

FOREF: Japan's Unification Church Dissolution Exposed at Brussels Press Club

Peter Zoehrer
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Japan’s War on a Peaceful Faith: The Unification Church Dissolution Exposed at Brussels Press Club

Experts, survivors, and lawyers reveal political score-settling, ignored UN warnings, and the global threat to religious freedom as the conference video goes viral.

PETER ZOEHRER
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On June 29, 2026, the Brussels Press Club became the stage for a powerful international warning: Japan had dismantled a peaceful religious minority with no criminal record. Just eight days later, the video of that extraordinary press conference had already surpassed 3,600 viewings on the Press Club’s own website, with subtitles appearing in multiple languages and clips spreading rapidly across Europe, Asia, and North America. This is no longer merely a Japanese story. It is a test of whether democracies will defend freedom of religion or belief—or allow political score-settling to establish a dangerous global precedent.

That warning came only one week after Japan’s Supreme Court, on June 22, 2026, upheld the dissolution of the Unification Church—officially the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. Within fifteen minutes of the ruling, liquidation agents arrived at churches across the country, demanding the immediate surrender of keys, bank accounts, and assets. For tens of thousands of Japanese believers, the decision did not merely dissolve a legal entity. It erased the physical and communal heart of their faith.

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The June 29 press conference at the **Brussels Press Club** was convened by Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF) to examine this development in its full political, legal, and human context. Moderated with clarity and moral conviction by **Willy Fautré**, Director of HRWF, the event brought together an investigative journalist whose work pierced the official narrative, a pastor who experienced the immediate consequences firsthand, a former church legal director who documented the evidentiary failures, and an international human rights lawyer who placed the case within the framework of international treaty obligations.

The objective was unmistakable: to generate sustained international scrutiny—and meaningful pressure—on Japan’s media, government, and judiciary. What happened in Tokyo must not be allowed to become a quiet blueprint for other democracies.

Willy Fautré Frames a Global Crisis

Willy Fautré opened the conference with remarks that were both precise and deeply alarming. He described the dissolution as “one of the most serious interferences with freedom of religion or belief” ever witnessed in a democratic state.

“Tens of thousands of its members are now homeless without a place of worship... In both [Japan and South Korea] there is a common denominator: a change of political power at the head of the state after democratic elections, followed by political score-settling.”

Fautré identified a recurring pattern: churches perceived as being close to a previous government became targets, accusations were constructed, and legal proceedings were launched. He reminded the audience that international human rights law permits the dissolution of associations only when it is strictly necessary and proportionate. The Unification Church, he emphasized, is a non-violent religious organization that has never advocated or engaged in violence.

He contrasted the case with Aum Shinrikyo’s 1995 sarin gas attack. While Aum’s religious corporation status was revoked in 1995–1996 because of those terrorist crimes (with splinter groups continuing under surveillance), the Unification Church has committed no crimes whatsoever—yet it was dissolved on the basis of civil tort claims and speculative future harm.

Fautré warned that Japan had opened a “Pandora’s box.” Democratic countries in Europe were already studying the precedent. The Czech Republic’s 2024 attempt to liquidate Jehovah’s Witnesses was halted only after international outcry.

“The danger is at our doors. Now with the quick circulation of information, everything that happens anywhere in the world can have an impact on the other

side of the world.”

His introduction established the central message of the conference: this was not simply a domestic Japanese dispute. It was a human rights crisis with global implications, and the international community has both the right and the responsibility to respond.

Masumi Fukuda Lays Bare the Orchestrated Campaign

The investigative centerpiece of the conference came from **Masumi Fukuda**, the independent Japanese freelance journalist whose reporting has become indispensable to understanding how this dissolution became possible.

Fukuda is the author of seven rigorously researched non-fiction books. Her earlier work *Dechiage* (“Fabrication”) sold 230,000 copies, won major awards, was adapted into a feature film, and reached number one on Netflix Japan. In 2024, she received the Wilbur Award in the United States for outstanding reporting on religion. Her latest book, *Sacrifice to the Nation*, published in November 2025, compiles years of investigative work into the Unification Church case.

For readers seeking a deeper examination of her research and its broader implications, I previously reported extensively on her presentation in the Bratislava Parliament earlier this year. **That article is available here:**

Exposing Japan’s Hidden War on a Minority Faith: Masumi Fukuda’s Urgent Warning from Brussels

At the Brussels Press Club, Fukuda’s testimony formed the conference’s analytical core. She demonstrated that the campaign against the Unification Church did not begin with the 2022 assassination of Shinzo Abe. Its origins date back to 1987 with the establishment of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS), a group of more than 300 left-leaning attorneys, many affiliated with the Communist Party.

