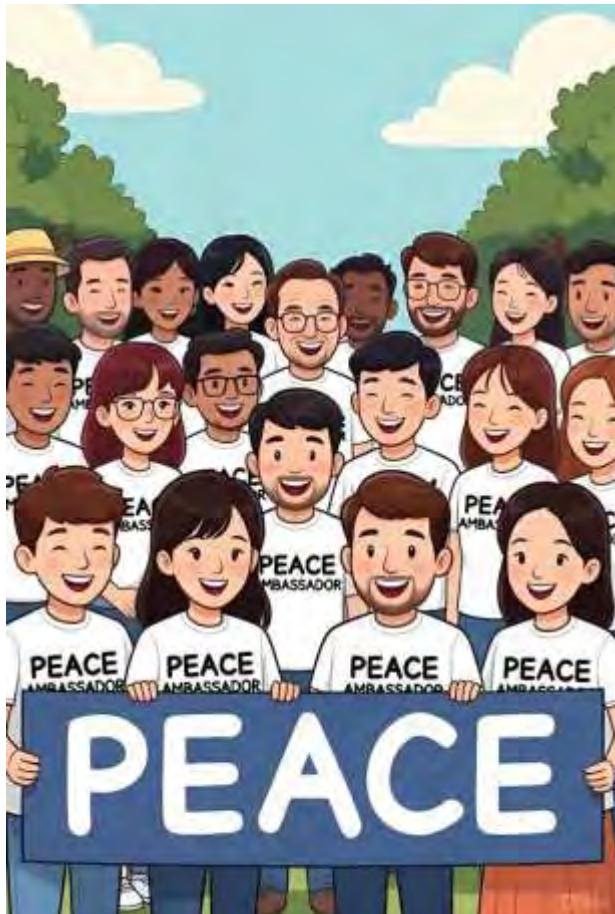


FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: UPF Peace Ambassador Program Is Civic, Not Political

Knut Holdhus
January 3, 2026



The peace ambassadors initiative. Illustration



*South Korean daily newspaper
JoongAng Ilbo*

In response to media allegations of political involvement, South Korean Peace Ambassador Council issues statement on political neutrality of its civic peace program

A statement in Korean issued by the [Family Federation](#) in South Korea to the Korean media on 2nd January 2026. Translated from the [text on the Korean language website](#) of the [Family Federation](#).

Rebuttal to the 2nd January 2026 JoongAng Ilbo Report: "Are Unification Church Peace Ambassadors Political Ambassadors? Some Even Served as General Election Campaign Headquarters Chiefs"



*Not getting involved in South Korean politics. Illustration
January 2026*

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With regard to the JoongAng Ilbo report dated 2nd January 2026, titled "Are Unification Church Peace Ambassadors Political Ambassadors? Some Even Served as General Election Campaign Headquarters Chiefs," the Peace Ambassadors Council hereby provides the following explanation of the facts and respectfully requests that members of the press refer to this statement when producing balanced and accurate coverage.

First, Peace Ambassadors are not positions for political activity or political intervention.

The Peace Ambassador program is not a system of "political ambassadors", but rather a symbolic role within a civic peace movement.

Peace Ambassadors are appointed as non-standing, unpaid, honorary positions from among regional opinion leaders who have practiced public service and social responsibility across various sectors, including politics, business, academia, the media, religion, and civil society. The purpose of the program is to form a network for a civic peace movement that promotes the values of peace, service, and sharing beyond nationality, ideology, and religion. Peace Ambassadors have served as partners in civic peace efforts by practicing a life of service within their local communities. Defining this role as a tool for political collusion or the pursuit of vested interests disparages decades of voluntary peace activities carried out within civil society.

Second, linking individual Peace Ambassadors' personal political activities to organizational political involvement is a distortion of the facts.

