

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Focus On Donations In Tokyo Court Case

Knut Holdhus
February 25, 2024



Japanese money. Photo (2020)

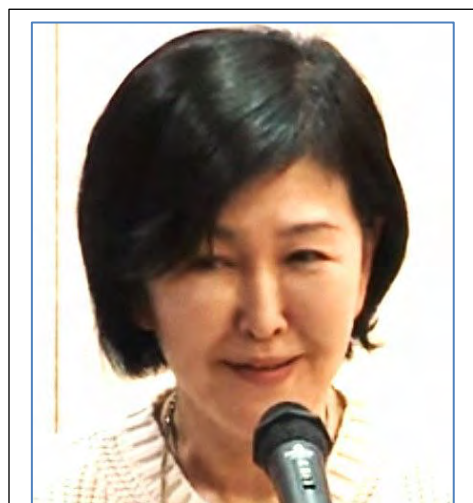
Japanese news outlets report focus on donations on first day of hearings in Tokyo

the japan times

The Japan Times, the country's largest and oldest English-language daily published 23rd Feb. 2024 a Kyodo News report on the first day of hearings in the case against the [Family Federation](#) (formerly called the [Unification Church](#)) brought by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) requesting the court to issue an order to dissolve the religious organization.

The paper writes that the request for a dissolution order is because of the "aggressive donation solicitation practices" of the former [Unification Church](#), that has been a registered religious corporation in Japan since 1964.

In its coverage of the first day at Tokyo District Court 22nd February, the English-language newspaper states that the Kishida administration has based its request on "claims" that the [religious organization](#) "systematically and repeatedly solicited financially ruinous donations from followers."



Masumi Fukuda speaking in Tokyo
20th Jan. 2024

The Japan Times writes,

"The probe into the [organization](#) and testimony from victims and their family members led the government to conclude the [church](#) deviated significantly from the aims of a religious organization.

Tomihiko Tanaka, head of the [Unification Church](#)'s Japan branch, told the session that the ministry's view of the [organization](#) is mistaken, according to people who attended the hearing."

An investigative journalist who shares Tanaka's view that the authorities have been fed a distorted perception of the [Family Federation](#), is Masumi Fukuda. She writes in the magazine Monthly Hanada February 2024 that the Kishida administration attack on the [faith](#) that originates in South Korea, is based on a media outcry about "victims", largely masterminded and staged

by a hostile leftwing organization of activist lawyers - National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, an organization founded 37 years ago with a pronounced goal to do away with the [Unification](#)

Church.

Fukuda writes,

"Opponents often criticize the high donations to the [FFWPU](#), claiming condescendingly that "[God](#) doesn't need money." However, for religious organizations to fulfill these purposes, donations are essential. Actually, [God](#) does indeed need money." (From "[Myth and Reality of the 'Spiritual Sales'](#)", Bitter Winter 29th January 2024.)

In addition, donations are the only source of income for non-profit religious corporations. Still, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) views systematic donation solicitation as deviating significantly from a religious organization's purpose, a conclusion seen as shortsighted and lacking understanding of religious dynamics.

The [Family Federation](#) asserts that donations mainly support overseas missionary activities and educational expenses, aligning with the core purposes of religious corporations. They maintain that donation collection aims to support these activities rather than financial gain.



Agency for Cultural Affairs

Investigative journalist Masumi Fukuda criticized the Agency for Cultural Affairs, a special body of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), for cooperating when examining the [Family Federation](#), with the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (National Benren),

"The National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales teamed up with the Agency for Cultural Affairs and gave them instructions on what to do. It is highly questionable whether the Agency for Cultural Affairs, with a hostile organization as a collaborator, was able to make a neutral and fair decision. The claims of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales are being passed on without being checked." ("[Conference on Religious Freedom Violations](#)", Masumi Fukuda quoted in article in Tokyo paper Sekai Nippo 2nd Oct. 2023, translated from

Japanese and republished by [News and Insights](#))

Fukuda commented in June 2023 on what she calls "fraudulent lawsuits" filed against the [Family Federation](#) by the hostile network of lawyers,

"For almost all religions, including the former [Unification Church](#), donations, endowments, and charitable gifts are expressions of piety and are offered willingly to [God](#). [...]"

