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A bestselling author explains why her investigation reveals a profound crisis for religious liberty and constitutional guarantees in contemporary Japan.

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After the Unification Church’s Dissolution in Japan. 1. Dissolved Without Having Committed Crimes

by Masumi Fukuda | Jul 13, 2026 | Testimonies Global

A bestselling author explains why her investigation reveals a profound crisis for religious liberty and constitutional guarantees in contemporary Japan.

by Masumi Fukuda*

*Address delivered at a press conference on the theme “Japan: The Hidden Story Behind the Eradication of a Religion,” organized by Human Rights Without Frontiers at the Brussels Press Club in Brussels, Belgium, June 29, 2026.

Article 1 of 3



Willy Fautré, co-founder and director of Human Rights Without Frontiers, and Masumi Fukuda at the press conference. Photo by FOREF.

I am a freelance journalist from Japan. Last November, I published a non-fiction book entitled “Sacrifice to the Nation.” It is based on a series of articles that I wrote intermittently for a monthly magazine beginning in late 2022, with substantial additions and revisions.

Including this latest work, I have published seven books. One of them, the non-fiction book “Fabrication,” became a bestseller, selling more than 230,000 copies. It received several major literary awards and was adapted into a feature film last year. This year, it was released on Netflix, where it ranked number one in the Japanese film category for two consecutive weeks. Two years ago, I was honored to receive the Wilbur Award in the United States, which recognizes outstanding works dealing with religion.

Readers of my latest book, “Sacrifice to the Nation,” have expressed deep astonishment. Their comments include: “Outrageous acts of injustice have been committed where the public could not see them”; “This is the truth that the media refuses to report”; “A must-read”; and “Every page is filled with truth.” I believe that much of what I have written in this substantial volume is information that the average citizen has never encountered before. Yet every fact presented in the book is supported by evidence. On the inside cover appear the words: “Do not turn a blind eye to the truth.”

Today, I would like to share with you the central message of this book. Most of you probably regard Japan as a highly developed democracy, where liberal values are firmly established and fundamental human rights, including freedom of religion, are fully protected. However, today’s Japan no longer fully reflects that image. Freedom of religion is being undermined, the principles of constitutional government and the rule of

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law are being weakened, and democracy itself is facing a serious challenge.

You may well ask, “What on earth is happening in Japan?” There is a religious organization of Korean origin known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. Until 2015, it was officially known as the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, commonly referred to as the Unification Church. Since that name is more familiar to many of you, I will use “Unification Church” throughout my remarks. I should also emphasize that I am not a member of the Unification Church. I am simply an independent journalist and an ordinary citizen.

As I mentioned earlier, liquidation proceedings have already begun against this religious corporation. Its headquarters and churches throughout Japan have been placed under the control of the court-appointed liquidator and sealed off, preventing members from entering their places of worship. In practical terms, believers can no longer gather in their own churches and have been deprived of the places where they conduct worship and religious ceremonies. Furthermore, many of the organization’s nearly 2,000 employees across Japan have already lost their jobs. You can imagine how difficult it will be for many of them to find new employment.

Since the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, ordinary members of the Unification Church have also been subjected to various forms of discrimination and persecution. Some members have taken their own lives. Others have been dismissed from their jobs after their affiliation with the church became known. Some students have been deeply distressed after hearing teachers tell their classmates that the Unification Church is an evil religion. Volunteer groups affiliated with church members have had all of their cooperation projects with local governments canceled.

The organization has received countless threatening phone calls and letters, and some of its facilities have been vandalized, with the word “cult” painted prominently on their walls. For a considerable period, the internet and social media were flooded with slanderous and defamatory attacks against the church. The situation has been especially difficult for church employees. Some have been denied the renewal of their apartment leases. Others have had their credit cards suspended or even been refused medical treatment at hospitals simply because the name of the church appears on their health insurance cards.

