

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Former EU Envoy on Japan's Arbitrary Dissolution Order

Knut Holdhus
September 2, 2025



Jan Figel was born in 1960 in the former Czechoslovakia. From 2004 to 2009 he served on the European Commission, later becoming leader of the Christian Democratic Movement in Slovakia from 2009 to 2016, and Deputy Prime Minister from 2010 to 2012. In 2016, he was appointed the first EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion outside the EU. He currently serves as president of Forum for Religious Freedom Europe (FOREF).



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Tokyo District Court's Ruling on Family Federation is arbitrary, unconstitutional, and politically driven, says former EU Religious Freedom Envoy Jan Figel

Tokyo, 2nd September 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

[Part 1 of interview with Jan Figel, Former EU Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion]

Decision to Dissolve the Family Federation Called "Arbitrary"

Warning Against Ignoring UN Recommendations

by Yosuke Yamazaki (山崎 洋介)



Also denouncing the [dissolution order](#) issued by Tokyo District Court: a young member of the [Family Federation](#) at a rally outside the court July 30, 2025

In March, the Tokyo District Court [ordered the dissolution](#) of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (commonly known as the [Family Federation](#), formerly the [Unification Church](#)), citing civil law violations. The [organization](#) immediately [filed an appeal](#), and the case is now under review at the Tokyo High Court. Jan Figel, Former Slovak Deputy Prime Minister and former EU Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion, recently gave an interview to [this paper](#), discussing the problems with the decision and the significance of religious freedom.

Interview by: Yosuke Yamazaki (山崎 洋介), the Washington office of the [Sekai Nippo](#)

- On 25th March, the Tokyo District Court issued a dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#). What are your thoughts on this decision?



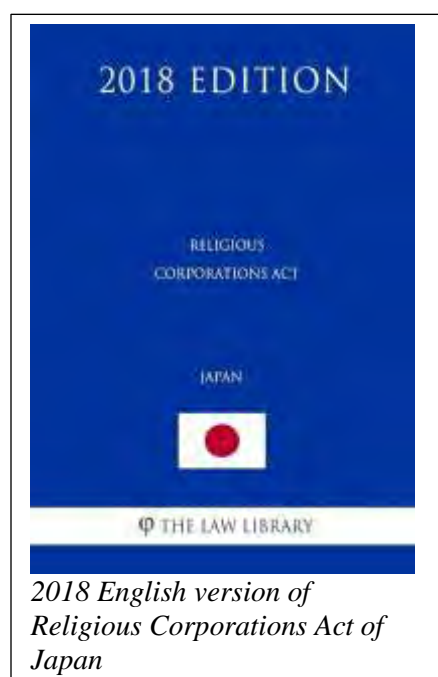
I have serious concerns. This [dissolution order](#) lacks constitutional legal grounds and clearly violates the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), to which Japan is a signatory.

Such measures can pose a threat to minority religions and faith communities. When one minority group is treated unfairly, others are endangered as well.

The [decision](#) against the [Family Federation](#) is based on false evidence and accusations, lacking substantive grounds. It was motivated not by law, but by political considerations.

- What do you see as particularly problematic about this decision?

The Tokyo District Court's [ruling](#) is arbitrary, clearly unconstitutional, and unlawful. It lacks due process in several respects. First, the hearings were held behind closed doors.



Furthermore, Article 81 of the Religious Corporations Act allows the government to request dissolution only if a religious corporation has committed acts that "violate laws and regulations and are clearly deemed to harm the public welfare to a serious extent." The court broadened this interpretation to include 32 civil tort cases involving former members over a span of 40 years. The Ministry of Education (MEXT) suddenly reinterpreted the law to justify the dissolution request, regarding it as a serious infringement on public welfare.

The court judged that the [Family Federation](#)'s missionary work and solicitation of donations violated "social appropriateness and social norms," but these concepts are so vague that they invite arbitrary administrative and judicial application.

The UN Human Rights Committee has advised Japan to stop using "public welfare" as a justification for restricting religious freedom. Article 18 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) does not recognize such restrictions. In fact, according to the Committee, states have an obligation to protect minority religions that may be targeted by hostility from dominant religious

groups.



Yet Japan has ignored this and even tolerated coercive faith-breaking carried out by Protestant pastors. It has been revealed that many plaintiffs against the [Family Federation](#) were subjected to deprogramming (coercive faith-breaking) [See editor's note below] and [confinement](#).

The Tokyo District Court also adopted the unscientific "mind control theory" and based its judgment on hypothetical potential victims. This demonstrates arbitrary and biased decision-making. Legitimate court rulings must not be swayed by political pressure or media campaigns. The future of Japanese democracy depends on transparent and accountable application of the rule of law, respect for human dignity, and equal justice for all.

- You have pointed out that the movement to dissolve the [Family Federation](#) originates in actions by the Japanese Communist Party about 50 years ago.

