

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Impossible Questions Reveal Kishida Bias

Knut Holdhus  
September 16, 2023



### Part of strategy used against Family Federation: *Impossible Questions*

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced 7th September 2023 that the [Family Federation](#) of Japan would be fined for not properly answering questions from the ministry. At a press conference the day after, Nobuo Okamura, head of the Legal Affairs Department of the [Family Federation](#), explained how there were many impossible questions posed by the Kishida administration.



Wind vane, weather cock

Observers claim that Prime Minister Kishida simply is behaving like a weathercock, in an effort to appear in agreement with the full-scale media storm started by activist leftwing lawyers blaming the [Family Federation](#) for the Abe assassination. The questions are simply a part of the Kishida-led government's strategy to get the Family Federation dissolved in order to please wide-spread media-generated sentiments.

The Japan News by the Yomiuri Shimbun, one of Japan's most read newspapers, published 14th September 2023 an article that clearly reveals how Kishida has caved in to public pressure,

**THE JAPAN NEWS**  
BY THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN

sources said."

"The central government has determined that the [Unification Church](#) religious group should be dissolved and plans to request the Tokyo District Court to issue such an order as early as October,

The press conference, held at the [Family Federation](#)'s Japanese headquarters in Shibuya, Tokyo, was attended by the major Japanese media corporations.



Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto at  
press conference 8th Sep. 2023

Speaking for the [Family Federation](#) of Japan, attorney Nobuya Fukumoto, already in his opening words pointed out that the government has acted illegally and had to change the interpretation of the law in order to proceed towards the dissolution by posing hundreds of questions to the [Family Federation](#).

Nobuo Okamura, head of the Legal Affairs Department of the Family Federation, explained why the [Family Federation](#) had not answered impossible questions from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). He said,

"First of all, the first point that we did not respond to is personal information. We did not respond to the questions about privacy and freedom of belief. They asked such questions. We did not

reply to them.

Secondly, there were some duplicate questions. I think there were times when I didn't give an answer to something like this because it had already been answered.



*Nobuo Okamura, head of legal affairs department of [FFWPU Japan](#), at press conference 8th Sep. 2023*

Then there were some questions about torts. Questions were not answered that could not be said to be related to the main topic of this question, which is torts.

And fourthly, there are currently cases pending in the civil courts. For these cases, we did not respond because they are subject to the court's decision.

Then, fifthly, there was a question as to whether the corporation has such and such a text, if it is true that it is officially a regulation, that according to the regulations, there must be something like that. The question had not been adequately formulated, so we could not submit an answer.

Or there were cases where it was impossible to submit an answer because the time had already passed.



*Shunichi Tokura, since April 2021, commissioner of the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs*

Furthermore, the Agency for Cultural Affairs itself cooperates with the National Federation of Bar Associations in many ways. From that angle, they were requesting one kind of document, with a strong assumption that it should exist. Regarding such materials, if we don't have them, we cannot provide them. We cannot provide something we don't have. [...]

The sixth point is that the corporation has also submitted all the documents regarding the problems and requests for refunds from the former believers, and has also submitted a written settlement, etc., stating that the matter has been settled peacefully and amicably.

However, we were also asked to provide more detailed information on such problems, and this was probably requested by the National Federation of Bar Associations and because of their suggestions. But we did not have enough time to prepare carefully for it. And just to prepare it would probably have taken more than a year. There was such a question.

We cannot answer to those things. Well, we gave that kind of answer. There were several aspects that we couldn't answer, so I think that's why they pointed out that we didn't answer nearly

a hundred questions.

However, we regret very much the conclusion that we have been given such a fine. Basically, we have done our best to respond to the case as a whole. We regret very much that such a decision was made in response to our efforts."

Okamura also pointed out the obvious bias of the government bodies handling Kishida's dissolution plans,



*Logo of the Agency for Cultural Affairs*

"And also, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, concerning the way it requests these documents, as well as in its approach to the right to ask questions this time, has collaborated with the National Federation of Bar Associations, which represents one party in the dispute, and the Minister of MEXT has clearly stated this. And we have pointed out to the Agency for Cultural Affairs that their approach is very biased because of information they have been given by such people.

Also, former believers and former second-generation believers were received by Prime Minister Kishida, the Minister of MEXT, and the Agency for Cultural Affairs. They listened to many things.

