FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Masumi Fukuda on Japanese Court Assumes the Role of Grand Inquisitor

Knut Holdhus
July 2, 2026

From judge to inquisitor: By passing judgment on religious doctrine, Japan's dissolution case crossed a long-observed legal boundary in the campaign to eradicate the Family Federation

Masumi Fukuda speaking at the press conference in Brussels on June 29, 2026

Part 2 of a speech given by Japanese investigative journalist and prize-winning author Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ) at a press conference on the theme "Japan: The Hidden Story Behind the Eradication of a Religion", held at the Brussels Press Club in Brussels, Belgium on 29th June 2026, organized by Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF), an independent non-profit NGO. Translated from the transcription of the original Japanese, slightly edited.

Continued from part 1: The Hidden Story Japan Doesn't Want You to Hear

Why, then, was the Unification Church [See editor's note 1 below] ordered to dissolve?

The answer is surprising: primarily because of disputes over donations.

Donations are indispensable to any religious organization. However, Japanese courts have ruled that when a religious organization accepts donations that exceed what society considers reasonable, those donations may be deemed unlawful.

In earlier court cases, the typical reasoning was that people had been induced to donate through fear - for example, by being told that they or their ancestors would suffer misfortune or go to hell unless they made donations. In other words, the courts found that they had been pressured or intimidated into giving money.

Over the years, many civil lawsuits were filed against the Unification Church [See editor's note 1 below], and the church lost many of them. I will explain later why so many lawsuits were brought.

I will not go into the details of those cases today, but in many instances the plaintiffs prevailed despite lacking convincing evidence. In my view, a series of unjust judgments accumulated over time.

I believe this happened because almost none of Japan's judges have any religious faith, and many tend to view new religious movements such as the Unification Church [See editor's note 1 below] through the lens of prejudice, seeing them simply as cults. It may also be that, given the overwhelmingly negative media coverage, judges feared that ruling in favor of the church [See editor's note 1 below] would damage public confidence in the courts.

Japanese man offering a donation to support spreading the word. Illustration: Miocrosoft Designer Image Creator

More recently, the courts have gone even further. They have ruled that believers may sincerely think they donated of their own free will, yet were actually subjected to improper psychological influence without realizing it, making the donations unlawful.

This is an extraordinary conclusion. It comes very close to saying that having religious faith is itself a form of victimization. In effect, it amounts to recognizing the controversial theory of "mind control" [See editor's note 2 below].

In addition to these civil judgments, something even more remarkable occurred in the dissolution proceedings. The court treated settlements and out-of-court agreements between the church and former members as evidence that the church [See editor's note 1 below] had committed unlawful acts. On that basis, the court issued the dissolution order.

In other words, the outcomes of civil disputes - which were simply a means of resolving disagreements over donations between the church [See editor's note 1 below] and former members - were used as the legal foundation for dissolving the entire religious organization.

An auto-da-fé (Public ceremony announcing and enforcing sentences by the Inquisition, often executions.) of the Spanish Inquisition and the execution of sentences by burning heretics on the stake in a market place

Furthermore, in the dissolution case, the court concluded, without any concrete evidence, that the church [See editor's note 1 below] would probably continue causing problems related to large donations in the future.

The court even went so far as to examine the church's religious doctrines and teachings, concluding that because it was an undesirable religion, there was little prospect that it would reform itself.

Until now, this would have been unthinkable in Japan. Japanese courts have traditionally regarded it as taboo to pass judgment on the content of religious doctrine. It was inconceivable that a court would evaluate whether a religion's teachings were good or bad.

The court, in effect, assumed the role of an inquisitor.

For these reasons, I believe the dissolution order is entirely unjust.

It cannot be regarded as a fair judgment based on strict evidentiary standards, because the existence of unlawful conduct was never adequately established.

It is also true that this one-sided decision was made against the backdrop of years of highly biased media coverage portraying the Unification Church [See editor's note below] as nothing more than a cult.

How did things reach this point?

Continued from part 1: The Hidden Story Japan Doesn't Want You to Hear
To be continued. Part 3 coming soon.

[Editor's note 1: Although Masumi Fukuda uses the name "Unification Church" and also the word "church", please be aware that the Unification Church in Japan in 2015 changed its name to Family Federation for World peace and Unification.]

[Editor's note 2: In Japan, the "mind-control" myth has been a powerful tool used to stigmatize and suppress new religious movements (NRMs), particularly since the 1980s. The concept suggests that NRMs manipulate or "brainwash" their followers, depriving them of free will and rational thought. This narrative gained traction after the 1995 Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attack, when public fear of dangerous cults intensified. Although Aum was an extreme and violent exception, the incident cast suspicion on all NRMs, allowing critics, media, and the government to label diverse groups as manipulative or psychologically coercive.

The "mind-control" myth serves multiple social and political functions. It simplifies complex questions of belief, making it easier to portray converts as victims rather than as individuals exercising spiritual agency. This framing justifies legal and social intervention, including the coercive "deprogramming" of believers - sometimes involving confinement or psychological pressure to force renunciation of faith. Lawyers, ex-member groups, and certain media outlets have used the idea of mind control to construct NRMs as threats to family stability and national order, reinforcing social conformity and Japan's preference for established, non-controversial religions such as Buddhism and Shinto.