As I mentioned earlier, Japan is a country whose Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. So, did the Unification Church commit such a grave crime that it deserved to be dissolved? Many of you are probably familiar with the Aum Shinrikyo case in Japan during the 1990s. In 1995, members of Aum Shinrikyo carried out a sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system, killing 14 people in the attack itself and causing thousands of injuries, while other related crimes brought the total death toll to 29. The organization’s founder and several senior leaders were convicted of murder and executed. Given the magnitude of these crimes, Aum Shinrikyo was ordered to dissolve.



A view of the Brussels press conference. Photo by FOREF.

Is the Unification Church a similarly dangerous organization? Did it commit mass murder or comparable acts of violence? The answer is no. The Unification Church, as an organization, has never been convicted of a criminal offense. None of its leaders, and indeed none of its tens of thousands of members, has been convicted of murder. In fact, not even a single case of assault has been attributed to the organization.

So why has it been ordered to dissolve? Surprisingly, the principal issue concerns donations. Donations are an essential part of the life of virtually every religious organization. However, the court concluded that the

Unification Church had accepted donations that exceeded what it described as the bounds of common sense and accepted social norms.

Until recently, it was commonly alleged that members had been pressured into making donations through fear, particularly through teachings relating to ancestral sins and the possibility of hell. Over the years, numerous civil lawsuits concerning donations have been brought against the Unification Church, and in most cases, the courts ruled against it.

Without going into the details of those cases today, it is worth noting that, in many instances, plaintiffs prevailed despite the absence of concrete evidence, leading, in my view, to an increasing number of unjust judgments. This may be because nearly all Japanese judges are non-religious and tend to view newer religious movements, such as the Unification Church, with suspicion, often regarding them as “cults.” Another possible explanation is that after years of media coverage portraying the Unification Church as a “cult,” a legal victory for the church would have undermined public confidence in the judiciary.

More recently, some courts have even ruled that although believers make donations voluntarily, they are unaware that they are allegedly under the church’s undue psychological influence. As a result, the donations have been deemed unlawful. This reasoning comes close to suggesting that religious faith itself is harmful. In effect, it amounts to judicial acceptance of the theory of mind control.

In addition to these unfavorable rulings, the dissolution order took an extraordinary step by treating settlement agreements that the church had reached with former members as evidence of illegal conduct. As a result, the church was ordered to dissolve. In other words, the outcome of civil disputes concerning large donations between the church and former members was used as the principal basis for dissolving an entire religious organization.

Furthermore, the court inferred, without concrete evidence, that the church would continue to create problems through large donations. It even examined the church’s doctrines, the teachings, and the conduct of its founder, concluding that, because it regarded the religion itself as fundamentally flawed, meaningful reform could not be expected.

Traditionally, Japanese courts have avoided judging religious doctrine, and it was once considered unthinkable for a court to assess the merits or shortcomings of a faith. This decision gives the impression that the court assumed the role of an inquisitor.

In short, I believe the dissolution order is fundamentally unjust. It was not the result of a fair trial based on clear evidence, and no criminal conduct by the organization was established. It is also difficult to ignore the influence of years of highly one-sided media coverage portraying the Unification Church as a cult.

The immediate catalyst for the dissolution proceedings was the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Without that tragic event, I believe it is highly unlikely that the government would have sought the church’s dissolution.

Anti-Cult, Japan, Religious Liberty, Unification Church

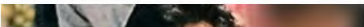


Masumi Fukuda

Masumi Fukuda was born in Yokohama in 1956. She graduated from the Department of Sociology of Rikkyo University. After working for a specialty magazine and a magazine production company, she became a freelance journalist. She has reported and written about crime, Russia, and other topics. Her books include “Stalin: A Portrait of His Family” (Bungei Shunju), “Russia, an Assassination State: In Search of a Missing Journalist” (Shinchosha), “The True Nature of Political Correctness” (Hojosha), and others. In 2007, she won the 6th Shincho Documentary Award for “Fabrication: The Truth About the ‘Murder Teacher’ in Fukuoka” (Shinchosha).



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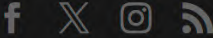
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After the Unification Church’s Dissolution in Japan. 2. In the Aftermath of the Abe Assassination

by Masumi Fukuda | Jul 14, 2026 | Testimonies Global

A journalist traces the chain of events that turned a single crime into a nationwide campaign against an innocent religious minority.

by Masumi Fukuda*

*Address delivered at a press conference on the theme “Japan: The Hidden Story Behind the Eradication of a Religion,” organized by Human Rights Without Frontiers at the Brussels Press Club in Brussels, Belgium, June 29, 2026.

