FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Arbitrary Populist Measures Against Religion

Knut Holdhus September 19, 2023



Kishida is warned that arbitrary populist measures against the Family Federation may backfire.

18th September 2023 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. <u>Original article</u>

Dissolution request is the worst populism

By Susumu Fujihashi







Fumio Kishia 14th July 2022

At a press conference after the inauguration of the reshuffled Cabinet, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said, "Finally, I would like to say a few words about the former <u>Unification Church</u>." "We will make a final effort to reach a firm conclusion on this issue, and we will make a final decision based on the law, listening to the opinions of the Council of Religious Corporations."

Following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in July last year, the LDP declared that it would sever ties with the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (formerly the Unification Church, hereinafter referred to as the Family Federation). The government exercised the right of questioning seven times under the

Religious Corporations Law with a view to ordering the dissolution of the <u>Family Federation</u>. For failing to answer some of the questions, the court notified the Tokyo District Court to impose a fine that would amount to administrative penalties to the <u>Family Federation</u>.

The government is expected to request a dissolution order for the <u>Family Federation</u> as early as October, and the notice of the fine is seen as a stepping stone to that end. In response to this, the <u>Family Federation</u> has requested the dismissal of the fine from the standpoint that "the exercise of the right to question itself is illegal in the first place" and is taking a stance of fully contesting the fine in court.

The requirements for exercising the right to question under the Religious Corporations Act cited violations of laws and regulations, but Prime Minister Kishida expressed the view that violations of laws and regulations refer to criminal cases in his reply to the Diet in October last year, but the next day he changed the interpretation to include civil cases. It was an unprecedented event, such as a change in the interpretation of the law overnight, and it can only be assumed that political considerations played a role.



Masaru Wakasa, lawyer and politician

Masaru Wakasa, a lawyer, expressed concern on his YouTube program that this problem would be at the core of the rule of law in Japan, saying, "If we arbitrarily proceed with something that does not meet the conditions of the law, it will eventually bounce back on us."

"If the former <u>Unification Church</u> was indeed engaged in a gross violation of laws and regulations or something that seriously harmed the public welfare, I have no objection whatsoever to the dissolution order issued by the court and the dissolution of the religious corporation," the lawyer said, adding, "It is implicitly political to show that the LDP has completely distanced itself from the former <u>Unification Church</u>. Even if it is unreasonable, it should not be necessary to file a petition for the dissolution of a religious corporation."

In the age of mass democracy, some populism will be necessary to advance politics. However, populism must be avoided at all costs especially in matters directly related to the existence of the country, such as diplomacy and security,

and issues related to the fundamentals of the national body (the state of the country) such as the imperial family, freedom and democracy, and the rule of law.

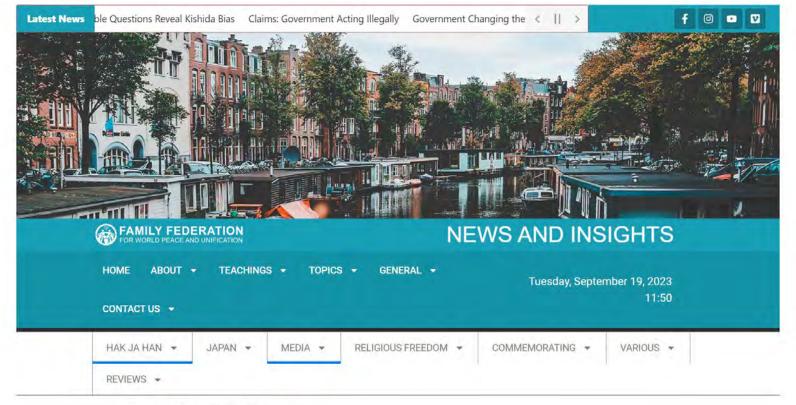
The Cabinet reshuffle and the call for the dissolution of the <u>Family Federation</u> are seen as part of the preparation of the environment for the dissolution of the House of Representatives and the general election. There are various views on the timing of the dissolution, but in any case, it is the worst kind of populism, such as scapegoating a specific religious group through arbitrary interpretation of the law and carries the danger of destroying the very foundation of the rule of law and democracy.

Featured image above: Fumio Kishida at press conference in Teheran 6th October 2015. Photo: Hamed Malekpour / Tasnim News Agency / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int.

"Arbitrary Populist Measures Against Religion" - text: Susumu Fujihashi (藤橋 進)

More about arbitrary populist measures: Government Changing the Law Overnight

Even more about arbitrary populist measures: Claims: Government Acting Illegally



Family Federation

The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification

The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification is a global federation of individuals and families who aim to create a world of peace and unity beyond national, cultural, religious and ideological barriers, a world where everyone may live together in peace and harmony.

In a nutshell

Name: Family Federation for World Peace and

Unification

Father and Mother Moon 1st August 1996.

Founded: 1996

Founders: Rev. Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012) and Dr. Hak Ja Han

Teachings: Unificationism, a long series of revelations received by Sun Myung Moon. See: Brief about the Teachings of the Family Federation

Goal: The Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. A harmonious world family, where everyone may experience peace, security, freedom and love.

