

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Government Changing The Law Overnight

Knut Holdhus
September 12, 2023



Changing the Law: Spotlight on Judicial Decisions Concerning Japanese Government's Right to Ask Questions

By editorial department of Sekai Nippo

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[Original article](#)



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The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has decided to impose administrative penalties on the grounds that the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (Family Federation) did not answer questions based on the "Report and Questions" of the Religious Corporations Law, and decided to proceed to the Tokyo District Court.

The [Family Federation](#) issued a statement claiming that it "sincerely responded to questions from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) every time while protecting the privacy and religious freedom of believers."

Due to partial non-response

This is the first time that the right to question a religious corporation has been exercised, and if a religious corporation refuses to answer or gives a false answer when asked a question, a fine of up to 100,000 yen may be imposed on the representative officer of the religious corporation. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) said that it had asked the [Family Federation](#) 500 questions, and the reason for the fine was that it did not answer about 100 items.



It is believed that the [faith society](#) answered about 80% of the questions, but the specifics of the questions, the content of the answers, and the details of the contents that were not answered, have not been made public. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has exercised the "right to report and ask questions" seven times, but it is safe to assume

that the decision to ask for a fine was intended to accumulate evidence for the dissolution order from the beginning, contrary to the initial "prudent judgment".

Originally, it cannot be said that the exercise of the right to question the [Family Federation](#) was carried out in a calm discussion. After the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe last July due to a grudge against the [faith society](#), criticism of troubles surrounding the [faith society](#) swept the media. Furthermore, with regard to election campaigns and religious votes, the opposition parties raised the issue of "points of contact" with the LDP.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida declared a break with religious groups, and the Diet passed the Act on Prevention of Unreasonable Solicitation of Donations (Victim Relief Law) as a measure to deal with donation troubles. In addition, regarding the legal interpretation of "violation of laws and regulations" - a

requirement for requesting a dissolution order for a religious corporation, as a "criminal penalty", based on a Supreme Court judgment - the prime minister replied to the Diet that civil law torts also belong to this category. The prime minister changed the legal interpretation overnight.



Prior to this change in interpretation, the Religious Affairs Division of the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) replied that the [Family Federation](#) was "not subject to a request for a dissolution order", but later exercised its right to question the [Family Federation](#) in an attempt to bring the request for a dissolution order. Overseas human rights groups and religious officials are concerned that this move could lead to serious religious persecution.

In response to some media outlets reporting on the "penal fine policy" of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the [religious group](#) issued a statement stating that "if a court case over the fine against the corporation is pending in the future, the corporation will do everything it can to contest the legality of the exercise itself of the right to question."

Criticism and debate are natural as former believers and family members have come forward to complain of damage, but the religious freedom and privacy of believers who continue to practice the faith should also be considered.

Relationship with religion questioned

The hurdle to exercising the right to question was lowered to "civil," and political power over religion was expanded. It will be necessary to pay close attention to how the right to question religious corporations will be exercised for the first time, and how the court proceedings will unfold over the fines required by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, in order to determine how the basic human rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the administrative power should be protected.

Featured image above to illustrate "Government Changing the Law Overnight": Fumio Kishida 5th October 2021. Photo: [首相官邸](#) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

"Government Changing the Law Overnight" - text: Editorial Department of the Sekai Nippo, Tokyo, Japan.

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Response To Scandalous Bias

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From the header of ffwpu.jp, the official homepage of the Family Federation of Japan.

7th September 2023 the Family Federation of Japan issued a

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7 September 2023 the [Family Federation of Japan](#) issued a press release in response to recent scandalous bias in media reports that the [Federation](#) had failed to report sufficiently and that the materials submitted “were scarce”.

The media did not mention that some of the questions from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) put the [Family Federation](#) in an impossible situation as it would be forced to disclose private matters from the lives of the members. That would indeed represent a serious infringement of human rights and religious freedom.



