

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Writers, Clergy Urge Rethink of Media Narrative

Knut Holdhus
September 3, 2025



Followers of the Family Federation protesting the lack of neutrality in government and media reporting August 31, 2025, Kita Ward, Osaka City, Japan



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Protests and symposia held across Japan to defend religious freedom urging media to listen to current members and rethink the biased portrayal by hostile lawyers and journalists

Tokyo, 1st September 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Family Federation Nationwide Action Against Dissolution Request

White House Faith Advisor Offers Encouragement

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

See also [Former EU Envoy: Arbitrary Dissolution Order](#)



The symposium August 30, 2025 at the Hamamatsu Family Church, Chūō Ward, Hamamatsu City, Japan

Followers of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) ([Family Federation](#), formerly the [Unification Church](#)), who oppose the government's request for a [dissolution order](#) against the [religious organization](#), carried out nationwide actions on 30th and 31st August. These included protest marches, street speeches, and signature-collecting campaigns.

In Osaka City on 31st August, about 600 members marched through the city center for 40 minutes, calling

for the protection of freedom of religion and fundamental human rights. Participants appealed to passersby, shouting,



Fumihiro Katō - second from left) and Chief Priest Shindo Mizuta - third from left) speaking on stage August 30, 2025, Hamamatsu Family Church, Chūō Ward, Hamamatsu City, Japan



Masaki Kubota

"The voices of current members are not reflected at all in the media reports."

At a rally held prior to the march, freelance writer Masaki Kubota (窪田順生) noted a shift in the media's stance toward the [Family Federation](#) compared to two years ago, when coverage was entirely critical. He revealed that multiple media professionals had begun questioning whether the claims made by opposition lawyers and journalists were always correct. He stressed that "showing your humanity is the most important thing for your group" and emphasized the need to project a positive image to society.

In Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, on 30th August, a symposium on freedom of religion and human rights was held with about 108 attendees.



Masumi Fukuda speaking in Saitama August 31 2025

Writer Fumihiro Katō (加藤文宏) analyzed that most Japanese people are indifferent to religious freedom, regard the [religious organization](#) as "something incomprehensible", and subject its members to insults and abuse. He argued that "a problem that doesn't exist has been turned into a social issue." Kato compared the stigma (discrimination and prejudice) against the [Family Federation](#) to the situation faced by Fukushima residents after the nuclear accident during the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. He advised that the way to counter such reputational damage is "to continue communicating objective facts and evidence to society and increase the number of allies."

Reverend Shindo Mizuta (水田真道), chief priest of Kongōji Temple (Myōshinji branch of the Rinzai sect of Buddhism, Numazu City), explained:

"The essence of Buddhism is that suffering will lessen if you carefully unravel attachments ('clouds')."

He appealed that removing such clouds is the only way to change unjust currents.

On 31st August, a lecture was also held in Saitama City, drawing about 180 attendees.

Nonfiction writer Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ), author of Fabrication (Shinchosha), which was adapted into a film, took the stage. She pointed out the large gap between the [religious organization](#)'s actual circumstances and its public image, saying,



Paula White

"There is often a mismatch between media reports and what's happening on the ground."

Regarding the [dissolution order](#), she remarked,

"The [verdict](#) that was handed down was made based on emotional reasoning, and the judiciary lacked logic."

In Tokyo, also on 31st August, the [Family Federation](#)'s headquarters in Shōtō, Shibuya Ward, hosted an online "10,000-Person Worship Service" connecting churches nationwide. Pastor Paula White, senior advisor to the White House Faith Office, delivered an encouraging video message, stating:

"If 10,000 young believers rise up as peacemakers, you will change Japan and the nations of the world."

She expressed her hope for the realization of world peace through religion.

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Former EU Envoy: Arbitrary Dissolution Order

- September 2, 2025
- Knut Holdhus



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



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

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"

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Warning Against Ignoring UN Recommendations

by Yosuke Yamazaki (山崎 洋介)

See part 2 of interview: [Alarm over Japan's Treatment of Minority Faiths](#)

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



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

violations. The organization immediately filed an appeal, and the case is now under review at the Tokyo High Court. Ján 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?



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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.



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

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



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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.



Declared the 'final war' against the *Unification Church*: Kazuo Shii, chairman of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 2000-2024, here 30th March 2023. Photo:

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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.

See part 2 of interview: [Alarm over Japan's Treatment of Minority Faiths](#)

Featured image above: Ján 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). Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

[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.



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of *Soka Gakkai*. Here students belonging to the faith in 2001. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp.](#) Cropped

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.



From header of the webpage of the Human Rights Committee, a subpage on the site of the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

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.]

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