

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Journalists Point Out Vicious Japanese Media Bias

Knut Holdhus
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Sekai Nippo

Media bias and discrimination described by journalists / authors at Tokyo symposium.

Tokyo, 22nd January 2024 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

Why Did Reporting Go Astray? Thorough Examination by Journalists on Reporting about the Former Unification Church

by the editorial department, Sekai Nippo

Symposium in Tokyo

The symposium "Why Did Reporting Go Astray? Thorough Examination by Journalists on Reporting on the Former [Unification Church](#)" (organized by UPF-Japan) was held on the 20th January 2024 in Tokyo to investigate the media's continued coverage bashing the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)). As panelists, non-fiction writer Masaki Kubota (窪田順生), non-fiction author Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ), and author Fumihiro Kato (加藤文宏) attended, expressing their respective views.



Masaki Kubota

Kubota pointed out factors contributing to the media's "astray" reporting, such as excessive reliance on sources and a tendency to unquestionably believe in reports from fellow journalists. While respecting the media's role in rigorously investigating the [religious organisation](#), he emphasized the issue of imbalance, stating,

"It's a problem. This is not wartime, so interviews with believers should be included, and that is the role of the media."

Fukuda touched upon the issue of abduction and confinement of followers of the [religious group](#), highlighting that it was testimonies of ex-members that resulted in dissolution requests. She further stated,

"While spiritual sales practices have been extensively reported and even called an 'enormous evil,' the issue of abduction and confinement has never been reported. Ordinary people are unaware of its maliciousness and reality. It is a major incident in Japanese society, and it is natural to continue to speak about it."

Kato presented the fluctuation in the number of searches for "[Unification Church](#)" on Google, revealing a

sharp increase in searches in July 2022, followed by a rapid decline. In 2023, the search volume was higher than before the shooting incident involving former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, but it remained low. From this, Kato concluded,



Masumi Fukuda

"The continuous discussion of the relationship between the [religious organisation](#) and politics in the media was limited to a small segment of the population. The chasing of the [religious group](#) has caused a division in society between those who discriminate and those being discriminated. This is harmful not only to believers, but also to Japanese society as a whole."

Featured image above: From left, Fumihiro Kato (加藤文宏), Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ), Masaki Kubota (窪田順生), who attended the symposium as panelists at the Kyoto District Court (京都地裁) on afternoon of 20th Jan. 2024, Shinjuku (都新宿) ward, Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀) / Sekai Nippo. Published with permission.



Fumihiro Kato

"Journalists Point out Vicious Media Bias" - text: Editorial department, Sekai Nippo, Tokyo.

More about media bias: [Media-Created Public Opinion Is Boss](#)

Yet more about media bias: [Horrendous Persecution in Japan](#)

Still more about media bias: [Press Release about Media Attacks](#)



The front cover of 'Infiltrating the Former Unification Church - Tankobon Softcover, Nov. 2023), by Masaki Kubota

Masaki Kubota (窪田順生) is the author of "Infiltrating the Former [Unification Church](#) - the Complete Story of the Request for a Dissolution Order and the Deepest Secrets of the 'No Good Coverage'" (2023). He has also authored several other books and is a non-fiction writer who has contributed to weekly and monthly magazines. Kubota has also worked first as a producer, then as an advisor for TV-documentaries. He is journalist for a weekly magazine and a newspaper, and editor of a monthly magazine.

See a series of articles containing an interview with him and more about media bias:

[Author from Media World Exposes Its Huge Bias](#)

[A One-Sided, Prejudiced, Unfair Japanese Media](#)

[Scary Bigoted Attitude in Big Media](#)

[Author Debunks Nasty Media Myths](#)

[Kishida Has Opened Can of Worms](#)

[State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"](#)

[Media Consultant / Author on Media Relationship](#)

Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ) is an award-winning Japanese author, also known for her investigative journalism. She has researched the [Unification Church](#) issue extensively and has written two series of articles about it in the monthly magazine Hanada. See

[Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying](#) and

[Illegalities of Activist Lawyers Exposed](#)

Fumihiro Kato (加藤文宏) has published several books as Fumi Kato. Launched the interview magazine Monthly IJ covering a wide range of people, from the general public to celebrities. Wrote an [analytic article](#) about the [Unification Church](#) issue and its media coverage in the February 2023 issue of the monthly magazine Seiron.



Media-Created Public Opinion Is Boss

October 28, 2023 • Knut Holdhus

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Government decisions based on public opinion shaped by media

Tokyo, 24th October 2023 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

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By Kiyoji Masu

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Dangers of spreading disinformation



Word cloud generated image from the most common words on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artificial_intelligence. Photo: Madhav-Malhotra-003 / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image

Last week was Newspaper Week. The motto was “Know the present, learn from the past, and read for tomorrow.” At the 76th Newspaper Convention held in Karuizawa, Nagano prefecture, it was mentioned that the appearance of artificial intelligence (AI) will facilitate the spread of false information and risk undermining the integrity of the discursive space. The following convention resolution was adopted,

“We must continue to deliver accurate reporting and fair commentary to people, protect and nurture a healthy discursive space. In this era of a turbulent information environment, we pledge to contribute to the development of democracy.” (Yomiuri Shimbun 19th October)

It sounds very superficial, like a textbook resolution. Is it only AI that is responsible for the spread of disinformation? Are there accurate reporting and fair commentaries in newspapers? Are we not undermining the health of the discursive space? Such questions pop up.



