

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Protesters Say Japan's Measures Totalitarian

Knut Holdhus
July 10, 2024



Masayuki Kudo speaking on 6th July 2024 in Sapporo about his experience of being abducted and held captive



[Sekai Nippo](#)

More protests are being held in Japan against measures seen as totalitarian taken by the Kishida administration against minority faith

Tokyo, 8th July 2024 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

"We've been labeled," say second-generation believers with agitated voices at a rally calling for religious freedom

by the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)



Rallies were held in various places to protest the unfairness of the government's request for a court order to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)). On 7th July, in Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture, the second "Gunma Rally to Protect Basic Human Rights and Freedom of Religion", following the first one in March of this year, was held, attracting about 400 believers.

A second-generation believer, a woman who said her heart had been hurt by the bashing of the [religious organization](#), spoke with an agitated voice, saying, "Second-generation believers have been labeled as pitiable." Nevertheless, she expressed her resolve, saying, "I received the church's [blessing of marriage](#) of my own will. I am

happy now. I will continue to live in a way that contributes to the nation."



*Norio Hosoya, Japanese author and politician. Among his books is one titled "[The Constitution and the Former Unification Church](#)" (2023)
Photo May 2024*

Fumiya Sako (酒生文弥), head priest of Jodo Shinshū Shinjōji Temple (浄土真宗真照寺) [Editor's note: part of Shin Buddhism or True Pure Land Buddhism], pointed out that the separation of religion and state in Japan was imposed by the former Allied Powers after the war, and he viewed this as problematic. He preached that the core of religion is "love for one's neighbour" and emphasized the importance of "protecting the freedom of the soul".

In Sapporo, the "Hokkaido Rally to Protect Basic Human Rights and Freedom of Religion" was held on 6th July, with about 200 believers gathering. Masayuki Kudō (工藤雅之), a resident of Sapporo and one of the current believers who gave a speech, reported his experience as a victim of abduction and confinement aimed at forcibly breaking his faith. Criticizing the methods used in abductions and confinement and the bias of the media, he said,

"For over 40 years, lawyers opposing the [Family Federation](#) and Christian ministers known as faith-breakers have collaborated, using violent methods to abduct and confine people. The media has never reported any truth that is inconvenient to them."

Norio Hosoya (細谷典男), a city council member from Toride City (取手市), Ibaraki Prefecture, who

took the stage as one of the speakers, criticized the process behind the request for a dissolution order. He stated,

"The government's approach of filing a request for a dissolution order based solely on one-sided claims cannot be considered democratic and has extremely strong totalitarian overtones."

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Kishida Relying On Info From Archenemy Of Faith

July 9, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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

Tokyo, 8th July 2024 – Published as the **sixth article** in a series in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article*

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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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**."



Masahito Moriyama, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Photo (2023): 首相官邸ホームページ. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

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 **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 cover front page of *Monthly Seiron* December 2023.

December 2023

Issue of the monthly magazine Seiron (正論)



Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)



Professor Tsutomu Nishioka. Photo: [U.S. Department of State / Wikimedia Commons](#). [Public Domain](#)

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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*. *aomain image. Cropped.*

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."

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

Featured image above: 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. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

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