Unfortunately, however, even if the donors are convinced at the time of the donation that they are donating freely, as time goes by, their faith may wane. Their relatives may rush to the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales to recover the donation.



Dr. Massimo Introvigne, April 2023

The donors may be persuaded by lawyers from the Communist Party of Japan or the former Socialist Party that they have been 'deceived', and a lawsuit against the [religious organization](#) for the return of the donation may follow. In fact, there are many cases in which relatives consulted with the Network on how to force the donors-believers to sue." ([The Plot to Destroy the Unification Church in Japan. 3. Fraudulent Lawsuits](#), written by Masumi Fukuda, published in [Bitter Winter](#) 26th June 2023.)

And yet, Fumio Kishida's administration have to a large extent based its case against the [Family Federation](#) on claims by the network and their fraudulent lawsuits.

Putting pressure on members to make large donations. This is one of the standard allegations from the network of activist lawyers. And at the same time it has become one of the allegations the Japanese authorities base their witch hunt of the [Family Federation](#) on. Dr. Massimo Introvigne, a leading authority on religious freedom, criticizes such a claim, saying,

"In its general principles, the [Unification Church](#)'s theology of

donations is surprisingly similar to its Catholic and Protestant counterparts. [...]

Ultimately, the problem is theological and philosophical. For a believer, donations may be deep spiritual experiences. For an atheist, or somebody who believes that groups such as the [Unification Church](#) are not "real" religions, no caution would be good enough, and no donation would ever be recognized as the fruit of a free and reasonable choice." ([The Abe Assassination. Donations to the Unification Church: Separating Facts from Fiction](#), [Bitter Winter](#) 3rd Sept. 2022)

"Focus on Donations in Tokyo Court Case" - text: Knut Holdhus

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Donations Issue: "God Does Indeed Need Money"

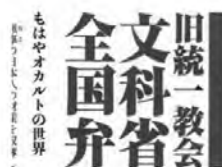
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Investigative journalist unravels the donations issue central to claims against Family Federation in Japan

Masumi Fukuda, award-winning Japanese author and investigative journalist, has written an in-depth report titled "Dissolve the Anti-Cult Lawyer Group, Not the Unification Church." She is referring to a group of



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Church. She is referring to a group of leftwing activist lawyers who have specialized in fabricating false "victims".



In a series of four articles, [Bitter Winter](#), the online magazine for human rights and religious freedom, has published her report originally written in Japanese and published by the magazine *Monthly Hanada* in its February 2024 issue.

On 29th January 2024, [Bitter Winter](#) published the second of its four articles in English. It was headlined "Myth and Reality of the 'Spiritual Sales'".

On [part 1](#) of Masumi Fukuda's report, [part 3](#), [part 4a](#), [part 4b](#)

The current case where the Japanese authorities have requested Tokyo District Court to issue an order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#), is based on a media outcry surrounding "victims", **largely orchestrated by an organization of activist lawyers** of *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales*, an organization founded 37 years ago to eliminate the [Unification Church](#).



Masumi Fukuda speaking 20th January 2024 in Tokyo. Photo: Screenshot.

According to Masumi Fukuda, many individuals voluntarily donated to the [Family Federation](#), but later, due to a loss of faith or familial pressure, requested refunds. Historically, the [Family Federation](#) has typically **honored such refund requests**, which is uncommon for religious organizations and may inadvertently lead to unintended consequences.

The investigative journalist writes,

"National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS) is fabricating new "victims" by provoking individuals with statements like, "Let's negotiate for a refund. Let's sue. If you do that, you will get your money back." Thus, there are two types of plaintiffs: ex-believers who are instigated by NNLASS lawyers who say, "You can easily recover the money you donated," and those who are victims of deprogramming – ex-believers who were kidnapped and confined by their families and then persuaded to sue by the deprogrammers."