Article 2 of 3. Read [article 1](#).



Tetsuya Yamagami in his high school years. [Credits](#).

Even those who know little about Japan probably remember the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on July 8, 2022. One of Japan’s longest-serving and most respected leaders, he was shot by a 41-year-old unemployed man, Tetsuya Yamagami.

The motive that Yamagami reportedly gave to police immediately after his arrest sent the investigation in an unexpected direction. According to media reports, he said: “My mother became deeply involved with the Unification Church and went bankrupt because of large donations. I developed a deep grudge against the church. My original intention was to assassinate the church’s leader, Hak Ja Han, but I had no opportunity to do so. Instead, I targeted former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe because of his ties to the church.”

What kind of religious organization is the Unification Church, now known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification? Its teachings are rooted in Christianity, but they have long been regarded as heretical by mainstream Christian denominations because they interpret the Bible in distinctive and unconventional ways. As a secular journalist, I do not take sides in these theological debates.

Because the movement has consistently maintained a strongly anti-communist and politically conservative orientation, it has also faced sustained opposition from left-leaning Christian groups, the Communist Party, and lawyers associated with the political left.

By 2022, however, the Unification Church had largely disappeared from public attention. Then Yamagami’s violent act suddenly revived memories of the organization. Many Japanese remembered it primarily as “the group involved in fraudulent spiritual sales.”

During the 1980s, the Unification Church became the subject of intense public criticism because companies operated by church members sold imported pagodas and marble vases from Korea at prices far above their market value. These practices became known as “spiritual sales.”

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market value. These practices became known as "spiritual sales."

A group of more than 300 lawyers known as the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS), many of whom held left-leaning political views, organized to represent alleged victims. Established in 1987, the organization worked closely with the media to portray these practices as fraudulent and to present the Unification Church itself as a major social evil.

However, the products in question were not imported or sold by the church itself, but by businesses operated by individual members. In my view, the number of victims and the financial losses were greatly exaggerated by NNLASS, and not a single criminal fraud conviction resulted from these sales.

On the contrary, I personally interviewed several people who purchased these items, believed they had experienced profound spiritual benefits, and later joined the church. Because the media rarely reported their experiences, the public received only one side of the story.



The artifacts at the center of the so-called "spiritual sales" controversy.

Moreover, the company responsible for importing and selling marble vases and pagodas stopped doing so in March 1987. Reports of new victims steadily declined, and by the time of Prime Minister Abe's assassination, the practices commonly described as "spiritual sales" had virtually disappeared.

Nevertheless, the public continues to associate the Unification Church with those activities, and that image has remained deeply entrenched.

I believe, however, that NNLASS had a broader objective. According to my research, it also sought to block the enactment of Japan's proposed Anti-Espionage Law. In 1987, organizations affiliated with the Unification Church were actively campaigning nationwide in support of that legislation. The Communist Party, media labor unions, teachers' unions, and other left-wing organizations strongly opposed it. NNLASS, which included many lawyers affiliated with the Communist Party, also opposed the bill.

One of its leading figures at the time, attorney Hiroshi Yamaguchi, reportedly stated: "The money the Unification Church earns through spiritual sales is being used to finance its affiliated organizations' campaign for an anti-espionage law. Therefore, those spiritual sales must be stopped."

Another lawyer reportedly declared: "The Unification Church and its affiliated organizations must be shut down. They are Japan's largest right-wing movement. To achieve that goal, we must cut off their financial resources and find ways to expose them through the media."

In other words, I believe this was not merely a legal dispute over consumer protection. It also reflected a broader political and ideological struggle, in which the political left sought to weaken conservative forces, while atheistic communist groups opposed religious movements that promoted theism.

