

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan uses disinformation and false claims against religious minority

Knut Holdhus
March 14, 2024



Tomihiko Tanaka, President of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan at press conference 7th November 2023 in Tokyo

Disinformation and false claims used against religious minority in dissolution case

Part 3 of the English version of statement by President Tomihiko Tanaka, President of the [Family Federation](#) (FFWPU) of Japan, at the Tokyo District Court on 22nd February 2024. Published with permission.

See [part 1](#), [part 2](#)

In discussing the issues related to our church, the next unavoidable matter is the National Network of Lawyers against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS). This association, formed by lawyers affiliated with the Social Democratic Party [formerly the Socialist Party (JSP)] and the Japan Communist Party, has pursued the dissolution of our [church](#) for political reasons since its [NNLASS] establishment in 1987.

Our [church](#) and its affiliated group, the International Federation for Victory Over Communism (IFVOC), have advocated against the threat of communism, worked to prevent the leftward shift in Japan, and actively promoted the enactment of spy prevention legislation. NNLASS aimed to thwart these activities. They adopted the principle of "any means justifying the end" and closely collaborated with deprogrammers behind the scenes. They utilized former believers who had lost their faith through deprogramming by means of abduction and confinement as plaintiffs in legal battles against our [church](#).

Moreover, the courts adopted a policy of admitting the claims of NNLASS and testimonies of apostates as truthful unless our [church](#) could prove the falseness. Consequently, our church faced a series of defeat judgments over an extended period.

However, our [church](#) finally succeeded in proving the falsehood of their claims and testimonies, achieving complete victories in two civil cases in 2021. In one of these cases, our [church](#) proved not only the falseness of the plaintiffs' claims and testimonies, but also the fact that the evidence submitted by the plaintiffs to the court was fabricated. On July 7, 2022, the Tokyo High Court delivered a complete victory judgment for our [church](#) in one of the two cases. It seemed that this brought an end to the history of legal battles orchestrated by the NNLASS using false claims and testimonies.



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

Since the Compliance Declaration of our [church](#), the number of complaints against our [church](#) has dramatically decreased. Attorney Hiroshi Yamaguchi, the secretary-general of the NNLASS, provided an article titled "Increasing Complaints from Growing Small Groups" to the July 2022 issue of the monthly magazine "Consumer Law News", and in the article, he explicitly mentions a reduction in consultations related to the former [Unification Church](#) and an increase in complaints concerning small religious groups that were previously unheard of.

However, on July 8, 2022, a shooting incident involving the former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe occurred, and the NNLASS held a press conference, announcing exaggerated figures regarding our [church](#). They claimed that the number of "consultations" received about our [church](#) over the past 35 years was approximately 34,000, and the "amount of damages" exceeded 120 billion yen. On October 12, 2023, the day before

MEXT [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology] filed the request for dissolution to the court, it announced the "number of damages" was approximately 1,600 cases and amount of damages was around 22.6 billion yen since 1980.

The figures released by NNLASS show an exaggerated difference, approximately 20 times in terms of the

number of cases and six times in terms of the amount. Even the "scale of damages" announced by MEXT includes numerous amounts of cases which were resolved through negotiation, settlements, or compromises, "damages" MEXT claims are deviating significantly from the actual nature of the "damages". This clearly indicates how>NNLASS engaged in exaggerated and distorted announcements. Their purpose of spreading disinformation through the media must be gaining new clients, and ultimately achieving their long-standing goal of our [church](#)'s dissolution.



*Yasuhiro Nakasone (1918-2019),
Japanese Prime Minister 1982-
1987*

Ideally, the government should not be influenced by such one-sided announcements. However, on August 31, 2022, Prime Minister Kishida declared a severance with the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) as the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Most believers of our [church](#) work like ordinary individuals in regular companies, hospitals, banks, and even at the national and local government levels.

If attempts were made to execute such a severance declaration, every member of LDP in the parliament would need to verify the ideology and beliefs of every person encountered in their daily lives and sever ties upon discovering them to be followers of our [church](#). Such a severance declaration is clearly discriminatory based on ideology and religious beliefs, violating the spirit of Article 14 of the Japanese Constitution. Additionally, it also violates Article 20(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which prohibits the advocacy of religious hatred.