THE
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Sankei News reported that the *Agency for Cultural Affairs*, a special body of the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)*, would

order the [Family Federation](#) to pay a fine for not having responded properly. According to the Sankei article, it appears that the source of the scandalous bias may well be found within the *Agency for Cultural Affairs* itself.

The press release was written by the [Family Federation's](#) public relations office.

Here is the text in English:

“View of the media on the Family Federation’s response to the ‘exercise of the right to question’ is insincere.

Currently, amid various media reports regarding the ‘exercise of the right of questions’ by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to this religious corporation [[Family Federation](#)], multiple media have stated that

‘at the beginning the Agency for Cultural Affairs received 8 cardboard boxes, but the amount gradually decreased to one envelope’, as if [this corporation](#) had responded insincerely. It must be said that such reporting is biased and arbitrarily twists the facts. We will explain in detail below.



Logo of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. *Public domain image*

First of all, it is clear that the ‘volume’ of responses cannot be used to determine whether or not we answered appropriately.



文部科学省

Symbol of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan. Photo: [文部科学省\(MEXT Japan\) / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) initially required [this corporation](#) to submit a wide range of basic materials, but since the third ‘exercise of the right to ask questions’, more specific questions have come in. This is the primary reason why the volume of responses gradually decreased. As the questions were asked, the range of answers required became narrower, so it is natural that the overall volume of answers decreased.

In addition, it has been reported that [this corporation's](#) answers to the 4th and 5th ‘exercise of the right to ask questions’ are ‘one envelope’, but in reality, it was a ‘letter pack’ and contained about 100 pages of A4 size paper. It may not be wrong to

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report it as an 'envelope', but it gives the impression that **this corporation** is not answering properly. Similarly, for the sixth and seventh responses, what is reported as an 'envelope', is a 'letter pack').

On the other hand, TV Asahi's



*Toru Goto, a member of the **Family Federation**, after having being held captive by professional deprogrammers for 12 years and 5 months! He won an important court case against his captors. But according to MEXT staff, it appears that records of victories in court cases are not so important. Photo: **FFWPU***

information programs 'Good! Morning' (aired on 5th September) and 'Morning Show' (broadcast on 6th September) introduced comments from MEXT staff, saying, 'Since there were many records and pamphlets about their victories in court cases, most of the answers did not have so much content.'

This is clearly an arbitrary way of picking up the story that gives the impression that we are not answering in good faith, and it misleads viewers.

We call on the press to report fairly based on facts.

Among the questions from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) were

(1) related to the privacy and religious freedom of believers,

(2) were clearly unrelated to civil law torts,

(3) repeated questions that had already been answered, and

(4) questions related to pending trials.

We, **this corporation**, have sincerely responded to the enormous number of questions and requests from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology by spending a huge amount of time and effort while sacrificing our regular operations. Nevertheless, the attitude of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) that **this Corporation** 'does not answer questions appropriately' is extremely regrettable."

*Featured image above: Toru Goto, member of the **Family Federation**, held captive for 12 years and 5 months by professional deprogrammers in league with activist lawyers, some of whom are now advisers to the Japanese government. Now Toru Goto and fellow members are suffering from a scandalous bias in the media, supported by the authorities.*

Photo from April 2023: [FOREF](#)

"Response to Scandalous Bias" – Introductory text: Knut Holdhus. Translation: Tiara Boysen

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Pure Activism In Japanese Media

September 4, 2023 • Knut Holdhus

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Japanese media promoting pure activism for dissolution of the Unification Church

The Asahi Shimbun

Asahi Shimbun, a major left-leaning newspaper in Japan

– followed by Japan Times, Japan Today, Yomiuri Shimbun and others – quoting unnamed sources, published 3rd September 2023 articles about the possibility of Japan seeking a court order to disband the [Unification Church](#). Leftwing Asahi wrote

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that such an order will be sought, other papers that it may or could be sought. Kyodo News pointed out that it remains uncertain.

Some media in the Western world have also picked up the story.