As early as 1987, Hiroshi Yamaguchi also stated that he wanted to "expose the Mistake of Education. There were people who were deceived

persuade the ministry of Education, then responsible for supervising religious corporations, to revoke the church's legal status. From its very beginning, therefore,>NNLASS appears to have pursued the long-term objective of dismantling the organization.

Evidence of this is that>NNLASS did not limit its criticism to commercial activities. It also argued that religious donations themselves should be regarded as another form of "spiritual sales," and for decades it has challenged the church on that basis.

In my view, much of Japan's traditional media, which has generally accepted>NNLASS's perspective, has failed to examine these broader political objectives and continues to portray the organization simply as a defender of victims.

As I mentioned earlier, by the time Tetsuya Yamagami attacked former Prime Minister Abe, the Unification Church had largely faded from public attention. Lawsuits had declined dramatically, and the organization was no longer a major public issue. Yet as soon as Yamagami cited large donations to the church as his motive, old accusations resurfaced almost overnight, and criticism spread rapidly throughout Japanese society.

The dominant public narrative portrayed the Unification Church as a fraudulent organization that used religion as a cover to extract large sums of money from its followers. Its members were depicted as victims of mind control, incapable of making independent decisions. Second-generation believers were widely portrayed as victims of religious abuse by their parents.

The church's Korean origins were emphasized, and it was frequently described as anti-Japanese. In some media coverage, it was even compared to Aum Shinrikyo and portrayed as an anti-social organization.

This tragedy also produced a disturbing reversal of the roles of victim and perpetrator. Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who was assassinated, was one of Japan's longest-serving leaders and a statesman who will likely be remembered as one of the country's most influential political figures. The public widely respected him.

However, as the leading figure in Japan's conservative movement, he had promoted policies, such as national security legislation, that were deeply opposed by segments of the political left. As a result, some on the left made little effort to conceal their satisfaction after his assassination.



Shinzo Abe (1954–2022). [Credits](#).

In the public debate that followed, Tetsuya Yamagami was, in some respects, portrayed as a victim of the Unification Church, which had long been depicted as a dangerous religious organization. At the same time, former Prime Minister Abe, because of his alleged ties to the church,

came to be portrayed by some as himself bearing responsibility.

As I mentioned earlier, the Unification Church is a conservative religious movement with a strong anti-communist orientation. Because its values overlapped with those of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), it occasionally provided electoral support to LDP candidates, and many LDP politicians had some degree of contact with the organization.

In fact, however, former Prime Minister Abe's relationship with the church was relatively limited compared with that of many other politicians. It is understandable that Yamagami, who has said that his mother donated approximately 100 million yen to the church, went bankrupt, and destroyed their family, would have developed deep resentment toward the organization.

What many Japanese found difficult to understand, however, was the enormous leap in logic that led him to direct that anger toward former Prime Minister Abe. Nevertheless, the media persistently linked Abe to the Unification Church and subjected him to sustained criticism.

Soon, any politician from the Liberal Democratic Party who had even the slightest connection with the church came under intense public attack.

The political consequences were profound. Facing mounting pressure, then-Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced that the government would sever all ties with the Unification Church. At the same time, the government adopted a new interpretation of the Religious Corporations Act, allowing civil tort liability, and not only criminal wrongdoing, to serve as grounds for seeking the dissolution of a religious corporation.

The Religious Corporations Council subsequently reached a one-sided conclusion, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), which supervises religious corporations, filed a petition seeking the church's dissolution. From that point onward, the question passed to the courts.

In my view, however, the outcome appeared predetermined from the outset, and the judgments of both the trial and appellate courts merely confirmed that conclusion.

I further contend that MEXT, lacking sufficient evidence to justify dissolution, altered or selectively presented statements made by former members in support of its case. If true, this would represent a grave abuse of state power.

From my perspective, the destruction of the Unification Church became an objective of the state itself. That is why I describe this process as a case of state fabrication and religious persecution. The title of my book, "Sacrifice to the Nation," refers precisely to the Unification Church and its members.

On June 22, the Supreme Court of Japan dismissed the church's special appeal, making the dissolution order final. The Court's decision consisted of only four pages. It simply affirmed the rulings of the lower courts without addressing fundamental constitutional questions.