But on the contrary, the second-generation of the church

prepared 25,000 petitions, and so I made a direct request to the Agency for Cultural Affairs that they somehow be put to practical use. At that time, they said, "We will meet you." But when I called the representative later, he said, "Please send it by post." This was the response I received.

Concerning the former believers or former second-generation believers, there are quite a number of lies in what they say. For such cases, the Agency of Cultural Affairs listened to their one-sided story, but when the second-generation members of ours had prepared 25,000 petitions nationwide and wanted to explain our view of things, the Agency called by phone and said, "Please send them by post." I can't help but think that this is a very cold response, and a very biased response."

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Featured image above: Nobuo Okamura, head of legal affairs department of [FFWPU](#) Japan, at press conference 8th Sep. 2023. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by [FFWPU](#) Japan.

"Impossible Questions Reveal Kishida Bias" - text: Knut Holdhus

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# Government Changing The Law Overnight

September 12, 2023 • Knut Holdhus

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**Changing the Law: Spotlight on Judicial Decisions Concerning Japanese Government's Right to Ask Questions**

By editorial department of Sekai Nippo

12<sup>th</sup> September 2023 – Published as an editorial in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

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The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has decided to impose administrative penalties on the grounds that the **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** (Family Federation) did not answer questions based on the "Report and Questions" of the Religious Corporations Law, and decided to proceed to the Tokyo District Court.

The **Family Federation** issued a statement claiming that it "sincerely responded to questions from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) every time while protecting the privacy and religious freedom of believers."



The Sekai Nippo logo

#### Due to partial non-response

This is the first time that the right to question a religious corporation has been exercised, and if a religious corporation refuses to answer or gives a false answer when asked a question, a fine of up to 100,000 yen may be imposed on the representative officer of the religious corporation. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) said that it had asked the **Family Federation** 500 questions, and the reason for the fine was that it did not answer about 100 items.



Symbol of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan. Photo: 文部科学省(MEXT Japan) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

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It is believed that the **faith society** answered about 80% of the questions,

but the specifics of the questions, the content of the answers, and the details of the contents that were not answered, have not been made public. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has exercised the "right to report and ask questions" seven times, but it is safe to assume that the decision to ask for a fine was intended to accumulate evidence for the dissolution order from the beginning, contrary to the initial "prudent judgment".

Originally, it cannot be said that the exercise of the right to question the **Family Federation** was carried out in a calm discussion. After the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe last July due to a grudge against the **faith society**, criticism of troubles surrounding the **faith society** swept the media. Furthermore, with regard to election campaigns and religious votes, the opposition parties raised the issue of "points of contact" with the LDP.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida declared a break with religious groups, and the Diet passed the Act on Prevention of Unreasonable Solicitation of Donations (Victim Relief Law) as a measure to deal with donation troubles. In addition, regarding the legal interpretation of "violation of laws and regulations" – a requirement for requesting a dissolution order for a religious corporation, as a "criminal penalty", based on a Supreme Court judgment – the prime minister replied to the Diet that civil law torts also belong to this category. The prime minister changed the legal interpretation overnight.

Prior to this change in interpretation, the Religious Affairs Division of the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) replied that the **Family Federation** was "not subject to a request for a dissolution order", but later exercised its right to



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later exercised its right to question the [Family Federation](#) in an attempt to bring the request for a dissolution order. Overseas human rights groups and religious officials are concerned that this move could lead to serious religious persecution.

*Logo of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. [Public domain image](#)*

In response to some media outlets reporting on the “penal fine policy” of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the [religious group](#) issued a statement stating that “if a court case over the fine against the corporation is pending in the future, the corporation will do everything it can to contest the legality of the exercise itself of the right to question.” Criticism and debate are natural as former believers and family members have come forward to complain of damage, but the religious freedom and privacy of believers who continue to practice the faith should also be considered.

### Relationship with religion questioned

The hurdle to exercising the right to question was lowered to “civil,” and political power over religion was expanded. It will be necessary to pay close attention to how the right to question religious corporations will be exercised for the first time, and how the court proceedings will unfold over the fines required by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, in order to determine how the basic human rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the administrative power should be protected.