During parliamentary questioning in 1987, then-Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, when pressured by Communist Party

members to sever ties with IFVOC, stated, "It is a serious infringement on freedom of thought and action," and emphasized that it was a manifestation of the Communist Party's dictatorial policies. He asserted, "Statements that violate the Constitution by infringing on freedom of thought and action should be refrained from." If Prime Minister Kishida had similarly announced such a reasonable stance, there would have been no issue. Moreover, such a situation would not have escalated to the extreme measure of filing a dissolution request against our [church](#).



Loudspeaker van of the kind used to blast hostile messages outside [Family Federation](#) premises in Japan

Prime Minister Kishida has created an irreversible situation through the severance declaration. Overnight, he changed the legal interpretation of the dissolution grounds, compelling the previously reluctant MEXT [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology] to enforce an illegal exercise of questioning rights. Moreover, based on this undue interpretation change, he finally proceeded to file a dissolution request, falling squarely into the hands of>NNLASS. In the first place, it is unavoidable to describe the situation as extremely abnormal when a former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated by the bullets of a terrorist, and the nation, as the perpetrator desires, mobilizes all its powers to actively strive for the dissolution of our [church](#).

In the current dissolution request lawsuit, MEXT claims that many victims have emerged because of our [church](#) and submitted 257 testimonies. Excluding family members, lawyers, and others, the total number of deponents is 233. Considering that our [church](#) membership is 600,000, with approximately 120,000 active members attending

worship at least once a month, allowing dissolution based on the dissatisfaction of these 233 individuals is unforgivable. Furthermore, the majority of the incidents that these 233 individuals supposedly complained about have already been resolved.

Since the shooting incident, our church has faced various damages due to one-sided critical reporting by the media, hindrance of business activities through right-wing loudspeaker demonstrations, threatening phone calls, threatening emails, graffiti on [church](#) facilities, refusal of package deliveries by courier services, refusal of orders by florists, refusal of sales by automobile dealerships, and more. Additionally, 19 instances of refusal to accept donation funds, including bazaar proceeds, from public institutions have

occurred, and some institutions that previously received donation funds have returned them. The recent earthquake damage on the Noto peninsula also saw a refusal of relief donations.

Furthermore, believers of our [church](#) have experienced discriminatory treatment reminiscent of "[non-citizens](#)" during wartime, enduring bullying in schools and workplaces, persecution from non-believing family members, refusal of medical treatment at hospitals, eviction requests from rental properties, depression, and suicides among believers, resulting in incomprehensible and severe damages.

Additionally, thousands of believers residing in Japan through international marriages from 95 countries around the world see the [church](#) as more than just a place of faith; it serves as a crucial support in their social lives. The prospect of losing this support due to the dissolution of the [organization](#) is an extraordinary source of anxiety for them. If, by any chance, the dissolution request is granted, it poses a risk of even more significant human rights violations and extensive harm.

In the courts, we earnestly request a thorough understanding of the essence of this dissolution request and an impartial judgment.

This concludes our statement.

See [part 1](#), [part 2](#)

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Part 2 of the English version of statement by President Tomihiro Tanaka, President of the [Family Federation \(FFWPU\)](#) of Japan, at the Tokyo District Court on 22nd February 2024. Published with permission.

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Next, I would like to discuss the unavoidable issues of **deprogramming by means of abduction and confinement** when addressing the issues of our church.

Organizations opposing our church have systematically and persistently engaged in **egregious human rights violations**, such as **abduction, confinement, and forced de-conversion against our believers**, with the aim of **destroying our church**. According to our church's records, **over 4,300 believers have suffered from such abuses**. When a believer is abducted and confined, they are subjected to daily verbal abuse from those trying to force them to leave the church, and they are **not released from confinement even for years until they are acknowledged that they have truly lost their faith**.



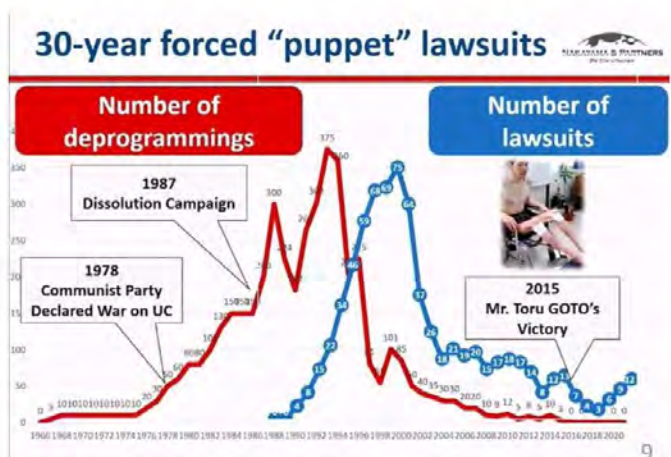
Tomihiko Tanaka, President of the Family Federation in Japan. Here at press conference 7th November 2023 in Tokyo. Photo: FFWPU