It did not examine whether stripping the church of its legal status would infringe upon the religious freedom of its members, whether a court may evaluate religious doctrine without violating the principle of the separation of religion and state, or whether it was appropriate to conduct key proceedings behind closed doors under Japan's non-contentious procedure.

In my opinion, the decision was profoundly unjust.

Anti-Cult, Japan, Religious Liberty, Unification Church



Masumi Fukuda

Masumi Fukuda was born in Yokohama in 1956. She graduated from the Department of Sociology of Rikkyo University. After working for a specialty magazine and a magazine production company, she became a freelance journalist. She has reported and written about crime, Russia, and other topics. Her books include "Stalin: A Portrait of His Family" (Bungei Shunju), "Russia, an Assassination State: In Search of a Missing Journalist" (Shinchosha), "The True Nature of Political Correctness" (Hojosha), and others. In 2007, she won the 6th Shincho Documentary Award for "Fabrication: The Truth About the 'Murder Teacher' in Fukuoka" (Shinchosha).



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After the Unification Church’s Dissolution in Japan. 3. Forced Conversions

by Masumi Fukuda | Jul 15, 2026 | [Testimonies Global](#)

A journalist describes years of abductions, confinement, coerced renunciations, and litigation that shaped public hostility toward the Unification Church.

by Masumi Fukuda*

*Address delivered at a press conference on the theme “Japan: The Hidden Story Behind the Eradication of a Religion,” organized by Human Rights Without Frontiers at the Brussels Press Club in Brussels, Belgium, June 29, 2026.

Article 3 of 3. Read [article 1](#) and [article 2](#).



The author at the Brussels press conference with Willy Fautré, co-founder and director of Human Rights Without Frontiers, introducing her book “Sacrifice to the Nation.” Photo by FOREF.

Allow me now to tell you a little about myself. Like many Japanese people, I have never had much interest in religion, and I did not have a particularly favorable opinion of new religious movements. Yet immediately after the assassination of former Prime Minister Abe, while criticism of the Unification Church dominated the media, I decided to begin investigating the organization myself.

Why? About a year before the assassination, I had interviewed a member of the Unification Church for an entirely unrelated news story. Religion was not the subject of our interview. He happened to be an expert in another field, answered every question accurately, and impressed me above all by his kindness, sincerity, and warmth. Although the church had long been viewed negatively in Japanese society, I remember thinking to myself, “People like him exist as well.”

After the assassination, the image of this thoughtful and compassionate individual was completely at odds with the public portrayal of the church as an evil organization exploiting Japan. I found this contradiction deeply unsettling. After considerable hesitation, I sent him a brief email of encouragement. I wrote something to the effect of: “This has become a witch hunt. It is a form of religious persecution. Please stay strong.”

He replied almost immediately. His response revealed the depth of his despair: “Your message brought me to tears. Right now, even my right to exist feels as though it is being denied. If I were the only one suffering, I could endure it. But I have a daughter, and when I think about what this may do to her... I was deeply shaken. Why should anyone have to endure such treatment simply because of their religious affiliation? And why was a relatively small religious movement, with only sixty to seventy thousand active members, becoming the target of such overwhelming hostility from an entire society? Those questions became the starting point of my investigation.

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Throughout my career, I have tried to uncover truths that are overlooked or suppressed amid overwhelming media narratives and public opinion. One of the experiences that shaped this approach was my reporting in Russia. Around 2008, I spent considerable time at the independent Moscow newspaper “Novaya Gazeta,” interviewing its editor-in-chief, Dmitry Muratov, and many of its journalists. Based on that research, I wrote the book “Assassination State Russia: In Search of the Silenced Journalists.”

Under Vladimir Putin’s government, journalists who exposed truths inconvenient to those in power were systematically targeted and murdered. Novaya Gazeta,” with little more than one hundred employees, suffered more than perhaps any other newspaper. Since its founding in 1993, five of its journalists and one legal adviser have been killed through shootings, poisoning, or brutal assaults. Yet I met reporters who continued their work despite these dangers, refusing to surrender their pens. In 2021, Dmitry Muratov was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.