Even if an individual appointed as a Peace Ambassador participated in political activities or an election campaign in a personal capacity, such actions represent that individual's own judgment and conduct. There has been no instance in which the organization instructed, directed, or was systematically involved in such activities. The Peace Ambassadors Council clearly states that it has never, at the organizational level, supported, assisted, or intervened in favor of any specific political party, politician, or election.

Third, the Peace Ambassadors Council is a purely civilian peace NGO that has consistently adhered to the principle of political neutrality.

The Peace Ambassadors Council has carried out civic-level peace initiatives centered on public issues such as peace on the Korean Peninsula, international cooperation, environmental concerns, and family values. Instances in which political figures attended public events hosted by the Peace Ambassadors Council to deliver congratulatory remarks or participate in discussions fall within the normal scope of civil society activities in which private organizations provide forums for public discourse.



South Korean Politics: HQ of main opposition party, People Power Party (PPP), being raided by special prosecutors. Illustration

Fourth, reporting that links the Peace Ambassador program to political donations or illegal lobbying is deeply regrettable.

The Peace Ambassadors Council has never approved or condoned any organized activity that violates political fundraising laws. Claims that Peace Ambassadors were used as conduits for political donations seriously distort the organization's official structure and operating principles. We also express deep concern over the amplification and repetition of speculative reporting that is inconsistent with the facts.

The Peace Ambassadors Council will continue to firmly uphold the principles of political neutrality and transparency, grounded in the conscience of citizens and the trust of the international community, and will steadfastly fulfill its mission as a responsible civil society organization.

We further request that, in carrying out its essential role of public-interest criticism and oversight, the media adopt a more cautious and balanced approach when reporting on matters that generalize individual

cases or distort the essential character of an organization.



The peace ambassadors initiative. Illustration

2nd January 2026

**Peace Ambassadors Council
Universal Peace Federation (UPF)
External Relations Headquarters, External
Relations Headquarters, Korean Branch of
the Family Federation for World Peace and
Unification**

Korean Branch of the [Family Federation for
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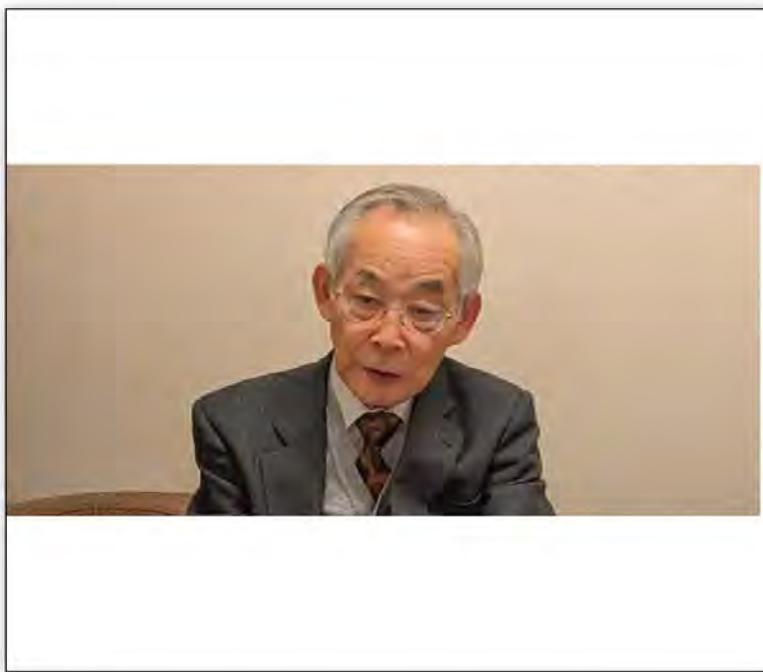
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Selective Justice: Special Law Against One Faith

- January 2, 2026
- Knut Holdhus



Unequal treatment under the law: Scholar points out the selective justice and legal flaws in Japan's liquidation guidelines



