

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: One-sided Japanese Media Causes Family Rifts

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Strong media bias causes domestic violence and family rifts for members of religious minority in Japan



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Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat - Part 3: Believers Suffering Discrimination and Human Rights Violations

Family Rifts and Forced Renunciation of Inheritance

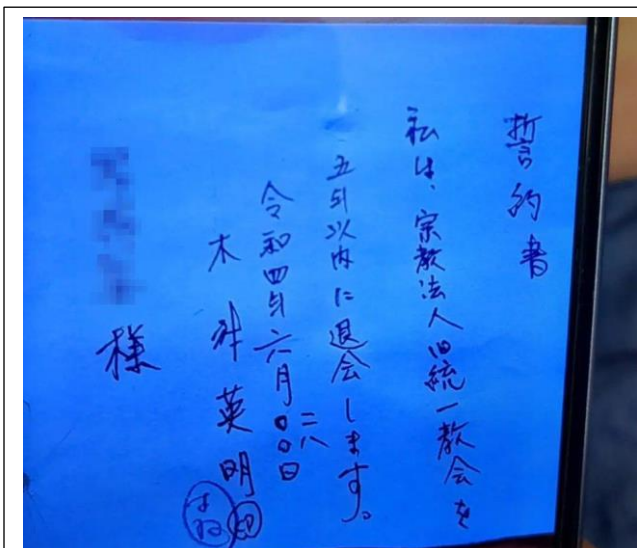
by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

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Due to critical reports about the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)), rifts have deepened between believers and their non-believing family members and relatives. There have been instances where parents, influenced by the negative reports, have forced their son or daughter to sign documents expressing that he or she intends to renounce the faith.

Hideaki Kimura (木村英明), a 41-years old man who lives in Kumamoto Prefecture, was asked by his father two years ago to sign a paper stating, "I will leave the [church](#) within five years." Reluctantly, he signed his name. While preparing to return to his hometown from Tokyo and considering living with his parents, the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe occurred.

Some of the claims made by his strongly opposed father were not based on facts, but what particularly hurt was being told that he would not act as a "guarantor". To join the company he had secured a job with after returning home, he needed his parents to act as guarantors. However, his father went as far as to say,



An image of the pledge taken by Hideaki Kimura with his smartphone. Although it says "June", the correct date is "July" according to him

"If you don't quit, I'll call the company and tell them not to hire you because you're a member of the [Unification Church](#)."

Seeing this, his mother intervened, saying, "This is a violation of human rights." Eventually, the situation was temporarily resolved when Kimura signed a pledge prepared by his father, as a condition for his father to act as a guarantor.

There has also been domestic violence motivated by religious beliefs. Mitsuyo Adachi (a pseudonym, in her 70s), who lives in the Tokyo metropolitan area, is a believer whose husband opposes the [Family Federation](#). While usually calm, he becomes irritable and violent towards Adachi whenever he sees critical reports about the [Family Federation](#).

Two years ago, and again last year, he assaulted her, saying things like "You've ruined my life!" This

resulted in Adachi suffering a fractured rib. However, she did not tell her husband about this and even concealed it at the hospital where she was treated, claiming it was an indoor accident caused by carelessness.

Adachi says,

"Although I fear the violence might worsen, I wanted to forgive rather than hate, so I never brought up the topic of violence."

However, she worries that if the dissolution order for the [Family Federation](#) is confirmed, her husband's opposition might become even more intense.

Some believers have been forced by relatives to renounce their inheritance. Akio Niikura (a pseudonym, in his 50s), living in the Chugoku region, was once nearly abducted and confined by relatives aiming to forcibly de-convert him.

Although the attempt ultimately failed, he continued to maintain steady contact with his parents afterward. When his mother fell ill, it was Niikura's wife who first noticed something was wrong and provided care. She recalls,



"At first, when we visited, we were given a cold reception. But as we continued to persevere, my mother-in-law, while she was still alive, eventually asked my husband a few times if he would consider returning home."

