

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Collusion To Rob Japanese Minority Of Rights

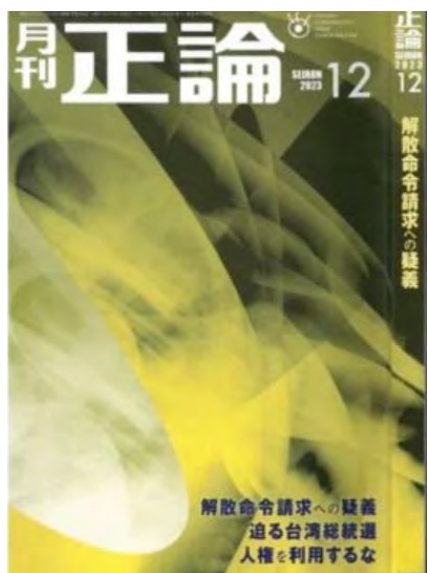
Knut Holdhus
January 22, 2024



Dr. Massimo Introvigne in April 2023

Japanese government in collusion with group hostile to Family Federation

Third of six parts of Seiron report - More on [part 1](#) and [part 2](#).



The cover front page of Monthly Seiron December 2023.

The Japanese monthly opinion magazine Seiron (正論) published in its December 2023 issue a feature article on the outrageous persecution of the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Japan.

One part of the report by Makiko Takita, well known journalist and editor-in-chief of the magazine, is an interview with Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Italian sociologist of religion and editor-in-chief of [Bitter Winter](#), the leading international online magazine on religious freedom and human rights.

BITTER WINTER

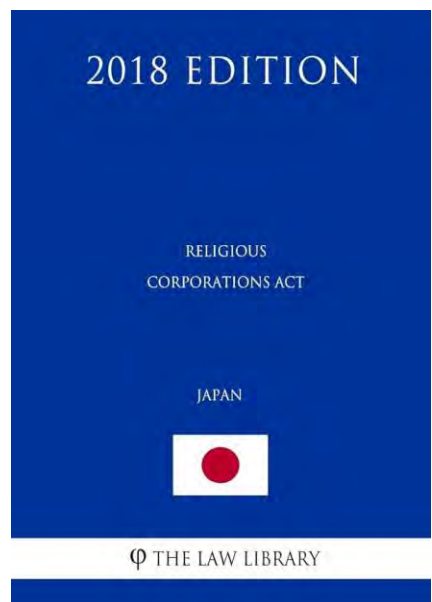
[Bitter Winter](#) published this part of the report of Seiron on 19th January 2024, as the third of six parts of the English version of the original Japanese article. Read the [whole Bitter Winter article](#). Read comments on [article 1](#) and [article 2](#)

In the interview with Dr. Introvigne, he says he is concerned about the legal actions taken against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), formerly the [Unification Church](#), in Japan.

The sociologist of religion, famous globally for his work, expresses his worry about the Japanese government's request for a dissolution order against the [Unification Church](#), citing that the organization has not committed any crimes in Japan, a democratic country that guarantees freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). He emphasizes that, in his experience working globally to defend freedom of religion or belief, this is the first time he has seen such a request for dissolution in a democratic country.

"[...] and it is a great shock to me," the scholar says, expressing his concern about what he perceives as an unusual and concerning legal action against the [Unification Church](#) in Japan.

Introvigne draws comparisons with other countries, mentioning that even in countries where there is criticism of the [Unification Church](#), such as the United States and Italy, there is no government action to legally regulate or dissolve the organization. He also contrasts the situation with Russia and China, where religious organizations, including the [Unification Church](#), face persecution and dissolution by the government. However, he notes that China and Russia are not democratic regimes, and the criteria for what constitutes a crime differ from those in Japan.



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

Massimo Introvigne further discusses the situation in Japan where the government is pursuing the dissolution of the [Unification Church](#) under the Religious Corporations Act. He compares this to the dissolution of an organization called Artgemeinschaft in Germany in September 2023.

Introvigne points out that even in democracies, systems for dissolving organizations exist, but their application is typically limited to cases where a crime, punishable under the penal code, has been committed. He provides an example of the dissolution of Artgemeinschaft in Germany, which he describes as a political organization rooted in Nazism rather than a religious movement. The dissolution of Artgemeinschaft was requested based on criminal activities, aligning with the general principle that dissolutions in democracies are tied to criminal conduct.

