

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: No Freedom of Assembly in Japan for Family Fed

Knut Holdhus
March 10, 2026



The situation that awaits Family Federation members coming to worship in Japan. Illustration. Chat GPT



Liquidators lock churches after Japanese dissolution order raising freedom of assembly concerns as believers are left without places to gather

Tokyo, 8th March 2026 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

"Unable to Worship"

Second-Generation Family Federation Employee Couple Express Anxiety and Anger Over High Court Decision

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

The first Sunday since the Tokyo High Court [issued its decision](#) on 4th March to uphold the [dissolution order](#) against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) arrived on 8th March. Until now, believers and staff of the [organization](#) had gathered every Sunday at church facilities for worship and other activities.

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Although reports stated that "even if the [religious corporation](#) is dissolved, freedom of religion will be protected," a married couple who are second-generation staff members revealed their anxiety and anger at the reality that, after being ordered to remain at home following the [high court decision](#), their religious freedom is not being protected in practice.



No more access to hundreds of its own buildings: Here, the property housing the [Family Federation](#) in North Hamamatsu, a city on the South coast on the main island of Honshu, Japan

Within hours after the [dissolution order was decided](#), liquidators entered approximately 300 churches across the country, one after another, [rendering church facilities nationwide unusable](#). Notices were posted stating that "this facility and all assets within it are under the management of the undersigned liquidator." As a result, staff are no longer able to enter the facilities or conduct religious activities such as worship.



Frustrated young Japanese believer. Illustration: Grok xAI

A male staff member in his twenties, who continues to speak out as a second-generation member of the [Family Federation](#) under the X (formerly Twitter) account name "Gorijirō Ikeda" (ゴリ次郎いけだ), spoke of his mixed feelings of frustration and sadness, saying,

"The freedom of religion that should be protected by the Constitution is being violated."

Even though he wants to worship, there is no place where he can carry out activities, and he says that a colleague even had a personal laptop confiscated.

He also expressed growing concern about the [state of Japan's judiciary](#) and administration, saying that because there is little understanding of religion and there are moves to enact [new laws](#) specifically targeting the [Family Federation](#), "Japan is becoming closer to a totalitarian state." His child is expected to be born later this month, and he said that the current social climate, in which people are viewed harshly simply for being [Family Federation](#) believers, is painful to him:

"It hurts to think that my son, who is about to be born, might have to live [feeling marginalized](#)."

The man's wife (X account name "Onigirimalu" - おにぎりまる) is also a second-generation employee of the [Family Federation](#). The couple has appealed in street campaigns and elsewhere that the image created by media coverage differs from the reality of the [Family Federation](#). However, the [High Court decision](#) has now placed them in a situation where they could be dismissed at any time.

She spoke about the sadness of having fewer opportunities to meet fellow believers in person and, with childbirth approaching, voiced concerns about their financial future, wondering "how long our savings will last." Nevertheless, the couple said they are trying to stay positive: "We can't just keep being sad."

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"Politically Driven Dissolution At Any Cost"

March 9, 2026 • Knut Holdhus



Investigative journalist claims that authorities submitting fabricated evidence and court basing verdict on assumptions, not evidence, indicate that dissolution of large religious organization was politically orchestrated and had to be take place no matter what



Tokyo, 5th March 2026 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from

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Social Ostracism For Believers After Legal Loss

March 4, 2026



Logo of the
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Japanese. Original article.

“Unjust State-Driven Trial – Protect the Human Rights of Believers”

Opinion Piece by Well-Known Nonfiction Writer

by Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ), investigative journalist and award-winning Japanese author.

When the [first-instance decision](#) was issued on 25th March last year, it seems that quite a few believers never imagined that a dissolution order would actually be handed down. However, I had long said at gatherings and elsewhere that we could by no means be optimistic. After reviewing many records of lawsuits concerning [large donations](#) made to the [religious organization](#), I noticed that there were numerous unjust rulings in which the [organization](#) was made to lose for unreasonable reasons. Unfortunately, my fears proved correct. Yet the content of [this decision](#) was truly terrible.