However, due to intense negative media coverage, the attitudes of his relatives, including his father, drastically changed. Last year, when Niikura and his wife attended the third anniversary of his mother's passing, his father told him, "If you don't leave the [Family Federation](#), we will cut ties with you. You must renounce your inheritance!" Surrounded by relatives, Niikura was pressured into signing a document indicating his intention to forfeit his inheritance.

Niikura expressed his frustration, saying,

"My father blindly believed what was reported on TV about the [Family Federation](#). As the eldest son, he feared that I would take over the family home and turn it into a meeting place for the [federation](#). He even suspected that there were ulterior motives behind the care my wife provided for my mother."

Niikura's wife also expressed her anger, saying,

"More than being forced to give up the inheritance, what's truly painful is to see the trust we built over decades being shattered and being treated like criminals."

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Vandal Attacks On Cars And Homes Of Members

August 9, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Members of religious minority suffer vandal attacks on their cars and homes and harassment at work

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Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat – Part 3: **Believers Suffering Discrimination and Human Rights Violations**








Members get graffiti sprayed on their cars and windows broken in their homes

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



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In 1992, international [mass weddings](#) and “spiritual sales” were widely covered on television talk shows, and critical reports about the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) were repeatedly broadcast. As a result, believers faced discrimination, prejudice, and sometimes even hostility due to their faith, causing them distress and suffering.

Before the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a woman in her 30s named Eri Shimada (a pseudonym), who currently works in customer service in the Tokyo metropolitan area, experienced harassment from a male manager at her previous job. Shimada had already been uncomfortable with the manager’s excessive physical contact and had written about her frustration in her diary.

One day, she accidentally left her diary at work, and the manager read it. Upon discovering that she was a member of the [Family Federation](#), the manager began harassing her further, using her faith as a pretext. Through social media, he started making new criticisms, such as “You don’t seem motivated,” and “Your work attitude is bad.” He had never mentioned such things before. Shimada recalled,



The manager reading her diary. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, 10th August 2024.

“I heard directly from a female customer I know that the manager had told her, ‘Since she’s a [Unification Church](#) member, you should avoid contacting her.’ Apparently, he said the same thing to several other mutual acquaintances.”

Eventually, Shimada quit the job. Reflecting on the harassment she had faced due to her [Family Federation](#) faith, she expressed concern, saying,

“Honestly, I think there are quite a few cases like mine that haven’t come to light. Believers tend to see endurance as a virtue.”

Amid the media frenzy criticizing the [Family Federation](#) following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, several individuals have faced harassment due to their faith. For instance, in October last year, a 60-year-old female believer named Chihiro Kamimura (a pseudonym) from the Chubu region found derogatory words scribbled on the hood of her car parked at her home.

Because the graffiti was written with a permanent marker, it “couldn’t be easily removed.” The incident was reported to the police, and patrols were conducted around her home, but the perpetrator has not been found. The woman said,

“Faith is undoubtedly a source of comfort for me. Being vandalized like this has deeply hurt me.”

There have also been cases of windows of the homes of members being broken. Around 12:30 AM on August 12, 2022, Kyoko Sasaki (a pseudonym), who lives in Fukushima Prefecture, heard a loud noise as if something had struck the window next to her front door. Although she was frightened, she went to bed that night. The next morning, she found a hole about 1 cm in diameter in the double-glazed window, which should not have been easy to break.



A hole in the window glass of a believer’s home in Fukushima Prefecture. Photo: FFWPU

It is suspected that a slingshot-like device was used, and a police report was filed later, but the perpetrator remains unknown.

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was fired later, but the perpetrator remains unknown.

Many neighbors knew that the Sasaki were members of the [Family Federation](#), but they had never openly spoken ill of them before.

After that, incidents that seemed like harassment continued, such as the switch-operated light in their parking area being mysteriously turned on, and empty oil cans for agricultural machinery being discarded on their property. Sasaki expressed her fears, saying,

"I can't sleep at night due to the fear that a similar incident might happen again."

She is still tormented by the anxiety that, in the worst case, an intruder might break into her home.

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Featured image above: A hole in the window glass of a believer's home in Fukushima Prefecture. Photo: [Family Federation](#)

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