Logo of the
Sekai Nippo

Tokyo, 30th December 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

[Interview Feature] The Dark Side of the "Special Measures Law" Targeting the Family Federation (Part 2)

Legislation That Runs Counter to the Principles of the Rule of Law

Part 2 of interview with Seishiro Sugihara, former professor at Musashino Women's University and expert on issues of freedom of religion and constitutional law

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

See part 1 of the interview: [Expert: "Is Dissolution Framework Constitutional?"](#)

– What is your view on the purpose and intent of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's (MEXT) "Guidelines on the Liquidation of Designated Religious Corporations" (the "Guidelines"), which appear to have the



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In the section of the Guidelines titled "Responses Such as Compensation to Victims", it states:

"The liquidator shall respond sincerely to victims so that not a single victim is left behind, including victims who reported damages within the creditor claim period and those known to the liquidator, as well as victims who reported damages after the expiration of the creditor claim period..."

At first glance, this may appear reasonable. However, in effect, it demands an almost limitless commitment to victim relief exclusively in the case of the [Family Federation](#). This is neither fair nor equitable when compared with victims who may have suffered harm involving other religious corporations.

– The Guidelines also include language under "Measures to Encourage the Reporting of Harm," such as: "Inquiring of a certain range of counterparties identified from records substantiating donations held by the liquidating corporation as to whether they intend to report harm," and "Based on a comparison between those who donated disproportionately large sums and the number of reported victims, it can be objectively assumed that a considerable number of potential victims exist." These passages seem to presume that high-value donors are potential victims.

In principle, when money or property is donated to a religious corporation based on faith, the donor cannot later demand its return simply because they have lost that faith. The sole exception is when the religious corporation has committed an unlawful act – but even then, such unlawfulness must be legally established through an open judicial process.

For a liquidator to arbitrarily determine that a donation was "disproportionately large", or to define a "certain range" of individuals as victims based on the [organization's](#) donation records, is an outrageous act that ignores the very essence of freedom of religion.



A Japanese woman offering a donation at a meeting. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, 10th February 2025.

– What do you see as the root cause of these problems inherent in the Guidelines?

The root lies in the law enacted exactly two months after 13th October 2023, when the Minister of Education requested the *Tokyo District Court* to issue a dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#). That law is formally titled: "The Act on Special Provisions for the Operations of the Japan Legal Support Center to Facilitate the Prompt and Smooth Relief of Victims of Specific Illegal Acts, and Special Provisions on the Disposal and Management of Assets by Religious Corporations" (the "Special Measures Law").

This law was enacted to monitor the movement of the [Family Federation's](#) assets in the event that unlawful acts are established, and damages must be paid. To that extent, there was some rationale for its enactment. However, at its core, the [law privileges only victims associated with the Family Federation](#).

Moreover, Article 5 of the Supplementary Provisions states:

"This Act shall lose its effect on the day three years have elapsed from the date of its enforcement."

This means that, in practical terms, the law targets only the [Family Federation](#).

Under the principles of the rule of law, special legislation limited to a specific subject is permissible when it confers benefits upon that subject. However, legislation that imposes disadvantages on a specific target is not permitted. **A special law that singles out only one religious corporation for disadvantage must never be enacted under the banner of the rule of law, legal governance, or a law-based state.**

Accordingly, **this law must be abolished**. The fact that the *House of Representatives Legislative Bureau*, the *House of Councillors Legislative Bureau*, and the Diet itself allowed such legislation to be enacted is something that defies ordinary legal common sense.

– This law was introduced as a members' bill.

The bill was submitted by six lawmakers: three from the *Liberal Democratic Party*, two from *Komeito*, and one from the *Democratic Party for the People*. That members of Komeito were among the sponsors is nothing short of outrageous.



