

## FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Broadcast Standards in Japan Grossly Violated to Persecute Religion

Knut Holdhus  
September 4, 2024



TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System) Holdings HQ

### Religious minority victim of media witch hunt where broadcast standards suffer gross violations



[Sekai Nippo](#)

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**Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat - Part 4: Media Crossing the Line**

### Lack of Fairness and Deviation from 'Broadcast Standards'

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

See [1st article](#), [2nd article](#), [3rd article](#), [4th article](#), [5th article](#), [6th article](#), [7th article](#), [8th article](#), [9th article](#), [10th article](#), [11th article](#), [12th article](#), [13th article](#), [14th article](#), [15th article](#), [16th article](#), [17th article](#), [18th article](#), [19th article](#), [20th article](#), [21st article](#), [22nd article](#), [23rd article](#), [24th article](#)



日本民間放送連盟  
The Japan Commercial Broadcasters Association

The Japan Commercial Broadcasters Association (JBA - 日本民間放送連盟), an organization comprising private television and radio companies, has established a common set of rules

known as the "Broadcast Standards" to serve as a reference when a company formulates its own "program standards". These standards aim to prevent viewers and listeners from being hurt or offended by broadcasts.

The standards define "responsible reporting" as follows:

"When conducting interviews and editing, care must be taken to avoid bias that could mislead viewers."

In the section on "religion", the standards state,

"When dealing with matters related to religious doctrines or rituals, care must be taken not to damage the dignity of that religion. Special caution is required when using such matters without direct connection to religion."

**TBS** On 27th August 2022, TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System), a member of the JBA, aired an episode of its program "News Feature" (Hodo Tokushu) that included interviews with five former members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), who had participated in its [mass wedding](#) ceremony around 30 years ago but later left the [organization](#) and divorced.

These women, who had married South Korean men, spoke in front of the camera about their harsh experiences, such as having to live in poverty in rural farming villages and suffering from their husbands' violence. Their stories appeared sincere and evoked sympathy from viewers.

When investigating issues with religious organizations, it is natural to hear from former members. If there are unreasonable matters, informing viewers about them is meaningful. However, caution is necessary.

People have faith because they find salvation and peace of mind in the teachings of a religious organization. However, if they leave, it is not uncommon for former members to exaggerate the negative aspects they experienced during their time as believers in order to denounce the organization. It is important to keep this in mind when listening to the stories of former members, especially those who actively oppose the organization.



*Toru Goto, member of [Family Federation](#) held captive for 12 years and 5 months by his own family and professional faith-breakers who attempted to break his faith*

Moreover, according to Toru Goto (後藤徹), a current member of the [Family Federation](#) and representative of the "[National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Conversion](#)", one of the five women who appeared on the program was his sister-in-law, who was involved in confining him for 12 years and 5 months to force him to renounce his faith. Because of this, Goto sent a letter of protest to TBS, accusing them of featuring someone who committed "severe human rights violations" and allowing her to make one-sided criticisms.

However, one of the program's hosts, Takako Zenba (膳場貴子), based on the former members' stories, criticized the Mass [Marriage Blessing](#) ceremony, saying, "The [organization](#) uses cult-like thought processes to make believers not feel the hardship, and then exposes them to physical and mental risks by marrying them to strangers," invoking the so-called "mind control" theory. She went further to condemn the ceremony, stating, "I believe the Mass [Marriage Blessing](#) ceremony is the ultimate form of human rights violations by this [organization](#)."

According to the website of the [Family Federation](#), the

[Marriage Blessing](#) Ceremony is a

"wedding ceremony centered on [God](#), where men and women from around the world come together to establish families centered on [God](#), transcending barriers of religion, denomination, ideology, race, and nationality."

There are reportedly thousands of Japanese women in Korea who, like the former members interviewed, participated in this religious ceremony and built families with Korean men. The program mentioned this fact. However, from the perspective of neutrality and fairness, it should have also introduced believers who have built happy families. According to the [Family Federation](#)'s Public Relations Department, there was no inquiry from "News Feature" (Hodo Tokushu) regarding the [Marriage Blessing](#) Ceremony.

Many families established by believers who participated in the [Marriage Blessing](#) Ceremony exist in Japan as well. Zenba's comments not only violate the Broadcast Standards, which caution against damaging the dignity of religious rituals. Her words also hurt the feelings of the participants in the [Blessing](#) Ceremony and the children born into those families. Criticizing human rights violations by the [religious organization](#) while simultaneously violating the human rights of its believers is a double standard and can be considered a representative example of biased reporting on the [Family Federation](#).