*Featured image above to illustrate “Government Changing the Law Overnight”: Fumio Kishida 5th October 2021. Photo: [首相官邸 / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)*

*“Government Changing the Law Overnight” – text: Editorial Department of the [Sekai Nippo](#), Tokyo, Japan.*

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September 14, 2023 • Knut Holdhus

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In response to the 7<sup>th</sup>



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Tokyo headquarters of the [Family Federation of Japan](#). Photo. Asanagi / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

September 2023 announcement by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) that the [Family Federation](#) of Japan would be fined for not answering properly to questions from the ministry, the [Family Federation](#) held a press conference the day after, 8<sup>th</sup> September, at the national headquarters in Shibuya, Tokyo.

The press conference was attended by major Japanese news outlets like the Asahi Shimbun, NHK, Kyodo News, the Yomiuri Shimbun, Jiji Press, and many others.

Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto representing the [Family Federation](#) of Japan, opened the conference. He explained the Family Federation's stance and how it will respond, stating,

"The exercise of the right to ask questions was carried out by the Government, by changing the interpretation of the law overnight. It does not comply with the guidelines for the exercise of the implementation of the right of questioning written in the Religious Institutions Act, article 78,2. We consider this to be illegal.

Therefore, we consider that we are justified in not answering such illegally made questions, whether in part or in full. A fine for refusing to answer is not admissible. We intend to contest the fine in court and fight the case all the way in order to seek a dismissal."

Activist leftwing lawyers, particularly opposed to the [Family Federation's](#) severe critique of totalitarian communism, have for decades waged a hate campaign against the faith society.

Investigative journalist Masumi Fukuda, present at the press conference, describes the hate campaign,

"The Network would not hesitate to use all means to destroy the former [Unification Church](#). They are willing to tell all sort of stories, including lies, to achieve what they believe is a righteous purpose. They often throw the words 'anti-social' and 'cult' at the former [Unification Church](#), but

considering their involvement in the abduction and confinement of believers, one may wonder whether they are not more deserving of these labels themselves." (*'Sayuri Ogawa': When 'Apostates' Slander the Unification Church. 5. Why the Story Is Not Believable, Bitter Winter* 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023)



Masumi Fukuda in April 2023. Photo: FOREF

The Japanese media has often uncritically echoed claims made by the activist lawyers, especially after the assassination of former prime minister Shinzo Abe 8<sup>th</sup> July last year. The activist lawyers succeeded in blaming the Family Federation for the act of terror soon after it happened.

Fukuda writes about the current situation,

"Last October, bowing to pressure from the media and public opinion, Prime Minister Kishida reversed his previous cautious stance and announced his intention to exercise the right to ask questions to the

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intention to exercise the right to ask questions to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) [a move that under Japanese law is preliminary to seeking the dissolution of a religious organization].

In response, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) exercised its first right to ask questions on November 22. And in December, approximately 200,000 online signatures were submitted to the Division of Religious Affairs of the Agency for Cultural Affairs in the MEXT, demanding that an order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#) should be sought and obtained as soon as possible." (*The Plot to Destroy the Unification Church in Japan. 1. Why the Church Should Not Be Dissolved, Bitter Winter 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023*)

Two registered religious movements have previously been dissolved, both after their leaders had committed criminal acts. The activist lawyers campaigning against the [Family Federation](#), have long claimed that it has committed acts deemed to be "detrimental to the public welfare, in violation of laws and regulations." Such claims are part of the lawyers' strategy to get the [Family Federation](#) dissolved.

Attorney Fukumoto explained at the press conference 8<sup>th</sup> September that leaders of the [Family Federation](#) had never committed such criminal acts. He stated,

"The conclusion is that 'violation of the law, extremely prejudicial to the public welfare' is interpreted as referring to acts that fall under criminal cases. On the flip side, this means that civil law torts do not enter the case. In fact, the interpretation that it is limited to criminal cases is an interpretation that the Government itself has repeatedly confirmed and expressed since the decision of the Tokyo Supreme Court was issued.



Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto at press conference 8th Sep. 2023. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by [FFWPU Japan](#).

Prime Minister Kishida still followed this interpretation at the Budget Committee of the House of Representatives on 18th October [2022], the day after he instructed the Ministry (MEXT) to exercise its right to ask questions, and clearly stated that civil case acts do not enter the case. Since the shooting incident, the Government has repeatedly stated that since there is no criminal case against the former [Unification Church](#), there is no grounds for dissolution and the right to ask questions cannot be exercised.

