

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy

Knut Holdhus
February 9, 2024



Masumi Fukuda speaking 20th January 2024 in Tokyo

Militant lawyers known to fabricate false "victims" allowed to dictate policy of Kishida administration

In a series of four articles, [Bitter Winter](#), the online magazine for human rights and religious freedom, has published an in-depth report originally written in Japanese by investigative journalist Masumi Fukuda and published by the magazine Monthly Hanada in its February 2024 issue. The report by Fukuda, who is also an award-winning author, is titled "Dissolve the Anti-Cult Lawyer Group, Not the [Unification Church](#)." She is referring to a group of leftwing militant lawyers specializing in fabricating false "victims".



On 27th January 2024, [Bitter Winter](#) published the first of its four articles in English. It was headlined "[Attorneys Against Religious Liberty](#)".

A group of fanatical activist leftwing lawyers, in league with a media willing to listen, has

managed to paint a horrendous picture of the former [Unification Church](#), now known as the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), as a fraudulent group posing as a religion. This group is perceived to exploit innocent Japanese individuals for their wealth and subject second-generation believers to unimaginable hardships.

The fanaticism of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS) is in many ways reminiscent of how the Jews were portrayed by the Nazis before and during World War II. Masumi Fukuda points out how the activist network has successfully collaborated with the media to shape this negative perception, painting the former [Unification Church](#) as an "enemy of the people". However, in her opinion, the NNLASS's actions appear more akin to a left-wing political movement disguised as a campaign to rescue victims of fraudulent activities.



Hiroshi Yamaguchi, activist leftwing lawyer and leading member of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales

Attorney Hiroshi Yamaguchi, a member of the Second Tokyo Bar Association, played a pivotal role in establishing the NNLASS and appears to harbour an intense animosity towards Reverend [Sun Myung Moon](#), the founder of the [Unification Church](#). Yamaguchi's involvement stems from his deep-seated disdain, as evidenced by his declaration at an NNLASS gathering where he vehemently denounced [Reverend Moon](#).

Fukuda writes,

"At a gathering after an>NNLASS meeting, Attorney Yamaguchi, surrounded by like-minded lawyers, reportedly shouted, '[Sun Myung Moon](#), go to hell!' Other lawyers raised their fists and echoed in agreement, shouting, 'Yes!'"



Taro Kono, government minister who brought extreme leftwing lawyer Masaki Kito, who is hostile to the [Family Federation](#), in as special advisor to the Kishida government

Taro Kono, Minister for Digital Transformation and Minister for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety since August 2022, just after the Abe assassination, insisted on including Masaki Kito, one of the leading militant lawyers from the hostile network, in a study group set up by Kono to investigate the [Unification Church](#). This gave the activist lawyers a key position to dictate their fierce anti-[Unification Church](#) plans to the government.

[More about Taro Kono appointing Masaki Kito.](#)

From the beginning, the goal of the lawyers had been to dissolve the [Unification Church](#). And on 13th October 2023, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) made a historic announcement, seeking the dissolution of the [church](#), now called the [Family Federation](#).

Fukuda explains,

"For Attorney Yamaguchi [another leading activist leftwing lawyer and founder of the hostile network], this news marked a momentous occasion, undoubtedly filled with deep emotions.

In February 1987, just before the formation of>NNLASS, he had declared his intention to ask the then Ministry of Education to 'investigate the anti-social activities of the [UC](#) and demand the revocation of its religious corporation status.' This was even before tackling the actual details of the alleged spiritual sales fraud ('Shakai Shinpo', February 20, 1987). It has been a long journey of thirty-six years, a passage through time."

Yamaguchi's sentiments upon the announcement reflected a mix of emotions, as he expressed his extreme views and hope that current followers would seize the opportunity to redefine their paths in life. His hope is of course that all followers abandon their beliefs. However, his words were met with skepticism and criticism from believers and neutral observers alike, who indeed questioned his sincerity and motives.

The>NNLASS's bizarre claim that all Japanese [Unification Church](#) followers are victims of deceptive evangelism and mind control may not only be viewed as unwarranted interference by believers. In addition, this is sheer peddling of outdated concepts, abandoned by most serious scholars a long time ago and regarded as pseudoscience. Dr. Massimo Introvigne, leading sociologist of religion, has this to say,

"The Abe assassination is now used for reviving the dead horse of brainwashing and of theories claiming that bad 'cults', unlike good 'religions', recruit members and donors through mental manipulation. Just as it happened during the European witch hunts and the Japanese persecution of Christians for which Abe apologized, accusations of black magic - of which brainwashing is only the secularized version - and of operating an 'evil cult' lead to dehumanize, discriminate and persecute those so accused.