Introvigne emphasizes that the situation in Japan, where the government is seeking to dissolve the [Unification Church](#) without it having committed any criminal acts, is unique and unusual in a democratic country that upholds freedom of religion. He points out that the current events in Japan are being highlighted in Chinese and Russian media as a form of propaganda, drawing parallels between Japan's actions and those of China in suppressing religious groups. Introvigne explains how the situation in Japan is being used for propaganda purposes by China and Russia,

"I am the editor-in-chief of a daily web magazine called '[Bitter Winter](#),' which covers news about religious freedom violations around the world. I carefully watch the Chinese media, and every week an article about the dissolution of the [Unification Church](#) in Japan always catches my eye. The articles are full of claims that 'Japan is doing the same thing as China' 'We have been proven right,' 'Cults should be

suppressed,' and so on. Similar arguments can be read in the Russian government-affiliated media, and the current events in Japan are being used for propaganda purposes by China and Russia. We would do well to keep this in mind."



Persecution in China: Tibetan Monks arrested in 2008 (5th April 2008) SFT HQ (Students for a Free Tibet)

The Seiron report provides an overview of events surrounding the [Unification Church](#) in Japan, particularly in the aftermath of the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe by an individual with a grudge against the [Unification Church](#). Introvigne expresses concerns about the way the government and certain groups have been handling the situation. Certain important facts about the assassin seem to have been ignored completely by the media. The general public appears to have been given a slanted picture of the situation. The Italian scholar points out,

"I noted that the man [the assassin] had been interacting with journalists and other opponents of the [Unification Church](#) on social media before the incident. Obviously, I do not believe that they encouraged him to kill Abe, but I wonder if they might have excited his hostility to punish the [Unification Church](#). Why did the man commit such a heinous act? I do not believe that this has been fully clarified."

And straightaway after the assassination on 8th July 2022, the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (全国霊感商法対策弁護士連絡会), a group of largely leftwing activist lawyers who have been fierce opponents of the [Unification Church](#) for decades, called a press conference where they blamed the [church](#) for what had happened.



Kingdom Hall in Hamburg-Alsterdorf, ten days after the killing spree on 9th March 2023: damaged door, flowers and candles

Dr. Introvigne describes the tactic of the network of lawyers as a "reversal phenomenon". The perceived victim becomes the perpetrator, and the alleged perpetrator is treated as a victim. The scholar mentions similar cases in South Korea and Germany where so-called anti-cult movements attempted to shift blame onto religious organizations,

"Last March [2023] in Germany, a former member of the Jehovah's Witnesses broke into a place of worship of this religion, called Kingdom Hall, and killed eight people with a gun. Then, some members of the anti-cult movement, which opposes Jehovah's Witnesses, came forward and criticized the religion, saying that the cause of the incident

was that 'the Jehovah's Witnesses have continued to abuse this man,' and called for the religious organization to bear the brunt of the blame. The anti-cult movement deflected the blame from the mistakes of the authorities [who had given a license to carry weapons to a mentally disturbed man] and

tried to create a campaign against the Jehovah's Witnesses."

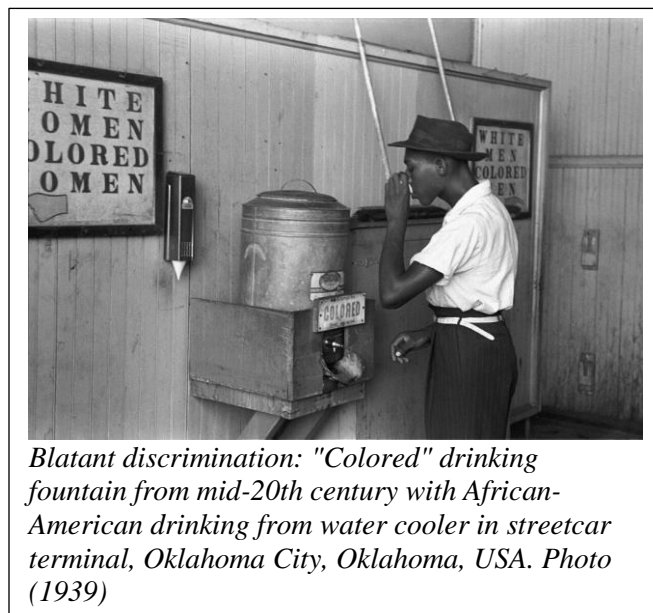
Introvigne criticizes the Japanese government for joining forces with the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (全国霊感商法対策弁護士連絡会) in various procedures related to a dissolution order against the [Unification Church](#). He argues that such collaboration between the government and a so-called anti-cult movement is ideologically and politically strange.