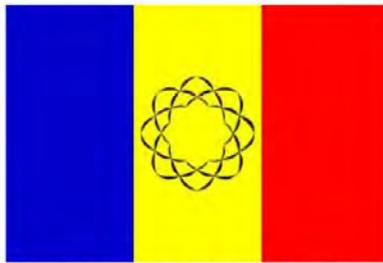


Fumio Kishida, Japanese Prime Minister, in 2020. Photo: 首相官邸 / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int. Cropped

There is not much new information in the reports. The dissolution option is commonly known from before. In fact, it is easy to conclude that the Asahi article may well have been published as pure activism in order to put pressure on the Japanese government to do something. The leftist Asahi has been campaigning for decades against a [Unification Church](#) known to have advocated a crystal-clear criticism of the ideological fallacies of totalitarian and genocidal communism.

Judging by the many vicious

attacks on the [Unification Church](#) by communists in Japan, or communist-initiated projects like *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales*, the [Unification Church](#), now called the [Family Federation](#), may indeed be the one religion that the communists fear the most.



The Soka Gakkai International flag. Photo: QueerMichael / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int

They have not launched similar attacks on the *Soka Gakkai* new Buddhist movement behind the Komeito, the governing *Liberal Democratic Party's* coalition partner, even though the *Soka Gakkai* is much larger than the [Family Federation](#) and is much more heavily involved in Japanese politics.

The Japanese media quote unnamed sources close to the government in their pure activism articles. One obvious candidate behind the pure activism, disclosing the information, may well be Masaki Kito, fanatic and uncompromising activist from *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales*, founded by communists.

In spite of his more than dubious background and having led numerous attacks on the [Unification Church](#) for years, he was appointed as an "expert" on the [Unification Church](#) to a committee to review "spiritual sales" under the *Consumer Affairs Agency of Japan*. This makes the entire examination of the [Unification Church](#) by the Japanese authorities biased.



Masaki Kito, anti-religious activist. Photo: Bitter Winter

It is easy to understand why Masaki Kito, and others, may be pushing for a dissolution to be ordered possibly already in October. They want it well before the court case against Tetsuya Yamagami begins at the beginning of next year. The proceedings there are likely to vindicate the [Family Federation](#), which to a large extent has been blamed for the assassination of Shinzo Abe 8th July last year. The case may also reveal that anti-cult activists influenced and even helped Yamagami to carry out his act of terror.

Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of the [Family Federation of Europe and the Middle East](#), issued 4th September a

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statement on the articles,

"We are aware that the courts in Japan are contemplating a dissolution order, and anticipate that they will conclude that religious freedom is too important a human right to be arbitrarily or capriciously removed.



Dr. Michael Balcomb.
Photo: FFWPU

We expect that the criminal case against Tetsuya Yamagani will reveal that the **Family Federation** is innocent of any connection to that tragic crime. We encourage the Japanese Government to allow that legal process to conclude, and not allow themselves to be pressed by the media into hasty actions in blatant disregard of the human rights of our community and, almost inevitably, those of others.

Experiences in other countries, and indeed in Europe itself, show that such attacks on religious freedom of one minority do not stop there, and may well spread to actions such as hate speech and violence against other religious groups, especially minorities."

14th June 2023, a letter was sent to the Japanese government, written by four academics and human rights activists, all leading experts on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). They urged the Japanese authorities to **halt the ongoing witch hunt against**, and respect the rights of, the **Unification Church / Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU)**, a minority religion that has been constantly attacked by anti-cult activist lawyers.

In the letter, published 3rd July by **Bitter Winter**, the online magazine for religious liberty and human rights, the four experts – Willy Fautré, Ján Figel, Massimo Introvigne, and Aaron Rhodes – "call for an end to what increasingly appears as a witch hunt".

*Featured image above: Pressure on Keiko Nagaoka from anti-cultists. She is government minister for education, culture, sports, science and technology (MEXT). Photo (May 2023): U.S. Department of State. **Public domain** image. Cropped*

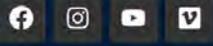
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