Since on 18th October still he repeated the same statement saying that civil case acts do not enter the case, then the opposition parties voiced severe criticism, saying, "Then we can't exercise our right to ask questions and we can't order the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#)."

Fukumoto points that Prime Minister suddenly made a complete U-turn,



"In response to this criticism, the Prime Minister changed his previous interpretation of the law at the Budget Committee of the House of Councillors on 19th



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida 16th April 2023.  
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October, stating that if the law is clearly defined as 'organised, malicious and continuous' and falls under the requirements of the Religious Institutions Law, it may also include civil law tort actions."

The attorney representing the [Family Federation](#) made it clear that only courts may make such a change of interpretation of the law,

"However, the authority to interpret the law rests with the courts, and not with the head of the executive government. This changed interpretation of the law is merely a new interpretation of the law, which the executive government claims unilaterally."

Attorney Fukumoto presented an overview of the time after the assassination of Abe,

"8th July, shooting of former Prime Minister Abe.

On 12th September, at an opposition party hearing, the Agency of Cultural Affairs (in charge) declared that the requirements for requesting a dissolution order from the court were not met.

On 20th September, the same Agency of Cultural Affairs officially replied that it would be difficult for the court to issue a dissolution order while the church leaders and others had not been criminally punished. (Explanation: exactly what I have explained,)

14th October, the Cabinet's written answer to a written question: "With regard to the former [Unification Church](#), based on the relevant interpretation (the higher decision in the case of the request for a dissolution order for Aum Shinrikyo), we have decided that it does not fall under items (81) 1 and 2 of the same paragraph, and therefore the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the competent authority, has so far not requested a dissolution order against the former [Unification Church](#). The government has not made a request for a dissolution order against the former Unification Church."

On 15th October, Nagaoka, Minister for MEXT, told a press conference, "Based on precedents, we are cautious. At the moment, it is difficult to order a dissolution request."



Keiko Nagaoka, government minister for education, culture, sports, science and technology (MEXT). Photo (May 2023): U.S. Department of State. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

On 17th October, Prime Minister Kishida instructed Nagaoka, Minister of MEXT to exercise her right to ask questions.

On 18th October, Prime Minister Kishida declared in the Diet that the term 'in violation of laws and regulations' does not include torts under the Civil Code.

Overnight, the interpretation changed.

On 19th October, Prime Minister Kishida stated in the Diet that the statute 'in violation of the law' could include civil law torts."

Fukumoto pointed out,

“Here, the right to ask questions cannot be exercised if there are no important material reasons for dissolution, which amounts to dissolution if there is no doubt.

In exercising the first right to ask questions, the Minister for MEXT even said at a press conference, ‘I would like to consider requesting a dissolution order as soon as possible.’ Is such a thing permissible in a country governed by the rule of law?”

During his presentation, attorney Fukumoto emphasized that previously when religious movements have been dissolved by the Japanese authorities, it was because of fraudulent acts committed by leaders of those movements.

He explained why there are no reasons for dissolution,



Sign at the entrance of the Family Federation's national HQ in Tokyo. Photo: Asanagi. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

“However, in the civil trials in which the [Family Federation](#) was the defendant, there has not been a single case in which a representative officer of the faith society, currently President Tanaka, or a senior officer of the faith society gave the order and used the personnel, material and organisation of the faith society to carry it out. [...]

Naturally, the Agency of Cultural Affairs was from the very beginning aware of its decision to exercise the right to ask questions. It must have been aware of it, because it must have checked all the precedents that it knew at that time. There was not a single corresponding case, and yet they exercised the right to ask questions. That was a completely illegal act. [...]

The [Family Federation](#) could have refused to answer any of the questions in the exercise of its right to ask illegal questions. However, in view of the boiling media coverage and public opinion, we had the option of refusing to answer all the questions, but we avoided this and answered as many as possible in relation to questions on illegal activities. This was also because we judged that it would be effective in explaining the actual situation of the Family Federation to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and in clearing up misunderstandings.

However, despite these efforts, we are very disappointed that the MEXT now has decided to seek a sanction in the form of a fine against the Family Federation.”

More about the questions from the government: [Impossible Questions Reveal Kishida Bias](#)

Featured image above: From the press conference 8<sup>th</sup> September, at the [Family Federation](#) national headquarters in Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by [FFWPU Japan](#).

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