The scholar says,

"Only in Japan has the government totally jumped on the bandwagon. In Korea and Germany, the media reports on the voices of anti-cult movements, and this can cause a lot of commotion. Sometimes there are campaigns to condemn these groups as 'cults.' However, there is no example of a democratic government reacting to such a campaign and moving toward the dissolution of the organization."

Dr. Massimo Introvigne denounces the Japanese government for all of a sudden changing its policy and allowing cases of tortious conduct to be sufficient ground for dissolving a religious organization. He explains,

"If religious corporations can be dissolved for torts under civil law, there is no such thing as a safe organization. This shows that this was not a legal decision, but a political decision. What the Japanese government has done is a clear violation of the principle of religious freedom. It is a move that should be strongly condemned."



Introvigne contends that the Japanese government's decision to pursue the dissolution of the [Unification Church](#) is a violation of the principle of religious freedom. He expresses concern that this move may have a ripple effect and set a precedent for private entities to discriminate against the [Unification Church](#),

"and start saying, 'We will have nothing to do with them.' This is undeniable religious discrimination, which is unacceptable in light of international law, which stipulates that there shall be no discrimination based on ideology, creed, religion, or other such grounds."

Introvigne questions the legitimacy of the government's decision, stating that it appears to be a political decision rather than a legal one.

In fact, there have already been instances of discriminatory incidents in Japan, such as local governments refusing to rent public facilities to independent organizations connected with the [Family Federation](#) or passing resolutions to sever relations with such organizations in local government councils.

And what makes matters worse in Japan, is the fact that there might be collusion between the Japanese government and the courts. For more on that particular issue, see [Does Japan Have an Independent Judiciary?](#)

More on [article 1](#) and [article 2](#) in the Seiron report.

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Malicious One-Sided Government Source Selection

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Second of six parts of Seiron report



The Japanese monthly opinion magazine Seiron (正論) published in its December 2023 issue a

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The first page of the feature article in the December 2023 issue of *Seiron* (正論) with the title "Doubts about the Request for a Dissolution Order".

In its December 2023 issue a feature article on the outrageous persecution of the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Japan. The article by Makiko Takita, well known journalist and editor-in-chief of the magazine, presents a conversation with Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa (中川晴久), President of [Japan Christian Theological Institute](#) and Secretary of [Tokyo Christian Theological Institute](#) (東京キリスト教神学研究所), and Professor Tsutomu Nishioka (西岡力), from the [Ethics and Moral Education Foundation](#), professor at the [Institute of Moral Science](#), [Tokyo Christian University](#).

On 18th January 2024, [Bitter Winter](#), the leading international online magazine on religious freedom and human rights, published the second of six parts of the English version of the original *Seiron* article. (See the [whole Bitter Winter article](#).) Read comment on [article 1](#) in the [Bitter Winter](#) series.



In the second part, Rev. Nakagawa describes how the government body [Agency for Cultural Affairs](#) (文化庁) has **ignored several serious and crucial issues** in its request to the [Tokyo District Court](#) to issue an order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#).

The Christian leader points out that the information that the government has based its request on, is **completely one-sided and not to be trusted**. In fact, much of it appears to come from [National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales](#) (全国霊感商法対策弁護士連絡会), a group of activist lawyers, many of them leftwing, who are hostile to the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) and have been campaigning against it for decades.

Rev. Nakagawa explains that the network of lawyers,

"has been using such former believers – who were abducted and forcibly converted [de-converted by faith-breakers] in confinement for many years – to develop court battles in pursuit of the church and its assets."