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# Media And Government Allowed Terror To Succeed

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September 3, 2024 • Knut Holdhus



**Terrorist's anti-religious sentiments embraced by media and government just like the intention was**



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

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Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat – Part 4: Media Crossing the Line

Inciting sympathy for terrorists

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

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On the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023, an incident occurred where something resembling a pipe bomb was thrown at Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who had come in a hurry to the Saikazaki Fishing Cooperative to support the House of Representatives by-election in Wakayama District 1. The arrested suspect was Ryūji Kimura (木村隆二), who was 24 years old at the time.



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on 16th April 2023, the day after a bomb was thrown at him. Photo: 首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int

Three days after the incident, international political scientist Yuichi Hosoya (細谷雄一) pointed out on Twitter (now X) the following:

**"In terrorism studies, it is generally understood that the very act of trying to understand the background of a terrorist's crime helps to achieve the terrorist's objectives."**

In other words, **the key to preventing similar incidents from recurring is for the media to ignore the motives behind the crime.**

However, even though the full picture of the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) remains unclear, **the media jumped on the leaked information from the investigative authorities that there was a grudge against a religious organization.** The media heated up the reporting based on the premise that this was the motive for the crime.



The front page cover of "Geinin Ningyo: Corona Pandemic, Ukraine, and Election Special - The Great Displeasure Edition" by Hikari Ota, published on Asahi Shimbun Publishing.

In the afterword of his book "Geinin Ningyo: Corona Pandemic, Ukraine, and Election Special - The Great Displeasure Edition", published before the attack on Prime Minister Kishida, Hikari Ota (太田光) of the comedy duo *Bakusho Mondai* wrote the following:

"If the statements of the accused Yamagami are true, **the current actions of television are proceeding exactly as the perpetrator intended. Is it acceptable for murder to be a means of advocating something?** [...]"

Television must continue to send the message that 'resorting to violence achieves nothing' with the same intensity as it pursues the 'relationship between politics and religion.'"

**Ota expressed his concern that the heated TV coverage of the investigation into the religious organization could lead to the emergence of a second or third Yamagami.** He made similar

remarks on the show "Sunday Japon" (TBS), where he serves as the MC, but these comments also drew criticism, **being perceived as defending the religious organization.**

Ota is not the only commentator who has faced backlash for **warning that the current situation has effectively allowed Yamagami's act of terrorism to succeed.**

Two days after the attack on the Prime Minister, sociologist Noritoshi Furuichi (古市憲寿) shared a similar perspective on the morning show "Mezamashi 8" (Fuji TV).



Noritoshi Furuichi. Photo (2023); 財務省 / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int. Cropped

The two incidents – the assassination of former Prime Minister Abe and the more recent attack that occurred less than a year later – both took place at election campaign events. While many details remain unclear, it is too early to definitively label the accused, Kimura, as a "copycat" of Yamagami. However, it is safe to say that he was **likely influenced by Yamagami's actions.**



On this program, lawyer Toru Hashimoto (橋下徹) made a statement delving into political implications:

"Due to Yamagami's actions in attacking former Prime Minister Abe, **not only did the media react, but the government also took action.** They created laws. Of course, it is natural to properly correct and address issues with the former **Unification Church** if there are problems, but **the fact that**

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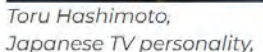
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**Yamagami's actions incited the state to take action is a significant issue."**

The media coverage, overheated with criticism of the [religious organization](#), **made the state to act in response to terrorism.**

The final piece included in "Geinin Jingo" is an article published in the August 2022 issue of "A Book" (Issatsu no Hon). It appears to have been written a few days after the incident where Shinzo Abe, who held the longest tenure as Prime Minister in the history of Japan's constitutional government, was assassinated in public. The agitation of Hikari Ota and other television station personnel is conveyed. One passage stands out:

**"We don't even know if the perpetrator's stated motive is genuine. It's possible that even the perpetrator himself doesn't know.** Whether it's the Tokyo subway sarin attack or the assassination of President Kennedy, despite the time that has passed, no one can clearly explain what really happened. In fact, the more time passes, the more 'words' and 'information' accumulate, which might take us further away from the 'truth'."

At the end of June this year, nearly two years after the assassination of Shinzo Abe, the defense team that met with the accused Yamagami revealed that he said, regarding the government's request for a dissolution order against the [religious organization](#), "I never expected this situation to arise" (Nikkei Shimbun). He also stated, "Before the incident, I was cornered and did not foresee what was to come."

If these words are true, how will the reaction be from television professionals and commentators who have continued to report and comment with such "one-sided intensity" from the early stages of this case?

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**Featured image** above: A floral tribute stand set up at Osaka Gokoku Shrine on 6th July 2024, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the death of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Organized by the Itagaki Taisuke Memorial Association. Photo: Photo memories 1868 / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

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