At the root of the conflict between the Japanese Communist Party and the [Family Federation](#) lies Marxist atheism. This ideology often turns into a radical movement that seeks to exclude belief in [God](#) and ban religion altogether. Religion liberates believers from worship of secular values and authoritarian state power, enabling believers to live independently, which is why authoritarian systems oppose it.

I spent half my life under the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. My uncle was killed by the regime's secret police. The system sought to suppress all religions, both traditional and new, through various coercive means. But ultimately it was defeated, collapsing peacefully in 1989. In Slovakia, the main driving force behind the opposition and freedom movement was dissident Christians and the Catholic

Church.



Declared the 'final war' against the [Unification Church](#): Kazuo Shii, chairman of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 2000-2024, here March 30, 2023

[Editor's note: 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.



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

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.]

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Lawfare: State Uses Legal System In War On Faith

- April 16, 2025
- Knut Holdhus



Courtroom contradictions and retroactive laws: How Japan is waging lawfare and rewriting laws to dissolve large religious minority organization"

Leftist Lawyers Lie and Shame Japan II

Part 2 (final part) of analysis by Dr. Robert Kittel, Senior Advisor for the Asia Pacific Region of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, April 2025

See [part 1](#)



Three days after the court



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Masaki Kito, 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 Damage Countermeasures Legal Team (全国統一教会被害対策弁護団). Photo: Screenshot / Bitter Winter

decision, the lawyers **Dr. Robert Kittel**. Photo: [Editor's note: from FFWPU] NNLASS, a network campaigning against the Unification Church / Family Federation] held a press conference on March 28, 2025 and praised the judgment. The first lawyer to speak was Masaki Kito, who played a game of smoke and mirrors. He cited the Religious Corporation Act in Japan and said the dissolution order simply removes the church's religious corporation status and tax exemption. He emphasized the point saying,

"That is not the death penalty for the religious group, after the deprivation of religious corporation

status. The insistence of the Unification Church about this point is a fabrication or exaggeration."

However, the ruling from the Tokyo District Court said specifically,

"when a dissolution order for a religious corporation becomes final and binding, liquidation procedures are carried out." [emphasis added]

Trying to square himself with the court ruling, Kito nonchalantly contradicted himself and added, "[...] the dissolution order is not confiscation of assets, but simply a liquidation procedure." If the dissolution only removes the legal status of the church, then why should its assets be liquidated? Removing religious status is done with a piece of paper from the court. Liquidators liquidate. These are not the same. In fact, NNLASS has even asked the court to expedite the liquidation process.

The lawyers are trying to downplay the draconian insolvency that will be imposed on the innocent church. Why? It is so blatantly obvious that even a layman would ask,

"Why should the church that has no criminal record be dissolved?"

This question should pop into the mind of any casual Japanese observer since it is widely known that only two religious organizations in Japan have ever been dissolved. Both were based on criminal – not civil – convictions.

It took a 180-degree flip-flop to reinterpret Japanese laws to use civil misdemeanors to dissolve the church. This turnaround happened at night behind closed doors, was conducted in less than 24 hours, never subjected to legislative or judicial review, and applied retroactively – all with the sole purpose of dissolving the Unification Church. This is unprecedented in Japan and other developed democracies.



Made a 180-degree flip-flop, changing the law overnight: Former Prime Minister **Fumio Kishida**. Here, at press conference 14th August 2024. Photo: 首相官邸 (PMO) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int. Cropped



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Worse still, in 1978 Japan voluntarily signed the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 18.3 allows legislative restriction on religious freedom "only" based on "prescribed laws" that "protect public safety, order, health, or morals [...] of others." Public safety, by definition, includes:

crime prevention, fire safety, emergency medical services, and disaster preparedness. The church, in its six decades of existence, has never impinged on any of these vital "public safety" responsibilities.

More to the point, the "prescribed law" in the UN Covenant would expressly preclude any new interpretations of legal norms not backed by established precedence, especially those imposed unilaterally and retroactively. To dissolve the church, Japanese courts needed to go beyond "prescribed law." New interpretations of the law targeted only

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one religious group – the [Unification Church](#).

This



Courts used for lawfare? Here, sign outside Tokyo District Court. Photo: Screenshot from [FFWPU](#) video.

aberration of justice is the difference between prosecution and persecution. These days it is called lawfare and has been pointedly prohibited by the UN International Covenant signed by Japan. To dissolve the [church](#), domestic laws are being unilaterally reinterpreted and given precedence over a signed international treaty, thereby putting Japan in a precarious position where it betrays its international obligations. This exonerating evidence was entirely ignored in the Japanese court's [judgment of March 25](#).

The Japanese Constitution was written in the post-World-War-II era and remains the oldest unamended constitution in the world. The Preamble reads,

"We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want."

