also go against the Jehovah's Witnesses, but also against evangelical conservative Christianity and many other groups.



Hiroshi Yamaguchi (山口広), activist leftwing lawyer and founder and leading member of *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS)*. Photo: Screenshot / [Bitter Winter](#)

And this national network was founded in 1987. They tried for many years, unsuccessfully, to have the [Unification Church \[See editor's note below\]](#) dissolved, until the assassination of Shinzo Abe offered them a golden opportunity.

But the opportunity was caught because the campaign existed before. It had existed for more than 30 years actually, when Abe was assassinated.

And finally: **how – how they did it.**

They did it – and that's the long and the short of the court decision – by accusing the [Unification Church \[See editor's note below\]](#) of what they called "spiritual sales".



Miniature pagoda sold by members of the [Unification Church](#) in Japan. Photo: [Bitter Winter](#)

"Spiritual sales" is an expression invented by this anti-[Unification Church](#) association for sales of small pagodas, seals and other artifacts – believed to bring good luck – that some believers from the [Unification Church \[See editor's note below\]](#) back in the 1980s and early 90's were selling for high prices. And then the lawyers extended the expression "spiritual sales" to donations.

Now question: Did these sales of artifacts for prices higher than their value happen? Yes. It happened decades ago and that was not an activity of the [Unification Church \[See editor's note below\]](#) as a church. [Unification Church](#) is a Christian religion – they don't deal in Buddhist charms or pagodas. It was an individual activity of some believers, and these believers were stopped eventually by the [Unification Church](#). After the [Unification Church \[See editor's note below\]](#) stopped them, the number of complaints for the so-called "spiritual sales" decreased to almost zero.

That's not my opinion. That's not the scholars' opinion. That's written in the decision of the dissolution case that in the last nine or ten years there have been almost no cases – three or four.

So why was the [dissolution pronounced](#)?

Because these lawyers persuaded the government and the court that even if there are no cases of "spiritual sales", there can be – perhaps hypothetically – because of the church being a "bad organization". It's true they stopped, but perhaps tomorrow, they will start again. And it seems they stopped, but perhaps they didn't, and things are going on under the table, etc.

But that's all speculation. Their own data, the data of the government, the data of the court in the dissolution case, say in recent years there have been no cases of "spiritual sales". That's extremely important because the reason the court issued a [dissolution order](#) is because of the "spiritual sales".



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護団) and *Nationwide Unification Church*

In the media there has been a campaign that they [[church](#) members] give a bad education to the children. No, that's not part of the court case and of the [dissolution decision](#). It's only about the donations and the "spiritual sales", which did not happen in recent years.

Summing it up: within the climate of general hostility to religion, particularly to foreign religion, an organization founded more than 30 years ago by communist and socialist lawyers to destroy conservative religion, and in particular the anti-communist [Unification Church](#), took the opportunity of the assassination of Shinzo Abe to revamp its campaign and used as the final weapon the "spiritual sales". The name (term) was invented by those lawyers, but it was referring to something which some members of the [Unification Church](#) [[See editor's note below](#)] did decades ago, and which had stopped.

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](#)

But it was said perhaps it didn't stop, perhaps it goes on secretly, but there is no evidence for this.

So we have a legally sanctioned "religiocide", or killing of a religion, which is not supported by evidence. It's motivated by politics and takes advantage of a climate hostile to conservative religion in general in a deeply secular society, and a society with a considerable degree of xenophobia where many are happy to bash a [church](#) whose headquarters are in Korea.

Thank you.

[Editor's note: Although Dr. Introvigne uses the name [Unification Church](#), in 2015 the religious organization in Japan officially changed its name to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#).]

Featured image above: Dr. Massimo Introvigne addressing the side event to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland on 16th June 2025. Photo: Screenshot from video recording by UPF.

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