

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan Relies on Lies from Enemy of FFWPU

Knut Holdhus
July 9, 2024



The Council of Religious Corporations discussing the use of the questioning rights by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology against the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (previously known as the Unification Church) - 14th December 2022, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Campaigning against minority faith, Kishida administration ignores its voice and relies entirely on information provided by archenemy of faith

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Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat - The Kishida Administration's Reckless Actions

A scapegoat to prolong the life of the government

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

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Masahito Moriyama, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) 2023

In an unprecedented overnight change of policy, the Fumio Kishida administration included wrongful acts according to civil law as grounds for requesting the dissolution of religious corporations. Because of that, the administration could use its "right to collect reports from and ask questions to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) for the first time on 22nd November 2022.

The right to ask questions was used seven times, and interviews were conducted with former members who claimed to be victims. On 12th October 2023, almost one year after Prime Minister Kishida ordered the use of the right to ask questions, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology decided to request a court order to dissolve the [religious organization](#). The following day, 13th October, such a request was filed with Tokyo District Court.

This is the first time that the government has requested a dissolution based on acts that are wrongful according to civil law. Masahito Moriyama (盛山正仁), Minister of Education,

Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, emphasized at a press conference that the damage from large donations had continued for many years, stating that it "had had a negative impact on many people." In response, the [Family Federation](#) criticized the decision on its website, saying, "It is deeply regrettable that

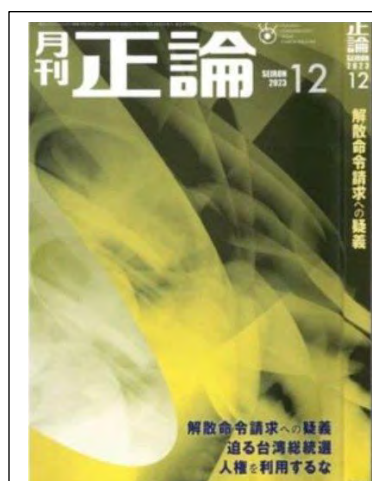
the Japanese government has made such an important decision based on biased information."

Prior to the decision, at a meeting of the Council of Religious Corporations held on the 12th October, Moriyama, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, announced his intention to make the request. It was unanimously recognized as "appropriate". He obtained the consent of the Council, which consists of academics and religious leaders.

However, although the decision was said to be "unanimous", it was not without dissenting voices. There were serious behind-the-scenes developments before the decision was made that cannot be overlooked. The Sankei Shimbun reported as follows on 13th October,



"A certain Council member selected from the religious community revealed to those around him in September of this year, when the investigation by Agency for Cultural Affairs was in its final stages, 'I still do not agree with the government's change of opinion.' The religious community was concerned about the impact on 'freedom of religion' due to the legal interpretation that was overturned overnight. Nevertheless, the Agency for Cultural Affairs appealed during the deliberations at the meeting [of the Council of Religious Corporations], stating 'if nothing is done about the [religious organization](#), the Cabinet will be blown away.' The Agency emphasized that the use of the right to ask questions - the basis for requesting a dissolution order - had to be legitimate. [Editor's note: Only the Council of Religious Corporations could grant them such a legitimacy.]"



The cover front page of Monthly Seiron December 2023



Professor Tsutomu Nishioka



Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa

The Council was established to hear objective and fair opinions from experts. Advocating from the outset for the Council to legitimate the dissolution request is putting the cart before the horse. Moreover, the fact that the reason for this is that "the Cabinet will be blown away" is tantamount to using a [religious organization](#) as a scapegoat for the prolongation of political power. The administration is only temporary. However, if freedom of religion, which is the foundation of a democratic society, is blatantly violated for the sake of prolonging the administration's life, it will leave a legacy of problems for the future.

The December 2023 issue of the monthly magazine Seiron (正論) featured a special section titled "Doubts about the Dissolution Order Request". In an article titled "Why the Government's Approach is Problematic," Haruhisa Nakagawa (中川晴久), secretary of the Tokyo Christian Theological Institute, has a discussion with Tsutomu Nishioka (西岡力), professor at the Institute of Moral Science of the Ethics and Moral Education Foundation.

Criticizing the government, Nakagawa said in their discussion,

"For example, in the current request for a dissolution order, evidence, court documents, and various insights collected by the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (Zenkoku Benren) are being used. Some may say, 'It's based on facts, so there's no problem.' However, it's highly questionable that the government is advocating for an organization's claims - especially a private group that has long been at odds with the [religious organization](#) - and relying on their information. It raises serious concerns about procedural impartiality."

Nishioka commented,

"There were many religious figures among the members of the Council of Religious Corporations. There was a former president of the university where I used to work. He was a Protestant pastor I know well. There was also a General Secretary from the United Church of Christ in Japan, as well as representatives from Shintoism and Buddhism. It's shocking and hard to believe that all of those individuals, without any dissent, unanimously supported it. What exactly are their thoughts on freedom of religion?"

In addition, Nishioka cited an article in the Sankei Shimbun newspaper and raised serious concerns, saying,

"It seems that officials from the Agency for Cultural Affairs secretly went to the homes of the members of Council of Religious Corporations, persuading them one by one. Could that be why

religious figures, especially Protestant pastors, hardly voiced any dissent? Hearing this, I get a strong feeling of fear and disbelief."