Dmitry Muratov. Photo by Olaf Kosinsky. [Credits](#).

As my investigation continued, I discovered numerous aspects of the Unification Church that had received little or no attention in the mainstream media. What concerned me most were the unanswered questions surrounding religious freedom, human rights, and the role of journalism itself.

The most shocking discovery was that, between 1966 and 2014, more than 4,300 members of the Unification Church were reportedly abducted and confined, often in private apartments or psychiatric institutions, in attempts to force them to renounce their faith. One individual remained confined for twelve years and five months. Remarkably, this serious human rights issue has received very little coverage in Japan’s major media.

The accounts of many victims are deeply disturbing. They were told that they would not be released until they abandoned their faith. Some escaped by jumping from third-floor windows, suffering severe spinal fractures. Others leaped from the sixth floor. Although they survived, they were left with permanent brain injuries and memory loss. Some, driven to despair, drank soy sauce or household detergent in desperate attempts to gain their release. Some took their own lives. Some young women reported being sexually assaulted by those holding them captive. Ultimately, an estimated 60 to 70 percent of those subjected to these abductions and prolonged confinements abandoned their religious beliefs under pressure.

Even after leaving the church, many continued to suffer from long-term psychological trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder.

Who, then, is responsible for these abductions and confinements? In most cases, they are carried out by the believers’ own relatives. According to my research, these family members are influenced by dangerous

to my research, these family members are influenced by deprogrammers who specialize in forcing people to renounce their faith, as well as by Christian pastors who denounce the Unification Church as heretical. Parents are told things such as “If your son or daughter remains in the Unification Church, they will become a criminal.” Convinced that they are acting in their child’s best interests, they are persuaded to abduct and confine their own family member.

This arrangement allows the deprogrammers and pastors to avoid direct involvement in the confinement itself. The police generally do not intervene, treating these cases as private family matters and therefore outside the scope of criminal intervention.

Once the believer has been confined, the deprogrammers and pastors repeatedly visit the apartment or house where the individual is being held. They attack the church’s teachings, denounce its founder, subject the believer to relentless verbal abuse, and in some cases resort to physical violence. Their objective is to break the person’s resolve and compel them to abandon the faith.

I regard this system of abduction and confinement as one of the gravest human rights violations in post-war Japan. What is even more disturbing, however, is that it evolved into a systematic and self-perpetuating enterprise.

When a believer finally declares that they have left the Unification Church, the deprogrammers reportedly require a series of “tests” to prove that the renunciation is genuine. These may include submitting a formal resignation letter to church headquarters, writing a lengthy statement resembling a confession or apology, drinking alcohol, which church members are prohibited from doing, and even visiting other confined believers in an effort to persuade them to abandon their faith.

Ultimately, many are instructed to file lawsuits against the Unification Church. If they refuse, their sincerity is called into question, leaving them with little practical choice but to comply. In these lawsuits, they may claim that they were subjected to mind control, manipulated into joining the church, pressured into purchasing religious items, or induced to make large donations.

In my view, this process transforms victims of abduction and confinement into individuals presented as victims of the Unification Church itself. These lawsuits, taken together, reinforce the public perception that the church has caused widespread harm, further damaged its reputation, and imposed substantial financial burdens through repeated litigation. I believe this is one reason the church has faced so many civil lawsuits brought by former members.

Meanwhile, according to my research, the deprogrammers and Christian pastors receive substantial payments from family members when the deconversion is considered successful. In effect, forced deconversion becomes a business. At the same time, pastors may gain new members for their own congregations by attracting former Unification Church believers whose faith has been broken. In this way, the system creates multiple incentives for those involved.

Nearly all lawsuits brought against the Unification Church have been handled by lawyers associated with the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS), as I mentioned earlier.

Interestingly, in a civil case brought by a church member who had been confined for twelve years and five months, an attorney who had previously belonged to NNLASS submitted a written statement criticizing the organization itself. The lawsuit was directed not only against the relatives who carried out the confinement but also against the deprogrammers who allegedly orchestrated it and the Christian pastor involved.