In recent years, the myth resurfaced following the 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose attacker cited resentment toward the Family Federation. A public outrage largely created by media reignited scrutiny of NRMs, and politicians and journalists revived "mind-control" rhetoric to explain fundraising and recruitment practices. Critics argue that this framing discourages genuine religious tolerance and critical examination of Japan's restrictive religious climate. Overall, the "mind-control" myth functions less as a scientific or psychological concept and more as a moral panic - a cultural weapon used to delegitimize minority faiths and to reaffirm mainstream social norms about religion, obedience, and the boundaries of acceptable belief.]

Related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Lawfare: State Uses Legal System in War on Faith

More, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Scholar Questions Secrecy in Dissolution Case

And more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Shocked Author: "Japan Ignores Basics of Justice"

Still more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Legal Inconsistencies A Blow to Democracy

Even more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Japan: Court Accused of Using Speculation

Also related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: MEXT's Legal Spin and "Dissolution at All

Costs"

Also related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: UN Report: Japan's Lawfare Against Faith Minority

And also related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Protesting No Transparency in Closed-Door Trial

More, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Dangerous Flaws in Dissolution Order Decried

Also related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: "Lawyers Lying and Shaming Japan" for 50 Years

And also related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Japan Following the Way of China

And also related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook

More, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Media/Legal Expert: Communism Behind Persecution

And more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy

More, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights

And more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"

Still more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Japan Copying China: State Seizure of Churches

And still more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: 12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan

More, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: 4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions

And more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Japan: Families Fear for Graves of Loved Ones

Yet more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying

Also related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Kishida Follows Anti-Family Federation Minister

Also related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy

Still more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Malicious One-Sided Government Source Selection

And still more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Japan Urged to Make U-Turn

And yet more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions

Even more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Japan Following the Way of China

Yet more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Japanese Communists' Final War

Still more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Political and Social Activism behind Oppression

Still more, related to court assuming the role of inquisitor: Dissolution Case: Rule of Law on Trial 4th March

The Hidden Story Japan Doesn't Want You To Hear

July 1, 2026 • The News Desk

Share:

Investigative journalist takes you inside the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Japan's campaign against faith minority Family Federation

More Posts

Japanese Court Assumes The Role Of Inquisitor
July 2, 2026

Brussels Press Conference Condemns Dissolution
June 30, 2026

3rd Extension Of Mother Han's Medical Release
June 29, 2026

Verdict Under The Shadow Of "Mind Control" Myth
June 28, 2026

Dissolution Case: Pseudoscienc Shaping Verdict
June 27, 2026

Ruling Leaves Serious Questions On Due Process

The headtable of speakers at the press conference at the Press Club in Brussels on 29th June 2026. Photo: FOREF. Published with permission

Part 1 of a speech given by Japanese investigative journalist and prize-winning author Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ) at a press conference on the theme "Japan: The Hidden Story Behind the Eradication of a Religion", held at the Brussels Press Club in Brussels, Belgium on 29th June 2026, organized by Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF), an independent non-profit NGO. Translated from the transcription of the original Japanese, slightly edited.

See part 2: Japanese Court Assumes the Role of Inquisitor

First of all, thank you very much to everyone for taking time out of your busy schedules to gather here today.

As I was just introduced, my name is Masumi Fukuda. I am a freelance journalist from Japan.

As was also mentioned, I am not a believer in this religion. In fact, I am not affiliated with any religion at all. I am simply an independent freelance journalist.

Last November, I published a book entitled *The State's Sacrifice* (国家の生贄 – *Kokka no Ikenie*). It is a nonfiction work compiled and revised from a series of articles that I had been publishing in a monthly magazine since the end of 2022.

Being translated into English: Here, the front cover of Masumi Fukuda's latest book The State's Sacrifice (国家の生贄 – Kokka no Ikenie)

Allow me to briefly introduce myself. Including *The State's Sacrifice*, I have published seven books.

One of my earlier nonfiction books, *Fabrication* (*Detchiage*), became a bestseller with over 230,000 copies sold. It received a major literary award, was adapted into a film last year, and was released on Netflix this year, where it ranked No. 1 in the Japanese film category for two consecutive weeks. The year before last, I also received the Wilbur Award in the United States, which honors outstanding works related to religion.

Readers of my latest book, *The State's Sacrifice*, have reacted with great astonishment. They have written comments such as:

> "Terrible wrongdoing was taking place where ordinary citizens could not see."
>
> "This reveals truths that the media refuses to tell."
>
> "It is filled with facts everyone should read."

I believe that nearly everything I wrote in this rather thick book will be completely new information to most Japanese citizens. However, it is unquestionably true. On the cover, it says:

June 26, 2026

Did Korean Origins Shape Dissolution Outcome?

June 25, 2026

Search...

Categories

Send us a message

First Name *

Last Name

Email *

Email Address

Your Message *

Submit

"We must not turn our eyes away from the truth."

This book is a report about the former Unification Church. Today, what I want to tell you is precisely what is written in this book.