Strategy: Unite all good forces

Distribution: Largest in South Korea and Japan, but found in most nations.

Background: The Family Federation took over many of the functions of the Unification Church and its basic teachings.

Frequently asked questions: See: Faq

Three ideals

As the name indicates, the Family Federation is based on three ideals – family, world peace, and unification.

- The family ideal. Most religions focus on the individual and its spirituality. The Family Federation teaches a broader concept of spirituality, where your relationships to your loved ones are of decisive importance for your eternal life. As <u>God</u> is the source of love, <u>marriage</u>s blessed by <u>God</u> and families full of <u>true love</u> are the very foundation for the Kingdom of Heaven that God longs for. It is a love kingdom, and the family is a school of love.
- World peace. If there is love and peace in the home, there is hope that we may also create societies and nations with peace. The family is the fundamental social institution. If we can learn to love our fellow human beings on micro-level, in a family, we may also do so on macro-level, i.e. in the society around us and in the big world we live in. Well-functioning families are the very key to reducing crime, alcohol and drug abuse, the number of suicides and many other social problems.

Unification. We talk about unification on all levels, from the individual to the global level. <u>God</u> is the
source of unity, evil the source of division. Therefore, the goal of the Family Federation is to remove the
barriers and create a world of unity, a social unity, such as that between husband and wife, between parents
and children, different social groups, nations and religions, but also unity between the inner world and the
outer, between mind and body, spirit and matter, religion and science.

The inauguration

The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification was first founded in the USA 31st July 1996 by Sun Myung Moon and his wife Hak Ja Han, and in many European nations soon after that.

As co-founder, Mother Moon gave the inaugural address titled "View of the Principle of the Providential History of Salvation", reading a prepared text. Father



The Inaugural World Convention of the Family Federation 31st July 1996

Moon spoke without a script at the closing banquet the following day, 1st August, at the Sheraton Washington Hotel. His speech was titled "In Search of the Origin of the Universe".

If at

Gerald Ford, U.S. President 1974-1977, spoke at the inauguration 31st July 1996. He said,



Gerald Ford 31st July 1996

this gathering is sort of a spiritual Olympics. Like the Olympians, you have assembled from all over the world to further the cause of peace among nations.

But while those Olympians are dedicated to gold and glory,

"While the world's finest athletes test themselves in Atlanta,

But while those Olympians are dedicated to gold and glory, you in this room pursue other objectives. The glory you seek, comes from God, not gold.

I sound a bit like an Old Testament prophet, it's because there is nothing about which I feel more strongly, more deeply, than the survival and the strengthening of the family. No civilization that neglects the family, can be called civilized for long, and no political philosophy that takes the family for granted, will be taken seriously by anyone who values morality, compassion and peace."

The chronicle "40 Years in America" describes the event,



National Building Museum, Washington DC. <u>Public</u> <u>domain</u> image. Cropped



Mother and Father Moon 31st July 1996

movement's most spectacular world convention was held in Washington, D.C. from July 30-August 1, 1996, inaugurating the Family Federation for World Peace (FFWP).

This event included a cast of luminaries rivaling anything the movement had yet undertaken: two former Presidents of the United States, Gerald Ford and George Bush; former President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias of Costa Rica; former Prime Ministers Edward Heath of Great Britain and Brian Mulroney of Canada; thirty-six one-time heads of state or governments; university presidents including Boston University's John Silber; Christian television personality Robert Schuller; Christian Coalition Executive Director Ralph Reed; Coretta Scott King, the widow of Martin Luther King, Jr.; Maureen Reagan, the

daughter of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan; well-known comedian Bill Cosby; and Christian singer-actor Pat Boone. In addition, the main proceedings were covered live by C-SPAN television network. (p.443) [...]

The establishment of the FFWP represented a new stage in the movement's development. Rev. Chung Hwan Kwak, who was appointed International President, maintained that the FFWP was more important than the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) or <u>Unification Church</u>. HSA-UWC, he noted, was "not <u>True Parents</u>" ultimate organization".

The rationale for this assertion was connected to the historic shift that underlay the emergence of the



Completed restament Age. As noted previously, Nev. Kwak explained,

'Religious organizations have always been centered upon the salvation of the individual, but we have now progressed to the salvation of the family. [...] Such an organization is not a church; it is the Family Federation for World Peace.'



Sun Myung Moon 1st August 1996

From the Inaugural Convention 31st July 1996.