“By relentlessly branding the Church a ‘great evil’ in coordination with sympathetic media, the lawyers succeeded in embedding a permanent ‘cult’ stigma in Japanese public discourse.”

Fukuda explained how this stigma was sustained for decades through exaggerated claims, the suppression of counter-testimony, and a judicial culture in which very few judges possess any personal religious faith. Even out-of-court settlements were later treated as evidence of wrongdoing. The courts crossed a dangerous line by evaluating religious doctrine itself and predicting future harm without concrete evidence. Her forensic presentation revealed the mechanism by which political and ideological actors transformed public hostility into the legal destruction of a religious corporation that had never committed a crime.

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sympathetic media, the lawyers succeeded in embedding a permanent ‘cult’ stigma in Japanese public discourse.”

— **Masumi Fukuda**

The Human Toll: Pastor Okamitsu’s Testimony

The immediate human consequences were described with quiet dignity and emotional power by **Pastor Kimihiro Okamitsu**. Just fifteen minutes after the Supreme Court announced its ruling at 11:15 a.m., fifteen liquidation agents entered his church.

“This is not merely the seizure of real estate. It is the trampling of our souls’ sanctuary underfoot... Faith is not confined to the inner heart alone. Without place, ritual, and community gathered together, faith loses its living power.”

A scheduled funeral was permitted only under humiliating conditions: the pastor could officiate not as clergy but merely “as one believer.” Prayer in the dedicated prayer room was forbidden. Later memorial services had to be conducted secretly in private homes.

Okamitsu described the church as irreplaceable sacred space—a lifelong spiritual home for the elderly, a place where children experienced divine love, and the foundation of identity for young people. He concluded with a solemn warning: what had happened to his community could happen to others tomorrow.

Norishige Kondo’s Evidentiary Indictment

Norishige Kondo, former director of the legal department of the Family Federation, presented the detailed chronology and a devastating evidentiary critique.

Following the July 8, 2022 assassination of Shinzo Abe, anti-Church lawyers immediately held press conferences. Prime Minister Kishida severed ties on August 31 and, on October 19, oversaw an overnight reinterpretation of the Religious Corporations Law so that civil torts alone could justify dissolution.

Civil tort judgments had already declined to roughly 5 percent of pre-2009 levels. Alleged post-2009 harms were inferred through speculation. Many earlier cases relied on testimony from deprogrammed former members. Kondo further noted that an experienced anti-Church lawyer had publicly acknowledged that donation solicitations involved neither deception nor intimidation. Nevertheless, the courts ruled against the Church.

The practical consequences were immediate. Access to approximately 300 church facilities was prohibited. Nearly 1,400 church workers were affected, with 900 dismissed on May 20. Several believers were driven to suicidal thoughts.

Kondo described the Supreme Court’s assertion that individual religious practice

remained possible as “a fiction that enabled state-sponsored religious persecution.”

Patricia Duval: Violations of International Law

Patricia Duval, the French international human rights lawyer with extensive United Nations experience, provided the international legal analysis.

She traced decades of state-tolerated deprogramming and explained how those civil cases were later repurposed to justify dissolution. The invocation of “public welfare,” she stressed, has no basis within the narrow limitation clauses of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

A joint press release issued on August 1, 2025, by four UN Special Rapporteurs declared the dissolution incompatible with international law—yet their concerns were ignored.

Duval also pointed out that similar legal reasoning is now being employed in South Korea to imprison elderly religious leaders under conditions amounting to torture. Following dissolution, efforts have even extended to re-educating children against their parents’ faith.

“It is not a matter of legal entity,” Duval emphasized. “It is a matter of eradication of the faith itself.”

The World Is Watching—Japan Must Respond

The Brussels Press Club conference was never intended as a closed academic discussion. Its explicit purpose was to mobilize international attention and increase pressure. In just eight days, the video has already attracted more than 3,600 viewings on the Press Club’s own platform, while clips continue circulating among religious freedom organizations, academics, parliamentarians, journalists, and concerned citizens across Europe, Asia, North America, and beyond.

Japan’s media, government, and judiciary should take careful note. The dissolution of a peaceful religious minority that has never committed a crime—based on civil disputes, speculative future harm, and a decades-long campaign of stigmatization—violates both the spirit and the letter of Japan’s international human rights commitments.

“International pressure is not interference. It is the minimum response required when a democracy dismantles the fundamental right of its citizens to practice their faith in community.”

Japanese authorities still have an opportunity to reverse course, restore the Church’s religious corporation status, and reaffirm their commitment to the post-war international human rights order.

The alternative is far more troubling: to confirm that political score-settling now outweighs religious freedom even in established democracies—a precedent that no society

committed to liberty should be willing to accept.

The video continues to spread across continents. International scrutiny is growing—and it is unlikely to subside.

The world is watching.

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