Many of you probably think of Japan as an advanced democratic nation where freedom, human rights, and religious liberty are firmly established. However, today's Japan is no longer such a country. Freedom of religion is being violated. The foundations of constitutional government and the rule of law are being shaken. Japanese democracy itself is facing a crisis.

Some of what I say will overlap with previous speakers, but first I would like to explain the former Unification Church – now officially called the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* – a religious organization that originated in Korea. Until 2015, its official name was the *Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity*, commonly known as the Unification Church. For familiarity's sake, I will continue to use the name "Unification Church".

Once again, let me emphasize that I am not a member of this church. I am simply an ordinary citizen.

***Taken by the state** along with hundreds of other places of worship throughout Japan: Tokyo headquarters of the Family Federation of Japan. 600,000 members will lose their places of worship. Photo: Asanagi / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image. Cropped*

As already explained, dissolution proceedings have already begun against this religious corporation. Its headquarters and churches throughout Japan have been placed under the control of court-appointed administrators and effectively closed. Members are no longer allowed to enter their churches.

Forced to hold worship services privately, in members' homes. Here, a prayer meeting in April 2026. Photo: FFWPU

In other words, believers can no longer gather for worship. They have lost the places where they held services and religious ceremonies. Nearly 2,000 staff members employed by the church across Japan have also been affected, and

many have already been dismissed by the court-appointed administrators. As you can imagine, it is extremely difficult for them to find new employment.

After the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三), something completely unexpected happened to ordinary members of the former Unification Church.

They began experiencing various forms of persecution and discrimination. Some members have committed suicide. Some lost their jobs after their employers learned that they belonged to the church. Students were deeply shocked when they heard teachers telling classmates that the Unification Church was an evil religion. Volunteer organizations affiliated with church members found that local governments rejected all of their offers of community service.

The church received numerous threatening letters. Church buildings were vandalized with large graffiti calling them a "cult". For a time, the internet and social media were flooded with defamatory attacks against the church.

The most serious discrimination has been directed toward church employees. Some have been unable to rent apartments. Others have had lease renewals denied. Some have been refused credit cards. There have even been cases where people seeking medical treatment were turned away because the name of the church appeared on their health insurance information.

As I said earlier, Japan is a country that constitutionally guarantees freedom of religion.

So did this religious organization receive a dissolution order because it committed extraordinarily serious crimes?

Many of you may know about the Aum Shinrikyo incident in the 1990s. In 1995, Aum Shinrikyo released sarin gas in the Tokyo subway. Including its other crimes, 29 people were killed and nearly 6,000 were injured. Its founder and senior leaders were sentenced to death for murder. Naturally, because of these horrific crimes, Aum Shinrikyo received a dissolution order.

But is the Unification Church similarly an evil organization? Did it also commit mass murder? The answer is no. The situation is completely different. As an organization, the Unification Church has not committed a single criminal offense. Neither its leaders nor any of its tens of thousands of members have committed murder or violent crimes. So why is the Unification Church being dissolved?

The primary reason is disputes over donations.

Continued in part 2: Japanese Court Assumes the Role of Inquisitor

Featured image *above: Masumi Fukuda speaking at the press conference in Brussels on 29th June 2026. Screenshot from live transmission by HRWF*

Related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: *Lawfare: State Uses Legal System in War on Faith*

More, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Scholar Questions Secrecy in Dissolution Case

And more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Shocked Author: "Japan Ignores Basics of Justice"

Still more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Legal Inconsistencies A Blow to Democracy

Even more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Japan: Court Accused of Using Speculation

Also related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: MEXT's Legal Spin and "Dissolution at All Costs"

Also related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: UN Report: Japan's Lawfare Against Faith Minority

And also related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Protesting No Transparency in Closed-Door Trial

More, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Dangerous Flaws in Dissolution Order Decried

Also related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: "Lawyers Lying and Shaming Japan" for 50 Years

And also related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Japan Following the Way of China

And also related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook

More, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Media/Legal Expert: Communism Behind Persecution

And more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy

More, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights

And more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"

Still more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Japan Copying China: State Seizure of Churches

And still more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: 12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan

More, *related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: 4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions*

And more, *related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Japan: Families Fear for Graves of Loved Ones*

Yet more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying

Also related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Kishida Follows Anti-Family Federation Minister

Also related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy

Still more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Malicious One-Sided Government Source Selection

And still more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Japan Urged to Make U-Turn

And yet more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions

Even more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Japan Following the Way of China

Yet more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Japanese Communists' Final War

Still more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Political and Social Activism behind Oppression

Still more, related to the hidden plot to eradicate a religion: Dissolution Case: Rule of Law on Trial 4th March

« Previous
Brussels Press Conferen...

Next
Japanese Court Assume... »

FAMILY FEDERATION
FOR WORLD PEACE AND UNIFICATION
EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

GET STARTED

Home Privacy Policy

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

First Name Last Name

Your Email Addres Subscribe

I consent to have this website store my submitted information so they can respond to my inquiry

Follow us

© All rights reserved FFWPU Europe & Middle East

This Website is GDPR Ready