Logo of the Komeito Party. Author: WeaponizingArchitecture. [Public domain](#) image



If one were to look back far enough, Soka Gakkai [See editor's note 1 below] – the religious organization that forms the foundation of Komeito – would undoubtedly have its own share of scandals. There would also be countless individuals who could claim to have suffered harm in the past. How, then, can a political party backed by Soka Gakkai become a sponsor



The head office of Soka Gakkai (創価学会) at Shinanomachi, Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan. Photo (2006): Lombrosa / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#)

Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

[Editor's note 1: Soka Gakkai], a global lay Buddhist organization originating in Japan, aims to create an "ideal world" based on the principles of Nichiren Buddhism, which emphasizes individual empowerment, inner transformation, and societal harmony. Their vision is often framed as *kosen-rufu*, meaning the widespread propagation of Buddhist values to establish peace and happiness for all.

Soka Gakkai promotes peace, culture, and education through initiatives that focus on **personal transformation (human revolution)** –

the belief that changing oneself positively impacts society; **peace activism** – anti-nuclear campaigns, human rights advocacy, and interfaith dialogue; **education** – institutions like Soka University emphasize value creation and global citizenship; **community engagement** – social welfare programs, disaster relief, and environmental sustainability efforts.

To actualize these ideals in governance, Soka Gakkai founded the **Komeito** party in 1964 (now known as **New Komeito** or simply **Komeito**). The party's purpose was to translate Buddhist-based humanistic values into public policy. While legally separate from Soka Gakkai, Komeito has long been backed by members of Soka Gakkai and focuses on **peace-oriented diplomacy** (e.g., supporting Japan's pacifist constitution); **social welfare policies** (benefiting education, healthcare, and the elderly); **grassroots democracy** (reflecting the voice of ordinary citizens)

Since 1999, Komeito has been a coalition partner with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), influencing policies while maintaining a centrist stance.

Despite its contributions, Soka Gakkai's political role has been controversial, with critics accusing it of blurring the lines between religion and politics. Some also argue that Komeito's alliance with the conservative LDP compromises its original pacifist ideals.

Soka Gakkai envisions an ideal world through personal empowerment, education, and political engagement. While its approach is rooted in Buddhist ethics, its political involvement remains a complex and debated issue.]

[Editor's note 2: In Ryūnosuke Akutagawa's short story **"The Spider's Thread"** (*Kumo no Ito*), **Kandata** is the central human figure and a condemned sinner in Buddhist Hell.

Kandata is portrayed as a notorious criminal – a robber and murderer – who suffers torment in Hell for his many crimes. However, during his life he once performed a single act of compassion: he spared a spider instead of killing it. This small deed is remembered by the Buddha.

Moved by this lone good act, the Buddha lowers a spider's thread into Hell, giving Kandata an opportunity to climb out and attain salvation. Kandata begins to ascend successfully, but when he notices other sinners climbing up the same thread behind him, he becomes selfish and possessive, shouting for them to get off. At that moment, the thread snaps, and Kandata falls back into Hell.]

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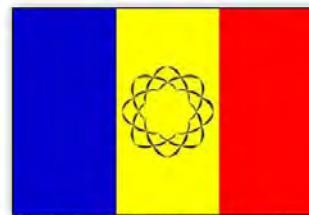
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of a law that, for a limited time, targets only other religious corporations?

If the intention is merely to save oneself while others are sacrificed, then this behavior is even more reprehensible than Kandata in Ryūnosuke Akutagawa's "The Spider's Thread." [See editor's note 2 below]

See [part 1](#) of the interview: **Expert: "Is Dissolution Framework Constitutional?"**

Featured image above: Seishiro Sugihara (杉原誠四郎), former professor at Musashino Women's University and expert on issues of freedom of religion and constitutional law.



The Soka Gakkai International flag. Photo: QueerMichael / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int](#)



The front cover page of a Japanese version of Ryūnosuke Akutagawa's "The Spider's Thread" (蜘蛛の糸) published in 1979.

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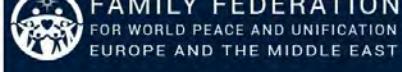
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