

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: More Protesting Japanese Government's Attack on a Minority Religion

Knut Holdhus
August 5, 2024



A demonstration march near Fukuoka City Hall under the scorching sun on the afternoon of the 4th August 2024, Fukuoka City, Fukuoka Prefecture



Japan: More and more are out protesting Kishida administration's appalling attack on minority rights

Tokyo, 5th August 2024 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

"Firmly Opposed to the Japanese Government's Request for a Dissolution Order" - Demonstration in Fukuoka

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

On 4th August 2024, the citizens' group "Fukuoka Prefectural Association for the Protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedom of Religion" held a symposium in the city, claiming that the government's request for a dissolution order for the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) was unjust. About 1,500 people participated, and after the symposium, about 1,200 of them marched in a street demonstration.

The association's representative, Koji Takashima (高島幸司), called out,

"Despite no court ruling, Fukuoka City has decided not to lend public facilities to the [Family Federation](#), treating it like an anti-social organization. This is religious discrimination against us believers who have lived in Fukuoka for decades."

International lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama (中山達樹), who pointed out that the [Family Federation](#) does not meet the requirements for a dissolution request, encouraged the attendees by saying,

"It will take about two more years for the court to rule on the dissolution request. There are two types of people: those who do things moderately and those who go all out. If you all work to the point where you feel you can't do any more during these two years, you will definitely be able to change the current situation."

Shingo Inoue (井上真吾), a member of the Kitakyushu City Council, also attended and said,

"As one of the council members who declared a severance of relations with the [Family Federation](#) in December of the year before last (2022), I stood up to offer an apology and support to the [Family Federation](#) believers who are actually in trouble."



Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama pointing out that the [Family Federation](#) does not meet the requirements for a dissolution request



Shingo Inoue in June 2024

This statement was met with loud applause from the audience.

After the symposium, believers who participated in the street demonstration marched around the bustling area near Fukuoka City Hall, protesting, "We firmly oppose the Japanese government's request for a dissolution order."

If the [Family Federation](#) is dissolved as a religious corporation, all employees will lose their jobs, all assets will be seized, and believers will lose their places of worship, significantly restricting their faith.

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Government’s Foul Play Pointed Out

January 19, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Tsutomu Nishioka

Kishida administration resorting to foul play against religious minority

First of six parts of Seiron report



The cover front page of Monthly Seiron December 2023.

In its December 2023 issue, the Japanese monthly opinion magazine Seiron (正論) carried a feature article on the horrible persecution of the Family Federation (formerly the Unification Church) in Japan. The article by Makiko Takita, the editor-in-chief of the magazine, presents a conversation with Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa (中川晴久), President of Japan Christian Theological Institute and Secretary of Tokyo Christian Theological Institute (東京キリスト教神学研究所), and Professor Tsutomu Nishioka (西岡力), from the Ethics and Moral Education Foundation, professor at the Institute of Moral Science, Tokyo Christian University.

On 17th January 2024, Bitter Winter, the leading international online magazine on religious freedom and



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human rights, [published the first](#) or six parts of the English version of the original Seiron article. [Read more on article 2, article 3, article 4, article 5, article 6 in the Bitter Winter series.](#)

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During the conversation printed by the magazine, Rev. Nakagawa describes the request of the *Agency for Cultural Affairs* (文化庁) to the *Tokyo District Court* to issue an order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#),

“As a Christian pastor, I have followed the **government's actions** up to this point, and I **find them very problematic**. When the government requests a dissolution order, it is usually difficult to imagine a situation where the dissolution order is not granted. But that is usually the case only when the request is based on the right motive and the right argument, which does not apply to this case of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#).”

Rev. Nakagawa **questions the impartiality** of the process that led the authorities to request a dissolution order,

“[...] the request for dissolution uses a lot of evidence, court documents, and findings gathered by the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* ([全国霊感商法対策弁護士連絡会](#)). Some may say, 'The evidence is true, so there is no problem about who supplied it,' but it is almost as if the **government is endorsing and relying on the claims and information of a private organization that has long been hostile and antagonistic to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)**. This is **highly questionable** in terms of the neutrality of the procedure.”