Does that include the 600,000 members of the [Unification Church](#) who have been publicly ostracized?

The 1946 document goes on to say,

"We believe that no nation is responsible to itself alone, but that laws of political morality are universal; and that obedience to such laws is incumbent upon all nations who would sustain their own sovereignty and justify their sovereign relationship with other nations. We, the Japanese people, pledge our national honor to accomplish these high ideals and purposes with all our resources."

Japanese courts need to be reminded of their country's unaltered and time-honored tradition.

Willing to tarnish Japan's image in front of international audiences to achieve their communist agenda, Kito closed his comments at the March 28 press conference saying, "In this sense [...] a small number of overseas intellectuals are defending the [Unification Church](#) without knowing about Japan." Here he is referring directly to the office of the President of the *United States of America* and his representative.

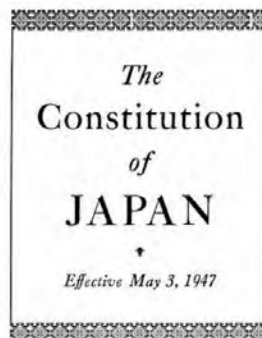


Image from a US Department of State publication, Publication 2836, Far Eastern Series 22, page 3. The Constitution of Japan was promulgated on 3rd November 1946 and became effective on 3rd May 1947. It had received the approval of the Japanese Diet and is the basis of a new era in Japanese government. Since Japan's surrender to the Allied powers in September 1945, the "Meiji" Constitution of 1889 was thus successfully revised. [Public domain image](#).



Rev. **Paula White**, here 11th June 2021 in Grapevine, Texas. Photo: Gage Skidmore. License: [CC ASA 2.0 Gen](#). Cropped

Rev. Paula White, the current Director of the White House *Faith Office* under President Donald Trump, released a video in December 2024 that shocked Japan. She connected the dots, emphasizing that Trump's strong stance for religious freedom was a bedrock for democratic nations. She said in her [taped message](#),

"Religious freedom is the foundation for all other freedoms. Japan is the United States' great ally who we have

the greatest appreciation for. However, concern has now been raised by prominent leaders around the world that believe Japan is not upholding its religious freedom commitment as a signer of the *UN Human Rights Declaration*."

The video was prepared for a [lecture event](#), titled "The Crisis of

Religious Freedom and Democracy in Japan," held in Tokyo and organized by the Japanese Committee of the *International Religious Freedom Alliance*.

Kito and his network of 350 liberal lawyers (a figure pompously promoted in the press conference) are calling the office of the President of the *United States of America* insignificant and irrelevant (i.e., "a small number of overseas intellectuals"). In the same breath, Kito said President Trump and his team are either uninformed or ignorant, or both (since they act "without knowing about Japan.") This attitude is un-Japanese and arrogant.

Left-wing lawyers are blinded by political revenge. Ostensibly, without any thought or consideration, they willingly dishonor Japan on the global stage. The lawyers' harm to "public welfare" (the legal term used to justify the [dissolution order](#) circumventing criminal conviction) is far worse than the [church's](#) misconduct of collecting [large donations](#) from faithful followers which is litigated in civil court, when needed. More importantly, the [church](#) has instituted successful, self-imposed reforms from within and not a single civil case has been filed in the last seven years.



Karl Marx (right) and Fredrick Engels would have been proud of Japanese activist lawyers. Here, handcolored portraits of them, Marx from 1872, Engels 1877. Photo: Aristoteles / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int](#)

The harm to "public welfare" by the cadre of communist cronies is established and lengthy. They have: orchestrated the kidnapping, confinement, coercion, and deprogramming of [4,300 Japanese adults](#); pitted parents against their own adult children; [extorted vast sums of money](#) from parents and relatives; choreographed a seemingly endless

stream of litigation to milk the system for funds needed to continue their charade; divided families which may take generations to heal (if ever); and undermined journalistic integrity and judicial independence. **NNLASS are anti-Japanese activists promoting a communist agenda, masquerading as "lawyers"**. They shame Japan's pristine image.

In broad daylight, a leftist coup is being perpetrated in Japan. Two shots were fired, and one man was killed. This case is drawing international attention, and Japan is on the brink. If the leftists achieve their goal, this will be the most successful communist takeover in human history. Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels would be proud.

Slightly edited for publication purposes.

See [part 1](#)

[Dr. Robert Kittel](#) earned his Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) from the University of Bridgeport, Connecticut in 2004, specializing in family-value-based character education. He also holds a Master of Divinity degree from the Unification Theological Seminary, New York. Throughout his career, Dr. Kittel has been dedicated to promoting traditional family values, interfaith harmony, and youth education through his leadership roles in various organizations affiliated with the Unification Movement.

Featured image above: Japanese state waging lawfare against religious minority. Illustration: Grok xAI, April 2025

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