

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japan's Media Supports Terrorists Who Bomb

Knut Holdhus
September 6, 2024



Sympathy for terrorists created by media's generous coverage of motive and background of assassins and would-be assassins

Tokyo, 5th September 2024 - Published as the 26th article in a series in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

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

Classic impression manipulation without remorse

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



[Sekai Nippo](#)

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On 15th April 2023, an explosive device was thrown near Prime Minister Fumio Kishida as he was giving a campaign speech for a House of Representatives by-election. This led to an unexpected debate regarding reporting about terrorism.

As previously reported, international political scientist Yuichi Hosoya (細谷雄一) pointed out on Twitter (now X) that the "general understanding in terrorism research" is that "the very attitude of trying to understand the background of terrorist crimes aids and abets terrorists in achieving their goals." However, this understanding is not common in Japan.



Goshi Hosono

After the incident, Goshi Hosono (細野豪志), a member of the House of Representatives from the Liberal Democratic Party, stated,

"Once someone commits terrorism, I don't give any consideration to their claims or background. From such things we can deduce no general way to deal with terror."

As the content of the perpetrator's tweets and other details began to be reported, Hosono argued,

"The media has begun a race to report on the man who attacked Prime Minister Kishida and his motives for the terror. I see no value in this reporting other than that they 'sell'."

東京新聞

Tokyo Shimbun - Chunichi Shimbun Co.

Similar opinions also spread online. In response, the section

Tokyo Shimbun's special report published an article titled "What's the Logic Behind 'Don't Report the Perpetrator's Motive'?" (posted online on 22nd April), where journalist Satoru Aoki (青木理) countered, saying,

"When politicians, regardless of party affiliation, start telling the media 'not to report on this', the very foundation of democracy collapses."

The Asahi Shimbun

Asahi Shimbun Digital also addressed the issue in an article titled "The Debate on Restricting Reporting in Terror Incidents and the 'View of the Ignorant Public'" (published on 16th May), where former Hosei University professor Gen Inuzuka (犬塚元)

argued, "Such discussions are based on a 'view of the ignorant public' and could lead to the collapse of liberal democracy." Many other rebuttals were posted online.

Of course, in reporting on terrorist crimes, the motives and background are key themes. However, if this reporting is not handled with the utmost care, it could end up aiding the perpetrator's objectives. What is being called into question is how the media handled reporting on the bomb terrorist attack targeting a sitting prime minister, which could lead to the serious situation of inspiring copycat crimes. It is the media's responsibility to verify the reporting related to the assassin of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三).



On 18th July 2022, during the broadcast of Yomiuri TV's program "Information Live Miyane-ya", they not only displayed the full text of a letter sent by suspect Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也) - now a defendant - to journalist Kazuhiro Yonemoto (米本和弘) just before the crime, but also had a female announcer read it aloud without omitting a single word.



The letter contained self-defense statements such as,

"Since my mother joined [the [Unification Church](#)], my teenage years passed amid the waste of more than a billion yen, the collapse of my family, and bankruptcy. These experiences have distorted my entire life [...]"

It also included clear expressions of his grudge against the family of the founder of the [Unification Church](#) and Yamagami's clear intention to commit murder.

Seiji Miyane (宮根誠司), the host of the show, followed up on this letter, saying, "Of course, there are believers who suffer, but there are also many second-generation believers who endure great pain." The discussion progressed on the assumption that many followers of the [religious organization](#) and second-generation believers suffer, and that this leads to the breakdown of their families.



Tetsuya Yamagami, the man who killed Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister of Japan

In the process, three times Miyane showed excerpts from postings believed to be Yamagami's on Yonemoto's blog (from December 2020), and also four times excerpts from Yamagami's tweets and other postings (from May 2021, October 2019, August 2020, and June 2022), Each time the text was projected on the screen and read out by a female announcer.

This is a classic method of manipulation that simultaneously stimulates both the visual and the auditory senses. Reporting the perpetrator's claims so thoroughly on public airwaves just ten days after former Prime Minister Abe was shot and killed, cannot be

considered proper journalism. The motives and background behind Yamagami's act of terror were reported over and over again. This is reminiscent of some forms of indoctrination.

Despite this, to date there has been no proper investigation, reflection, or disciplinary action related to the coverage.

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Broadcast Standards In Japan Grossly Violated

September 4, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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



Logo of the 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*

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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.**



日本民間放送連盟

The Japan Commercial Broadcasters Association

The logo of Japan Commercial Broadcasters
Association. Author: Yusaku Kamekura. [Public
domain image](#)

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

The logo of 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.

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.



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. Photo:
[FOREF](#)

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.

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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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