Professor Nishioka points out how Prime Minister **Kishida mysteriously all of a sudden changed his mind**,



Fumio Kishida 14th July 2022. Photo: [首相官邸/Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

“This is because on October 19, 2022, only five days after the cabinet decision not to seek dissolution, Prime Minister **Kishida changed his position overnight about the legal grounds for dissolution**. He said that instead of basing dissolution solely on criminal acts and criminal law violations, torts under Article 709 of the Civil Code could also be considered. This is what has led to the current situation.

I was horrified at that time as well. What events or circumstances had occurred that

necessitated the dissolution of the [Unification Church](#) as a religious organization? Was there a new case of unforgivable damage that came to light? I have no idea what happened to cause the request of dissolution of the church. This is a criminal trial.”

Kishida's made his sudden U-turn even though the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology* (MEXT) **on previous occasions never had given in to the pressure from the activist leftwing lawyers** called *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (Zenkoku Benren) to obtain a dissolution order. The reason was simply that the [Family Federation](#) (previously the [Unification Church](#)) had **never been convicted of any criminal acts or violations of the Penal Code**. Professor Nishioka explains,

“The cabinet of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also originally adopted this position on October 14, 2022. A part of this story is that in 2012, the *National Federation of Bar Associations* filed a lawsuit against the MEXT, claiming that the MEXT was acting illegally when it failed to request a dissolution order for the [Unification Church](#). But the Tokyo District Court dismissed that lawsuit in 2017. Despite this precedent, the Kishida cabinet eventually approved and submitted the request for dissolution.”

Nishioka also comments on the relationship between former prime minister Shinzo Abe and the [Unification Church](#),

The Asahi Shimbun

“After the fatal shooting of former Prime Minister Abe, the 'Asahi' newspaper [leftwing] stated in an editorial that Abe was 'advertising' the [Unification Church](#). Those who oppose Abe have been trying to gear the conversation to make the [Unification](#)



Shinzo Abe in 2017. Photo: [Chairman of the Joint](#)

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conversation to make the [Unification Church](#) and Abe look as close as possible. I also think it is **problematic that the government is acting to fulfill the wishes of the assassin** by requesting the dissolution order."

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 2.0 Gen.](#) Cropped

Nakagawa and Nishioka point out **several questionable sides of the government's dissolution request**. The Christian leader points out one absurdity,

"Regarding the topic of Prime Minister Kishida suddenly changing his standards for dissolution, I would say it **does not make sense in light of the legal principle of non-retroactivity of the law**."

He also states,

"I am a Christian. I believe that God created heaven and earth and all things, and that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. I also believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross but rose from the dead three days later. These beliefs may appear strange to most Japanese. Therefore, I am also a member of a religious minority. But even so, freedom of religion is allowed. **It should be the same for the Unification Church**."

The Seiron monthly magazine is published by the *Sankei Shimbun*, one of Japan's top five daily national newspapers. Rev. Nakagawa describes one story the *Sankei Shimbun* published last year, headlined "The Agency for Cultural Affairs requests a dissolution order: Limitations to the investigation",



Logo of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. [Public domain image](#)

"In reality, the *Religious Corporations Council* had members who were dissatisfied with the government's stance towards the [Unification Church](#). However, the Agency for Cultural Affairs intervened by claiming that the Kishida cabinet would be in trouble [if the *Religious Corporations Council* members opposed the government's request]. But that is what I think is wrong. I heard that Agency for Cultural Affairs officials went to the homes of the *Religious Corporations Council* members, **persuaded them to go along with the government**, and then, one by one, holed them up while **keeping it a secret**. When I hear these stories, I am in a state of intense fear and disbelief."

Continued in [part 2](#).

Featured image above: Left: Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa. Photo: Private. Right: Professor Tsutomu Nishioka. Photo: U.S. Department of State / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#). Cropped.

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