

**FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Hiroshi Ogasawara Vows to Keep Fighting Despite Election Loss**

Knut Holdhus  
July 21, 2025



*Hiroshi Ogasawara reporting the election results to his supporters late at night on 20th July in Chiba City. Japan*



**Unyielding in spite of loss in Upper House election, party founder wants to keep standing for faith and family and push vision for Japan's future**

Tokyo, 21st July 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

"I Did Everything I Could"

**Family Federation Believer Hiroshi Ogasawara Ran in Chiba Constituency for Upper House Election**

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

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Hiroshi Ogasawara (小笠原裕 - 62), a certified small and medium enterprise management consultant and an active member of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), ran in the Chiba constituency for the House of Councillors election under the political group "Association to Protect Japanese Families". In the late evening of 20th July, he announced via internet broadcast that he had no chance of winning. However, he expressed his commitment, saying,

"As an organization, we will continue political activities and work to change Japan."

During the campaign period, Ogasawara gave more than 80 street speeches. Reflecting on the effort, he said,

"I did everything I could."

In his speeches, he openly disclosed his affiliation with the [Family Federation](#) and criticized both the Ministry of Education's request for the [religious organization](#)'s dissolution and the practice of [coercive faith-breaking](#) [See editor's note below] through [abduction and confinement](#).



*Hiroshi Ogasawara and supporter Kunihiko Shibamura on the campaign trail July 14, 2025*

Together with his wife, Kaoru (薫 - 61), he traveled around the prefecture emphasizing the importance of protecting religious freedom and the [family](#). On 8th July, the anniversary of the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三), he held a memorial speech and moment of silence in public.

His campaign posters were sometimes defaced with slurs such as "Korean" and "idiot," but he also recalled being approached by non-believing young people who expressed interest in his message. Ogasawara noted,

"What young people expect is not short-term policies, but a vision of what Japan should be 20 or 30 years from now. Japan must move forward with policies that consider future generations."

He added, "Our [religious organization](#)'s unique values and principles have the potential to improve Japan, but we need to find better ways to communicate them clearly to voters. I want to think about what we can do for Japan and its people and strive toward the 'beautiful Japan' that Abe envisioned."

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See also [In Election Bid Citing Faith, Family, and Freedom](#)

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**[Editor's note:** Coercive faith-breaking ("deprogramming", forced renunciation of faith) in Japan refers to the practice of coercively attempting to separate individuals from their religious affiliations or beliefs, typically through intervention by family members, professional faith-breakers (deprogrammers) or organizations hostile to new religious movements (NRMs). This phenomenon often targets members of such movements, e.g. relatively large faiths like the [Family Federation](#) or Jehovah's Witnesses, but also smaller groups like Happy Science (Kōfuku no Kagaku) and other newer religious movements.

However, also Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist-based lay organization with more than 8 million Japanese

members, and affiliated with Nichiren Buddhism, has occasionally been subject to faith-breaking attempts.



*Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of Soka Gakkai. Here, students belonging to the faith in 2001*

The practice gained attention in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Parents or concerned family members often hired faith-breakers who taught them how to abduct and forcibly detain believers. Almost all such cases involved confining the individual believer and cutting him or her off from the religious community. During the confinement, the believer was subjected to intense questioning or indoctrination designed to break his or her faith. The aim was to "rescue" the person from what the family often had been tricked by faith-breakers or lawyers to regard as harmful influence from the religious organization.

Critics of forced de-conversion argue that it violates fundamental human rights, including freedom of thought, religion, and association. Reports of psychological trauma and accusations of unlawful detention have sparked debates over its ethical and legal implications. In response, some religious groups, particularly NRMs, have lobbied for greater protections against such practices.

Japanese courts have been inconsistent in addressing cases of coercive faith-breaking. While some verdicts have condemned the practice as illegal detention, others have been more lenient, citing family concerns about "mental health" or alleged "exploitation" as mitigating factors.]

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# When Society Forces You To Hide Your Faith

• July 20, 2025  
• Knut Holdhus

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Living with one’s faith hidden: When society drives believers underground – Japan joining ranks with North Korea, China and the Middle East

Tokyo, 20th July 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article.*

## The Anguish of Believers Forced to Hide Their Faith

by Satoshi Ogawa (小川 敏)

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In Islam, the act of declaring one's faith is known as the Shahada, meaning "evidence" or "testimony". Concretely, this refers to reciting the foundational Islamic creed:

"Ashhadu an la ilaha illallah, wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasulullah"  
("There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.")