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The case against the [Family Federation in Japan](#) in a nutshell,
as described by investigative journalist Masumi Fukuda.
Illustration: Chat GPT, 9th March 2026

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), facing the fact that there had been almost no damage since the compliance declaration, forcibly [fabricated evidence](#) by even [falsifying and altering written statements](#) from former believers. However, this [fabrication](#) was exposed in court, and the court could no longer adopt these materials as evidence. As a result, the grounds for dissolution effectively ceased to exist. In response, the court – apparently anxious that it must dissolve the [organization](#) no matter what – resorted to [speculating about damage](#).

Even though it acknowledged that harm had significantly decreased after the compliance declaration [[See editor's note 1 below](#)], the court simply assumed that there must still be latent, hidden damage.

Furthermore, it went so far as to judge that **settlements and negotiated agreements themselves constituted illegal acts**. I am not a legal expert, but even so, I was stunned by this acrobatic stretch of logic. It has reached the level of mere fault-finding and nitpicking.

Even after the case moved to the High Court, I had a pessimistic view: if the **High Court inherited such irrational reasoning**, then no matter how strong the [Unification Church](#)'s arguments were, it would have no chance of winning. However, according to what I heard indirectly, the High Court judges asked MEXT to “present concrete evidence in accordance with the principle of trial by

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evidence”, yet MEXT did not produce any new evidence. Hearing this gave me a glimmer of hope. Nevertheless, the High Court ultimately [issued a decision](#) that followed the [first-instance ruling](#).

Even I, who am not a believer, was truly shocked. Japan’s judiciary [issued this decision](#) with the clear intention that the [Family Federation](#) must be dissolved, ignoring even the proper procedures (due process) guaranteed by the Constitution. Just like the [first-instance ruling](#), there is no doubt that this is a **politically driven trial**.



Will Soka Gakkai be next? Here, Daisaku Ikeda (1928-2023), Buddhist philosopher, peacebuilder, educator, author and poet who was the Founding President of Soka Gakkai International. The photo shows him with the Soka Gakkai Student Division in Takasaki, Gunma Prefecture, Japan. Unknown author. [Public domain](#) image.

This is **no longer merely a problem affecting a single religious organization**. By making such an unjust and extra-legal [decision](#), a **precedent has been created in which an unpopular group can be crushed by force**. I have even heard people say that the next target might be Soka Gakkai [\[See editor's note 2 below\]](#) or others. This would constitute clear religious persecution and would shake the very foundations of the rule of law.

What is most worrying, however, is discrimination and persecution against the believers themselves. A situation is approaching in which believers – who have committed no crime – may be chased away as if they were criminals. The fundamental human rights that Japanese citizens normally enjoy are now at risk of being taken away. I believe the [organization](#) must urgently demand that the government strongly protect and safeguard the human rights of its believers.

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Featured image above: Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ), investigative journalist and award-winning Japanese author. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

[Editor's note 1: The **2009 compliance declaration** of the Unification Church of Japan (now the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)) was a formal commitment by the [organization](#) to reform its practices in response to longstanding public criticism and legal challenges.

The [Unification Church](#) in Japan had faced numerous allegations related to recruitment tactics and donation solicitation, termed “spiritual sales” (霊感商法) by a hostile network of activist lawyers who had declared the [religious organization](#) an enemy. These issues led to multiple lawsuits orchestrated by the activist lawyers and significant media backlash. This prompted the [organization](#) to take measures to restore its reputation and demonstrate compliance with legal and ethical standards.

The [religious organization](#) pledged to stop possibly unethical donation practices, including what the hostile network of lawyers

claimed amounted to “pressuring members into making large financial contributions under spiritual pretexts.”

This was in response to accusations from the same activist lawyers that followers “were being manipulated into giving away substantial amounts of money or property.”

The **Unification Church** stated it would enhance internal oversight to ensure compliance with ethical and legal standards. Measures included better training for leaders and stricter guidelines for evangelization and solicitation of donations.

After this compliance declaration, there was a significant decrease in the number of lawsuits against the **Unification Church** – since 2015 called the **Family Federation**. The **religious organization** has used this as evidence that it has improved its practices and should not be subject to **dissolution**.]

[**Editor’s note 2: 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



Logo of the Komeito Party. Author: WeaponizingArchitecture. **Public domain** image

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.]

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