Johnny & Associates headquarters, at 9-6-35 Akasaka, Minato, Tokyo, Japan. Photo (2023): Lombroso / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int

In the case of the Johnny's scandal [big sexual abuse / pedophile scandal in the J-pop agency Johnny & Associates Inc., with founder Johnny Kitagawa (1931-2019) as main perpetrator], the government decided on the “freedom not to report” (Japanese: “danmari” – silence, refusing explanation) in order to protect the interests of affiliated TV stations and advertising.

With this in mind, when it came to the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification*

(hereafter referred to as the “religious organisation”), they launched a massive torrential campaign against it. On the other hand, the religious organisation has continued to adhere to its “freedom not to report.” Such convenient pragmatism is quite noticeable.

Announcement coverage from start to finish

Left-wing newspapers have argued that if they continue to report announcements made by governments and other administrative bodies, they will not function as a check on power. There is some truth to that, but it is also too arbitrary.

Earlier, the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* (MEXT) submitted a request to the *Tokyo District Court* for an order to dissolve the religious organisation (reported 14th Oct. in various newspapers). But the press coverage of this was limited to reporting the announcement and did not examine the content of the request at all.

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According to the published reports, "There were 32 judgments that deemed the **religious organisation** liable for damages. Solicitation of donations and the sale of goods made by believers to 169 victims were found to be unlawful (total compensation amount of about 2.2 billion yen)" and "There were approximately 1,550 people included in the reconciliations and settlements, and the total amount of settlement payments is about 20.4 billion yen" (*Asahi Shimbun* 13th October).

However, serious doubts arise if this announcement is viewed from a different angle. Seishiro Sugihara, former professor at *Musashino Women's University*, pointed out in an article published in the 14th October issue of this newspaper,



Seishiro Sugihara. Photo: *Sekai Nippo*. Published with permission.

"A large part of the

compensation amount claimed by the Ministry of Education has already been determined in court as compensation paid by the religious

organization, or as amounts (and number of people) settled through reconciliation or settlements."



Logo of the *Sekai Nippo*

Sugihara emphasized,

"The amount reported by individuals who file new claims does not directly become the total compensation amount. It only becomes part of the compensation when there is a legitimate reason to seek a refund, and yet the religious organization refuses to pay. The Ministry of Education's figures are outrageously exaggerated and serve as a form of manipulation."

This view cannot be known if only an announcement is being reported. At the very least, in terms of fair reporting, the claims of the **religious organisation** should have been published. But the press conference held by the **religious organisation** was only covered in a short report in the *Asahi Shimbun* and the *Mainichi Shimbun* 17th October with a two-column headline on the third page of the "society section". The third page is at worst a news dump and is often used as an excuse to say, "We reported it." In other words, it is a form of "freedom not to report".

A nearly dead code of ethics

In the first place, there are many doubts about fair reporting in the newspapers. In the past, the chief editors of *Ryukyu Shimpō* and *Okinawa Times*, both



The logo of the *Shimbun Akahata*

members of the *Japan Newspaper Publishers Association*, appeared on the front page of the Sunday edition of the *Japanese Communist Party's* official newspaper, *Shimbun Akahata*, and declared a "joint struggle" with the party over the relocation of the *US Futenma Air Base* to Henoko, Nago City (20th August 2017).

In this situation, those are no longer newspapers of impartiality. Reports on the **religious organisation** overlap with this political struggle. This is because the reports are all about announcements made by *National Network of Lawyers*

Against Spiritual Sales (Zenkoku Benren), which is led by leftwing lawyers affiliated with the Communist Party and those who support extremist groups.

In this light, the two statements in the *Newspaper Code of Ethics*: "The duty of a reporter is to pursue the truth" and "reporting must be accurate and fair" are almost dead words. Reporting must not be "influenced by the position and beliefs of the individual journalist", and "commentaries must not be swayed by the world". Instead, reporting is now swayed by the world (public opinion) the reporters themselves have created.

Claiming that the spread of misinformation is exacerbated by AI without any self-reflection lacks credibility. I want to express my frustration that this year's Newspaper Week has been particularly hypocritical.

Featured image above: Cartoon titled *Public Opinion*, 22nd April 1874. Photo: Cornell University Library / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

"Media-Created Public Opinion Is Boss" – text: Kiyoji Masu. Published 28th Oct. 2023 at 1.33 pm. Updated 4.27 pm.

More about media-created public opinion: [Incendiary Hate Speech from Washington Post](#)

Even more about media-created public opinion: [Bizarre Atlantic Report Condoning Terror](#)

And yet more about media-created public opinion: [Did Constant Hate-Mongering Cause Terror?](#)

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