According to that statement, lawyers affiliated with NNLASS were well aware that deprogrammers were carrying out abductions and prolonged confinements, yet they tacitly accepted these practices. It also suggested that many lawyers came to regard such cases as financially rewarding because, in their view, courts were more likely to rule against organizations labeled as “cults.”





Attorney Masaki Kito, a prominent member of the NNLASS.

One attorney reportedly observed that courts were willing to accept legal arguments against a group labeled a “cult” that would not ordinarily succeed in other civil cases. He suggested that there was an unwritten assumption within the judiciary that, if one represented a group labeled a “cult,” defeat was almost inevitable. If these assertions are correct, they raise profoundly troubling questions about the impartial administration of justice.

I myself am currently being sued for defamation by one of the NNLASS lawyers. The lawsuit alleges that an article I published in a monthly magazine contains false statements. I strongly dispute those allegations. I possess extensive documentary evidence to support my reporting, and I am presenting it before the court.

The lawsuit was filed shortly after the publication of my book, and I cannot help wondering whether its purpose was, at least in part, to discourage or obstruct its publication.

The consequences of forced deconversion extend even further. Many former members who renounce their faith under these circumstances emerge profoundly embittered toward the church. Some later appear in the media or testify in court, making allegations that further damage the church’s public image.

Whether accurate or not, these accounts reinforce negative public perceptions, prompting other worried families to seek out deprogrammers. Those families may then abduct and confine their own children, perpetuating the cycle. In my view, this creates an endless cycle of abduction, confinement, deconversion, and litigation.

I also believe there is a direct connection between this history of forced deconversion and the eventual dissolution order. According to my research, more than half of the plaintiffs in the civil cases cited as evidence against the church had themselves previously been abducted and confined. Their testimony formed part of the evidentiary record in many of those proceedings. I believe those testimonies played a significant role in the decisions that ultimately led to the church’s dissolution.

I realize that this may sound extraordinarily complex to those hearing it for the first time. Yet, after years of investigation, I have concluded that government agencies, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, elements of the judiciary, the police, and certain lawyers’ organizations collectively created conditions that led to the dissolution of the Unification Church. Alongside this process, the alleged forced deconversion of more than 4,300 believers represents, in my opinion, a grave human rights issue. I am generally skeptical of simplistic conspiracy theories. Nevertheless, based on my research, I believe this case reflects a coordinated effort by state institutions that cannot be understood simply as a series of isolated events.

Some may argue that this situation is minor when compared with religious persecution in countries such as China or Russia. Indeed, religious leaders and believers have not been imprisoned or executed. Yet I believe the situation is serious precisely because it has occurred in a highly developed democratic nation that claims to uphold freedom, the rule of law, and freedom of religion. In my view, the state’s failure to address widespread alleged human rights violations, together with the

seizure or places of worship through dissolution proceedings, represents a subtle but deeply troubling form of religious persecution.

The courts have argued that dissolution merely removes the legal status and tax privileges of a religious corporation and therefore does not interfere with religious freedom. In my opinion, however, that reasoning is little more than a legal fiction. A religious community deprived of its legal existence inevitably loses much of its ability to function, organize, and practice its faith collectively.

To all of you in Europe who value freedom, democracy, and religious liberty, I ask you to take an interest in what I believe is a case of religious persecution unfolding in a democratic country in the Far East. I also ask you to lend your support to those believers who believe their fundamental rights have been violated.

Anti-Cult, Japan, Religious Liberty, Unification Church



Masumi Fukuda

Masumi Fukuda was born in Yokohama in 1956. She graduated from the Department of Sociology of Rikkyo University. After working for a specialty magazine and a magazine production company, she became a freelance journalist. She has reported and written about crime, Russia, and other topics. Her books include “Stalin: A Portrait of His Family” (Bungei Shunju), “Russia, an Assassination State: In Search of a Missing Journalist” (Shinchosha), “The True Nature of Political Correctness” (Hojosha), and others. In 2007, she won the 6th Shincho Documentary Award for “Fabrication: The Truth About the ‘Murder Teacher’ in Fukuoka” (Shinchosha).



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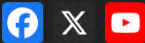
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