To be recognized as having lost one's faith, the **confined believer must actively collaborate in abducting and confining other believers**, engage in opposition activities such as **providing defamatory statements to the media and filing civil lawsuits** against our church. In this way, believers who originally led active and positive religious lives are transformed into apostates through abduction and confinement who vehemently oppose our church. These former believers then sue our church, make false statements in court to secure victories. When they win the cases, these results are reported in the media, then other believers' parents become concerned. This leads to a cycle of infinite repetition, with new believers being abducted and confined.

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Strong proof of lawyers exploiting illegalities: correlation between number of deprogrammings and number of lawsuits. Illustration: Tatsuki Nakayama, lawyer

Additionally, there have been instances where former believers who had left the church urged women believers who had made donations to our church to seek repayment through lawsuits. As a result, multiple civil lawsuits have been filed against our church. **The number of abduction and confinement cases and the number of civil lawsuits against our church exhibit a similar pattern over time.**

An increase in abduction and confinement cases is followed by a slight time lag, after which there is an increase in civil lawsuits. Similarly, a decrease in abduction and confinement cases is followed by a slight time lag, after which there is a decrease in civil lawsuits. Detailed information is available in the report submitted by our church as Exhibit B7, and I recommend referring to it.

Remarkably, Mr. Takashi Miyamura, a central figure among those orchestrating deprogramming, is said to have been **planning to dissolve our**



church through abduction, confinement, and legal battles since the early 1990s.



Professional deprogrammer Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻). Photo: FFWPU

In 2014, the United Nations Human Rights Committee issued recommendations urging the Japanese government to handle the issue of abduction and forced



CCPR/C/JPN/CO/6

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General
29 August 2014
Original: English

Human Rights Committee

Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Japan*

From header of UN document with United Nations' recommendations to Japan on human rights of believers.

confinement appropriately.

Furthermore, in 2015, the **Supreme Court decision was issued in a lawsuit filed by a believer who had suffered abduction, confinement, and coerced deconversion for 12 years** against figures such as Mr. Takashi Miyamura, confirming a **complete victory for the believer**. Although the issue of abduction and confinement was largely resolved through this process, many former believers who had left the church due to abduction, confinement, and coerced deconversion sued our church.

In nationwide lawsuits against our church by former believers, known as the "Return Our Youth", the majority of the 180 plaintiffs, in



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Symbol of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan. Photo: 文部科学省 (MEXT Japan) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int

Sapporo, Niigata, Tokyo, and elsewhere, with only a few exceptions, were **believers who had experienced abduction and confinement**. Additionally, of the 22 civil judgments that MEXT [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology] relied on for the exercise of questioning rights, **more than half of the plaintiffs**, to the best of our knowledge, **were victims of abduction and confinement**. In addition, MEXT submitted 257 written testimonies in the request for dissolution order in this case, but it was confirmed that approximately half of them are victims of abduction and confinement.

We highlighted the fact that **opposing groups fabricated "victims" by engaging in illegal activities as abduction and confinement** in the report submitted by our church to MEXT for responding to their exercise of questioning rights. However, MEXT [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology], in its first written statement, argues that there is no reasonable basis for our church's claims regarding the issue of abduction and confinement. However, the aforementioned UN recommendation is based on the premise that **Japan is in violation of international law**. Therefore, if MEXT denies the fact of deprogramming by means of abduction and confinement itself, it is **tantamount to an official declaration that the Japanese government has no intention of complying with international law**, making it an extremely serious situation.

In Western countries, particularly among former members who become aggressive toward their former religious organizations are called "apostates", and research by scholars of religious sociology has shown that the **discourse of apostates lacks credibility**. However, such research findings were not available in Japan. Consequently, both the media and the courts have tended to lend an ear to the discourse of apostates. The **excessive falsehoods in the discourse of apostates**, and the fact that it **should not be used as evidence in the dissolution request case**, have already been clearly demonstrated in the written statement (2) submitted

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