On the other hand, it's likely shocking for the [Family Federation](#) to hear that their "systematic solicitation of donations" is cited as grounds for a dissolution order, potentially violating Article 81, Paragraph 1, of the *Religious Corporations Act*. Critics argue that excessive donations to the [Family Federation](#), deemed unnecessary by some, contradict the true purpose of religious organizations. However, donations are crucial for fulfilling the fundamental purposes of religious groups such as spreading teachings, conducting ceremonies, and educating believers.



Facsimile from page 98 of the February 2024 issue of *Monthly Hanada*.

Reach His Goal
February 19, 2024

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

Fukuda writes,

"Opponents often criticize the high donations to the **FFWPU**, claiming condescendingly that "God doesn't need money." However, for religious organizations to fulfill these purposes, donations are essential. Actually, **God** does indeed need money."

Additionally, donations are the primary income source for non-profit religious corporations. Despite this, the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* (MEXT) views systematic donation solicitation as deviating significantly from a religious organization's purpose, a conclusion seen as shortsighted and lacking understanding of religious dynamics.

The **Family Federation** asserts that donations mainly support overseas missionary activities and educational expenses, aligning with the core purposes of religious corporations. They maintain that donation collection aims to support these activities rather than financial gain.

Masumi Fukuda maintains that in essence, soliciting donations for religious purposes should be acceptable as long as it's not coercive or extortionate. Unlike cases where dissolution orders were granted, such as the Myokaku-ji [temple near Osaka belonging to *Nichiren Buddhism*] case, the **Family Federation** hasn't faced criminal charges or fraud allegations under the Penal Code or Civil Code.



Front cover page of *Monthly Hanada* Feb. 2024.

Fukuda interviewed four individuals who had made significant donations to the **Family Federation**, formerly known as the **Unification Church**. The donation practices of the church were a central factor in the request for its dissolution. Among these followers, three were women and one was a man.

Michiko Tsuji, a 73-year-old woman residing in Tokyo, joined the **Family Federation** in August 1983. She recounted how a fellow believer visited her home that same year to sell a personal seal.

There were no coercive tactics used, and Tsuji, who was expecting a child at the time, was intrigued by the believer's fortune-telling and name analysis services. She ended up purchasing a set of seals for 240,000 yen, considering it a mysterious guidance. Subsequently, she and her husband attended **Family Federation** exhibitions and eventually purchased a pagoda.

Tsuji, who had been leading a prosperous life, often faced jests from acquaintances questioning her involvement with the **Unification Church**. However, she was searching for deeper meaning in her life since the age of 15. The **Unification Church** provided answers to her existential quest.

After acquiring the pagoda, Tsuji had several spiritual experiences, such as feeling a sensation of ascending from hell to heaven while climbing a historic temple staircase in Korea. She experienced "spiritual movement" and saw her maternal grandmother's face, which led her to pray for causes like the reunification of Korea and world peace.



Learning about Reverend **Sun Myung Moon's** sacrificial efforts to save humanity, Tsuji adopted the teaching to **live for the sake of others**. Over the forty years



Father Moon receiving an honorary doctorate from Bloomfield College, New Jersey, USA in the year 2000. Photo: FFWPU

the forty years of her membership, she and her husband have donated a total of 100 million yen.

While Tsuji emphasizes that donations are not compulsory, she believes that understanding the importance of **God's providence**, which is **God's** plan for humanity's salvation, naturally leads to contributions. **Providence**, as explained by the **Unification Church**, guides believers on how to act for humanity's salvation, particularly in the context of combating ideologies like communism. However, Tsuji acknowledges the potential issues if excessive donations lead to neglecting family responsibilities.

She reflects on how some early believers, driven by their zeal for achieving world peace and paradise on earth, neglected their families. This serves as a point of introspection for the **Family Federation** according to Tsuji.

Continued in [part 3](#)

Featured image above: *Miniature pagoda sold by members of the **Unification Church** in Japan. Photo: [Bitter Winter](#)*

On [part 1](#) of Masumi Fukuda's report, [part 3](#), [part 4a](#), [part 4b](#)

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