Today, they come for the [Unification Church](#). Tomorrow, they may come for any religion that has among its enemies, lobbies powerful enough to persuade the media it is a 'cult'." (Quoted from [The Abe Assassination. The Word 'Cult' Is A Tool for Discrimination](#), an article by Dr. Massimo Introvigne, published by [Bitter Winter](#), a magazine on religious liberty and human rights, 2nd Sept. 2022.)

Yamaguchi's call for followers to "reclaim themselves" raises doubts about his true intentions and the

extent of his commitment to their well-being.



Dr. Massimo Introvigne in April 2023

In light of these developments, Yamaguchi's obvious advocacy for individuals to break free from perceived mind control and regain their autonomy raises eyebrows and prompts further scrutiny into his motivations and the broader agenda of the NNLASS.

Yamaguchi and Kito, as well as the other members of the network believe that all members of the [Unification Church](#) ought to be deprogrammed. Of course, only by "experts" approved of by those lawyers. And the Kishida administration has already allowed such an extreme network to set the agenda, like it does in communist China with its war on religion. One almost gets the feeling that the network of lawyers regards themselves as saviours, come to save people who cannot think for themselves.



Masahito Moriyama, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)

During a press conference on 12th October 2023, MEXT Minister Masahito Moriyama elucidated the rationale behind the court petition for the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#). According to the Hanada article republished by [Bitter Winter](#), he disclosed,

"After November of last year [2022], the Agency for Cultural Affairs exercised the 'report collection and right of questioning' of the Religious Corporations Law seven times, considering the possibility of filing a dissolution order and gathering relevant materials. Concurrently, it conducted hearings with the NNLASS and individual victims, numbering over 170 nationwide."

It is of course extraordinary that the authorities conduct 170 hearings with the anti-[Unification Church](#) lawyers and so-called victims, and yet refuse to hold even one hearing with current believers.

Building upon these premises, Moriyama highlighted that

"the former [UC](#), at least since around 1980, has continuously imposed restrictions on the free decision-making of numerous believers, causing significant damage by inducing contributions and purchases of goods under conditions where normal judgment is impeded, and disturbing the peace of their lives."

Claims about imposing "restrictions on the free decision-making of numerous believers" is simply another way of saying that the [Unification Church](#) uses mind control. As mentioned above, "mind control" is a concept discredited by the majority of scholars of religion.

Moriyama also detailed around 32 cases where liability for damages stemming from activities post-1980 was recognized, involving a cumulative tally of 569 supposed victims.

Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama points out that many of the so-called victims, were forced by the activist lawyers to file for damages,

"Deprogrammers in consultation with leftwing lawyers deprogrammed as many as more than 4,000 believers and forced those poor believers to file a lawsuit against the [Family Federation](#) for donation refunds. The lawyers said something like this, 'Unless you file a lawsuit, we continue to take you as mind-controlled by the [Family Federation](#). So do file an action against the [Family Federation](#). Otherwise, we will continue to confine you and imprison you for deprogramming.'"



Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama in January 2024

The [Family Federation](#) challenges Moriyama's claims and emphatically maintains that its activities in no way meet the criteria warranting a dissolution order. The [federation](#) disputes the government's claims of organizational (e.g., led by leaders), "malicious," or continuous misconduct. Additionally, the [Family Federation](#) criticizes the>NNLASS, alleging that the "scale of damage" disclosed by the MEXT amounted to only approximately 5% in terms of cases and 16% in terms of financial amount, compared to figures asserted by the>NNLASS over the past 35 years, highlighting what they perceive as significant exaggeration by the>NNLASS regarding the extent of damages.

Notably, the bulk of these purported "damages" have already been resolved. Additionally, a crucial aspect to consider is that despite the MEXT's claim of individually interviewing over 170 alleged victims nationwide, they have not conversed with any current member of the [Family Federation](#). This investigation is perceived as severely lacking in fairness, prompting doubts

about how the MEXT plans to verify the credibility of the testimony of the "victims" under these circumstances.