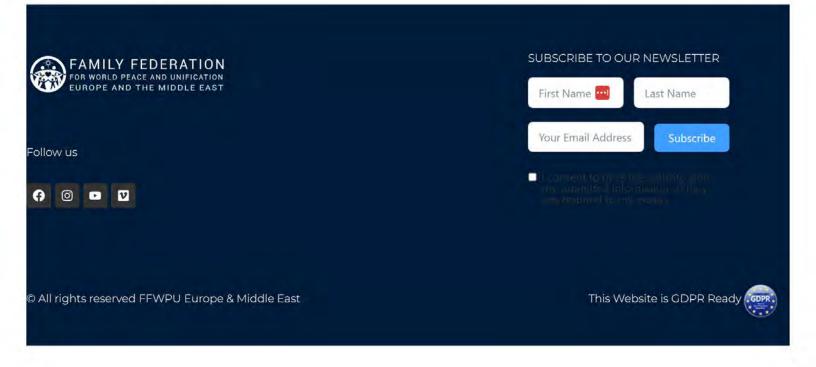
More about the Family Federation

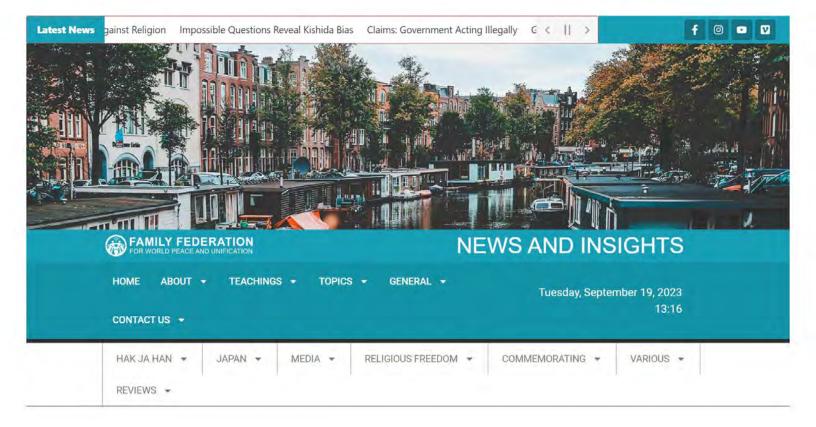
Text: Knut Holdhus

Given this understanding, it wasn't surprising that the FFWP rather than the Unification Church was the main sponsor of the World Culture and Sports Festivals and International Marriage Blessings after 1996." (p.444) (From the section "Federations for World Peace and Unification", in "40 Years in America - 1959-1999 - An Intimate History of the Unification Movement", by Michael Inglis and Michael L. Mickler, published by HSA Publications Oct. 2000, 624 pages.)

The Family Federation was launched on the foundation of the Unification Church, a spiritual movement founded in South Korea in 1954. The original intention was neither to establish a church nor a new religion.

The Family Federation took over many of the activities and tasks of the Unification Church and the same basic teachings, but has a pronounced goal of creating a world of peace and unity based on wellfunctioning families.





Government Changing The Law Overnight

September 12, 2023 • Knut Holdhus



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

By editorial department of Sekai Nippo

12th September 2023 – Published as an editorial in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. **Original article**





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.



文部科学省

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 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".

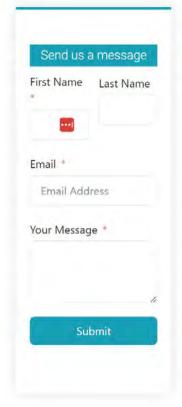
Originally, it cannot be said that the exercise of the right to question the Family Federation was carried out in a calm discussion. After the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe last July due to a grudge against the faith society, criticism of troubles surrounding the faith society swept 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







question the Family
Federation in an attempt to
bring the request for a
dissolution order. Overseas

Logo of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. Public domain image

human rights groups and religious officials are concerned that this move could lead to serious religious persecution.

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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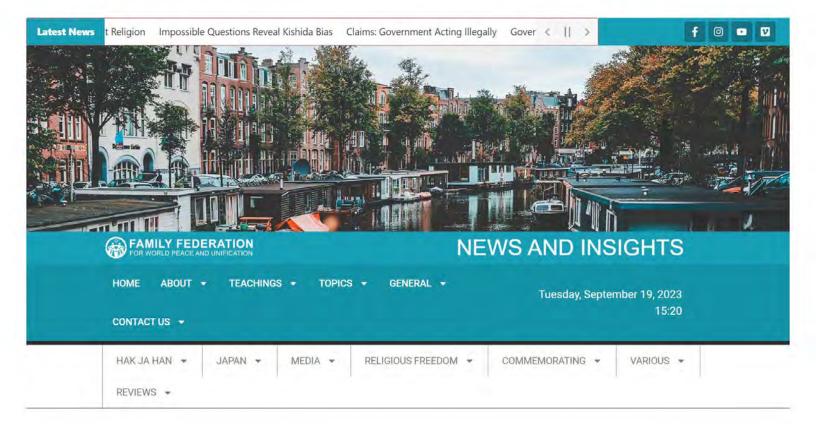
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September 14, 2023 • Knut Holdhus







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response to the 7th





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, 8th 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 'antisocial' and 'cult' at the former Unification



Masumi Fukuda in April 2023. Photo: FOREF

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 6th March 2023)

The Japanese media has often uncritically echoed claims made by the activist lawyers, especially after the assassination of former prime minister Shinzo Abe 8th 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 la 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 23rd 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 8th 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 FFWPU Japan. decision of the Tokyo Supreme Court was issued.



Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto at press conference 8th Sep. 2023. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by

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. Photo: 首相官邸ホームペー ジ / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int

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."

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



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

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 8th September, at the Family Federation national headquarters in Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by FFWPU Japan.

"Claims: Government Acting Illegally" - Text: Knut Holdhus

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