Haruhisa Nakagawa. Photo: Private

In other words, the network of **activist lawyers exploited cynically a situation** where more than 4,000 members of the [Family Federation](#) were kidnapped, held in forcible detention, sometimes for years, and forced to undergo horrendous faith-breaking sessions controlled by professional deprogrammers. If and when a believer would finally agree to abandon his faith, he would be introduced to lawyers who encouraged him often **under duress** to sue the [Family Federation](#) for damages. Rev. Nakagawa describes the situation,

"The Agency for Cultural Affairs used as the basis for the dissolution request 128 of the 231 plaintiffs in the 22 civil lawsuit judgments (increased to 32 at the time of the request). These cases were the ones the [Unification Church](#) lost in court. These cases were also often these where the people suing the church had been forced to apostatize through the same kind of abduction and confinement tactics. We believe that this **could violate Article 38 of the Constitution**, which states, 'No confession made under compulsion, torture, or intimidation, or after unreasonably long detention or imprisonment, shall be admissible as evidence.'

Hence, it is hard to understand that the **government** does not see that these people are being "trapped" in losing their

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see that they may be **acting illegally** in **basing their dissolution request on civil cases largely masterminded by hostile lawyers** who support methods like kidnapping, forcible detention, and testifying under duress.



Illustration of how **Family Federation** member **Toru Goto** was abducted by his own family. Photo: **Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion**

Nakagawa describes how some parents of adult members of the **Unification Church** were involved in the forced de-conversion of their sons or daughters. The **parents were thoroughly instructed by faith-breakers** for a period of up to half a year, **learning how to carry out the kidnapping, forcible detention,**

and faith-breaking. Haruhisa Nakagawa says,

“Parents claim they tried to compel their abducted children to leave the church out of love. However, it is important to note that these ‘children’ were adults.”

The Christian leader also mentioned how the forced de-conversion

“damages the parent-child relationship and leaves a big scar. Even if the adult believers say they are happy to have left the group, they may still be tormented by the memory of the moment of abduction and confinement, and a rift between parent and child may eventually develop, and the wound may never heal.”

Rev. Nakagawa also explained that such **faith-breaking hardly exists in other nations.**

“However, **in Japan, deprogramming has continued.** This is because the National Federation of Bar Associations [short for *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales*] has a **well-established system of inducing deprogrammed believers to file lawsuits.**”

Nakagawa goes into this in further details,

“On the surface, the lawyers and former believers say, ‘We were deceived by the **Unification Church,**’ and ‘The **Unification Church** is reprehensible,’ but behind the scenes, they pursue the **Unification Church** as plaintiffs in court by committing **serious human rights violations and trampling on the dignity of individuals.** But the system behind the scenes is **hidden from the public,** and the fact that even Christian pastors and lay leaders have been involved in these human rights violations is still not mentioned at all.”

The Christian leader also points out that he is **astounded that the network of hostile lawyers has been asked to take part in the government's investigation** prior to requesting the dissolution order.

He emphasizes that

“there is already a **precedent in the U.K.** of an attempt to dissolve a religious corporation through the concerted efforts of an ‘anti-cult’ organization/activists and the government. In 1984, the



Masaki Kito, activist leftwing lawyer who was brought in as advisor to the Kishida administration by

British government joined forces with anti-cult movements to eliminate the charitable status of the [Unification Church](#), which is equivalent to Japan's efforts to revoke its status as a religious corporation.

administration by [China-friendly government minister Taro Kono](#). Photo: [Screenshot / Bitter Winter](#)

The **British government's investigation relied almost entirely on the anti-cult groups**, and deprogramming experts gathered testimonies from ex-members who had been forced to apostatize. But much of this information was exaggerated or disproven, and eventually the **British government lost in court and had to pay** the [Unification Church](#) \$6 million, or about 850 million Japanese yen."

Read comment on [article 1](#) in the [Bitter Winter](#) series

Featured image above: Some of Fumio Kishida's cabinet on 13th September 2023. Kishida on the left and Taro Kono on the right. Kono, Minister for Digital Transformation and Minister for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety, is known to have lobbied Kishida to get the [Family Federation](#) investigated. In August 2022 Kono appointed Masaki Kito as expert advisor in a study group Kono established in the Consumer Affairs Agency for the issue of the [Family Federation](#). Kito is an activist radical leftwing lawyer who has been campaigning against the [Family Federation / Unification Church](#) for decades. Photo: [首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

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