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Anti-Family Federation minister central in seeking court order

Several Japanese papers reported 12th October that the Japanese authorities will seek a court order to dissolve the Family Federation. If the court rules as the government wishes, the Family Federation would lose its religious corporation status. It is expected that the Tokyo District Court will receive the court order already on Friday 13th October. Although the district court will reach a verdict within months, the entire legal process could last for several years.

The Japan Times reports 12th October that members of the [Family Federation](#) made a last minute appeal to the authorities by submitting signatures from 53,499 members urging the Japanese leadership not to go for a dissolution order. The paper quotes a statement from the petitioners,

"If an actual order is issued (by the court), all assets, including real estate such as church worship facilities and training centers, will be confiscated and liquidated, resulting in a significant limitation on the freedom of religious activities for followers."



Kunihiko Shibnuma, initiator of [Family Federation](#) signature campaign. Photo (2021): Screenshot from [FFWPU](#) YouTube video.



Journalist Makoto Fukatsu wrote in the *Mainichi Shimbun*, Japan's oldest paper and one of its largest, on 11th October that

"from the perspective of ensuring the legitimacy of the request, the ministry would like to proceed with the procedure after obtaining the approval of the council members [Council of Religious Corporations]."

And the ministry did consult with the council before making its decision. But not everyone on the council agreed that the request to the court is legitimate. In another article the same day, the *Mainichi* published a statement by one of the members of the *Council of Religious Corporations*, who expressed his concern that purely political motives may well be behind the current process initiated by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. The council member points out, "the dissolution order is a 'death sentence' against a religious corporation, and the request for dissolution should follow a careful procedure."

He emphasized that political intentions could be involved, saying,

"We do not want to be influenced by the political agenda. Politics tries to use what it can"

Mainichi explains that the obvious reason for Kishida's actions against the [Family Federation](#) is that the government is hoping that the dissolution request will lead to an increase in support.

Many are in fact wondering why Prime Minister Kishida is in a hurry to get the

dissolution order. Little has been written about that in the Japanese media. One who has made a good analysis of the situation, is Kazuhiro Aoyama, political journalist and part-time lecturer at the private distance learning university Seisa. In an article in the weekly business and finance magazine *Toyo Keizai* (Oriental Economist) 17th October 2022, he asks the question,

"Why did Prime Minister Kishida, who remained cautious about the dissolution order from the viewpoint of 'freedom of religion', change his policy in a hurry?"

The answer, according to Aoyama, is connected to one leading politician within the Kishida administration. Taro Kono.



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Minister for Digital Transformation and Minister for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety since August 2022, just after the Abe assassination. Aoyama explains,

“On August 8, at his first press conference since taking office as minister, Kono announced the establishment of a study group on the issue of the former Unification Church in the Consumer Affairs Agency. Two days after the Cabinet reshuffle, it was a lightning-fast move without instructions from Prime Minister Kishida.”

The Toyo Keizai article points out that Kishida considered Kono a key player to win over public opinion in the aftermath of the terror attack on Shinzo Abe. But Prime Minister Kishida “had concerns about his arbitrary and exclusive actions. When Prime Minister Kishida heard about the launch of the study group, he asked the people around Kono if they were okay with it.”



Masaki Kito. Photo: Screenshot / [Bitter Winter](#)

One worrying point for Kishida and members of the Consumer Affairs Agency, was the fact that Kono appointed Masaki Kito, an activist radical leftwing lawyer who had been campaigning against the [Family Federation / Unification Church](#) since a long time. But Taro Kono insisted on Kito's inclusion in the agency and did not want to reconsider it when faced with criticism.

Although Aoyama does not mention it, it turns out that Kito and Kono have a long history together. Taro Kono himself, along with his father Yohei Kono, a leading LDP politician for many years, and leftwing Masaki Kito – all friendly towards China – were vehemently fighting the espionage prevention bill that Abe and other LDP politicians had tried to introduce. An organization founded by [Sun Myung Moon](#) called *Victory over communism* (VOC) was actively supporting the introduction of the anti-espionage legislation. Since then, Kono has had a rather cold relationship to the [Family Federation](#).

Taro Kono is a contender for the LDP leadership, but is by many considered a political maverick, even eccentric.

Featured image above: Taro Kono 15th August 2022. Photo: デジタル庁. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

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