Muslims are obligated to recite this phrase five times a day. On the other hand, when Muslims hide their faith from others due to security or religious reasons, it is known as taqiyya – literally: "hiding one's faith" or religious dissimulation [See editor's note below].

This practice has sometimes been employed by followers of minority Shia sects, such as the Alawites and Druze. (This section references information from Islamic websites such as "Kaken".)



**Alawites** celebrating a festival in Banyas, Syria during World War II. Photo: Frank Hurley (1885-1962) / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#)

In Christianity, "confession of faith" refers to the public declaration of belief in Jesus Christ as Savior. It is a pledge of loyalty to God and a way to affirm one's identity as a Christian – for instance, through declaring belief in Christ at baptism.

In contrast, "faith concealment" refers to the act of not disclosing or intentionally hiding one's Christian faith, out of fear of persecution or disadvantage.

A real-life example of faith concealment can be found among Christians in North Korea, where there is no freedom of religion. In September 2015, international missionary organization *Open Doors* held a 60th anniversary event at *Vienna University of Technology*. There, a North Korean defector named Ms. Kim Yong-seok gave a striking testimony.



**Dangerous to possess in North Korea:** A Bible. Here, *Revision Korean Commons Translations Bible, Anglican Edition*. Photo: Alvis Jean / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#). Cropped

Simply possessing a Bible could lead to arrest – and in worse cases, detention in a labor camp, where survival is uncertain.

When Ms. Kim was a child, she often saw her father sitting quietly with his head bowed. She thought that was just what older people did. But in reality, he was praying. In North Korea, even prayer is forbidden, and one must do it in a way that others don't notice.

Her family was sent to a camp when it was discovered they were Christians. She saw her father only once while in prison, and never again afterward.

"Confession of faith" and "faith concealment" are polar opposites. In the latter case, believers may find themselves unable to declare their faith due to concerns for their own or their family's safety – leading to inner turmoil. While confession of faith is an active expression of loyalty to [God](#), faith concealment is often a painful, protective response to harsh circumstances.

Although many countries today guarantee freedom of religion, minority denominations can still be oppressed under the influence of dominant religious traditions.

In fact, persecution of Christians from minority denominations continues in some Islamic countries. Many have been killed simply for confessing their faith.

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I chose to write about confession and concealment of faith in this column after hearing that Druze believers in Syria have at times practiced faith concealment to avoid persecution from Sunni Muslims. In southern Syria's *As-Suwayda Governorate*, since 13<sup>th</sup> July, clashes have erupted between the minority Druze and Bedouin Sunnis, resulting in over 300 casualties so far.

Religious persecution is not unfamiliar to Japan's own history. The novel *Silence* by Shūsaku Endō (遠藤周作) portrays the agony of Christians caught between confessing and concealing their faith under intense persecution.

In recent times, we're witnessing something similar: amid the intense scrutiny and so-called "witch hunt" following the government's [dissolution order](#) against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), some believers are advocating for freedom of religion, while others may be forced into faith concealment.

In any case, the left-leaning media outlets and certain politicians who have relentlessly pursued the eradication of the former [Unification Church](#) will someday have to atone for the anguish they have inflicted on believers forced into hiding their faith. History teaches us that much.



**Shusaku Endo.**  
*photographed on 21st October 1966 at his home in Tamagawa Gakuen, Machida City, Japan.*  
Photo: Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image

See also: [China's New Crackdown: War on Foreign Christians](#)

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**Featured image** above: Druze and Christians in As-Suwayda, Syria.  
Photo (2021): [Marsharbt](#) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)  
*Int. Cropped*

**[Editor's note: Taqiyya** is an Islamic principle that allows a person to conceal their faith or beliefs when under threat, persecution, or compulsion, particularly when facing danger to life or severe harm. The concept is rooted in the Qur'an (e.g., Qur'an 16:106), which permits believers to protect themselves when forced to deny their faith, as long as their hearts remain firm in belief.

It has been especially emphasized in Shia Islam, where minority Shia communities have historically faced persecution and used taqiyya for self-preservation.

Taqiyya is not a license to lie for personal gain. It is a form of self-protection in extreme circumstances, not a routine practice.

In essence, taqiyya allows for the concealment of faith to avoid harm, while inwardly maintaining one's beliefs.]

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