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Small Clique Schemingly Changed Law Overnight

July 8, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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"The day before, I had contacted the Prime Minister's Office, advising them to retract the interpretation. I even gave them the reasons for doing so and suggested they should say that the entire Kishida administration had re-discussed the matter. I promised not to pursue that part further if they did so. Prime Minister Kishida said exactly that. However, this is a lie."



Ministry of Justice in 2020 Photo: Nendo Shigehiko License: CC BY 4.0 ICP

Tokyo paper reveals how small clique around Kishida overnight changed interpretation of law crucial to religious freedom



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

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by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

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Prime Minister Fumio Kishida made an announcement on 17th October 2022 that he would use the right to question the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)). This was an act against the conventional interpretation of the law, and it was subjected to attacks from the opposition parties at the *House of Representatives Budget Committee* the following day (18th October).

Akira Nagatsuma (長妻昭), a member of the *Constitutional Democratic Party* (CDP), persistently **urged Prime Minister Kishida to reconsider his interpretation of the dissolution requirements for religious corporations**. The requirements are in line with the 1995 Tokyo High Court decision (confirmed by the Supreme Court in 1996). Nagatsuma argued against Prime Minister Kishida's assertion that "acts that are unlawful according to the Civil Code are not included" in the prohibitions and directives specified by criminal law and other established regulations, as indicated by Tokyo High Court. Nagatsuma said,



Akira Nagatsuma
8th June 2010. Photo:
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"As for the main body of the former [Unification Church](#), **no final judgment has established criminal responsibility**. [...] As the director of the Agency for Cultural Affairs has consistently stated, unless the government changes its interpretation, **a dissolution request can never be made.**"



Hiroyuki Konishi.
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On that day, the Prime Minister stuck to the position that had been decided in the Cabinet meeting on 14th October. However, at the beginning of the *House of Councillors Budget Committee* session on the 19th, in response to a question from Hiroyuki Konishi (小西洋之) of the *Constitutional Democratic Party* (CDP), he stated, "Having taken into account the discussions from yesterday, the government, had the relevant ministries gather again and has **revised the government's stance.**" Then he made the following declaration,

"If it becomes clear that acts are organized, malicious, and continuous, and if they are deemed to meet the requirements of the Religious Corporations Act, **wrongful acts (torts) under the Civil Code can also be**

included."

The interpretation of a law so important for religious freedom, about the dissolution requirements for religious corporations, was changed 180 degrees overnight. Although Representative Konishi remarked that "this is too much of a change in such a short time," he did not pursue the matter any further.

There was an even more serious issue lurking behind this "overnight change of policy" commotion. On 22nd August 2023, Representative Konishi, to whom the Prime Minister first communicated the change in interpretation, revealed the behind-the-scenes details of this change on YouTube. Konishi said,

"The day before (18th Oct.), I had contacted the Prime Minister's Office, advising them to retract the interpretation. **I even gave them the reasons for doing so and suggested they should say that the entire Kishida administration had re-discussed the matter.** I promised not to pursue that part further if they did so. **Prime Minister Kishida said exactly that. However, this is a lie.**"

This is how Konishi bragged to his associate Eito Suzuki (鈴木エイト) [a "journalist" campaigning fanatically against the [Family Federation](#)] that "the **prime minister has changed his interpretation according to my instructions.**" So it is not entirely reliable.

However, the Prime Minister's schedule on the 19th Oct. records a meeting with Konishi just before the *Budget Committee* session of the *House of Councillors*. It was unusual for him to meet and exchange words with an opposition member who asked a question just before such a session. And indeed, **Konishi did not pursue the point he himself had declared a lie – that**



Eito Suzuki, born as Kiyofumi Tanaka.
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“the entire government had discussed’ the matter.” There is a strong suspicion that the overnight change was pushed through due to collusion between the government and the opposition.

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Satoshi Hamada asking questions in the Japanese Parliament 13th May 2024. Photo: Screenshot from video recording.

The government has remained tight-lipped about the participants in the meeting where the Cabinet decision was overturned. On 31st January of this year, Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡議), a member of the NHK Party, asked in a written inquiry about the assignment and positions of the participants in the meeting.

The government only admitted that **the meeting was not a Cabinet meeting**, but stated, “We would like to refrain from

answering questions about the details of the government’s internal deliberation process.” The **names of the participants were not disclosed**. Furthermore, the decisions (interpretation changes) made at this meeting have not been subsequently ratified by the Cabinet. There is a strong suspicion that **this significant interpretation change was decided by a very small number of close aides in an unofficial gathering**.



Masaru Wakasa, lawyer and politician. Photo (2013): Ogiyoshisan / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp. Cropped

At a symposium held in Tokyo on 18th June this year, Masaru Wakasa (若狭勝), a former senior prosecutor at the *Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office* and a former member of the *House of Representatives*, who is now a lawyer, strongly warned,

“The biggest issue in requesting a dissolution order against the **Family Federation** is the **lack of fairness**. Changing the interpretation and application of the law hastily within a day, and then requesting a dissolution order, is **going to undermine the foundation of a nation governed by laws**.”

See the [first article](#), [second article](#), [third article](#), [fourth article](#), [sixth article](#)

Featured image above: Hiroyuki Konishi’s statement 22nd August 2023. Photo (March 2020): Noriko Ishigaki (石垣のりこ) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 3.0 Unp](#). Cropped

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