

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Opposition Inciting Japan's Regime To Excessive Steps

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Fumio Kishida and opposition communist Kazuo Shii. In the Japanese Diet building 30th March 2020, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida receiving the Japanese Communist Party's proposals regarding Japan-China relations from Kazuo Shii, chairman of the Japanese Communist Party (JPC)



Kishida administration pressured by opposition to take excessive steps like changing the law overnight

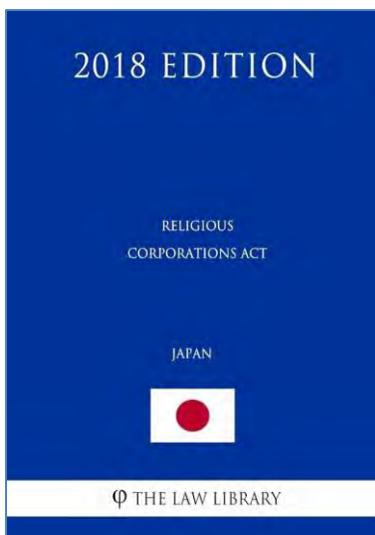
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Investigating the Request for an Order to Dissolve the Family Federation - Politics and Media out of Control

Part 2: The opposition parties created an uproar and made use of state power to attack a [religious organization](#).

by the Editorial Department of Sekai Nippo

Read [part 1](#)



Front page of 2018 English version of Religious Corporations Act of Japan



Satoshi Hamada in Dec. 2023

The government changing the interpretation of the Religious Corporations Act naturally affects all religious corporations. Previously, the interpretation of the requirements for a dissolution order for a religious corporation explicitly stated that it must have engaged in acts falling under Article 81, Paragraph 1, Item 1 of the same law, namely, "acts that violate prohibitory norms or directive norms established by statutory laws such as the Penal Code, and moreover, it is clearly recognized that such acts significantly harm the public welfare," along with Item 2, which states "acts that are recognized as significantly deviating from the purposes of religious corporations stipulated in Article 2 of the Religious Corporations Act" (Tokyo High Court, 19th December 1995).

However, the interpretation of Item 1 was suddenly changed overnight under the Fumio Kishida cabinet to include "unlawful acts under the Civil Code" (19th October 2022, House of Councillors Budget Committee, response from Prime Minister

Kishida).

The right to ask questions in order to request a dissolution order has been expanded. All at once, it became possible to exercise this right not only against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), but also against all other religious corporations. This only strengthened the state's power over religion. According to statistics from the Religious Affairs Division of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, there are approximately 180,000 religious corporations and a religious population of 180 million individuals in Japan. That exceeds the population of Japan. In other words, it affects the majority of the population.



Hiroyuki Konishi in March 2020

However, such a significant change in the legal interpretation was made by a limited number of people within the government. In Prime Minister Kishida's response to the written question from House of Councilors member Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡) (31st January), he did not disclose the details of the cabinet's decision or internal government deliberations (9th February).

So far, the opposition parties, that should have been vigilant about "state power", have not raised any issues regarding this matter. In the Budget Committee of the House of Councillors, Constitutional Democratic Party lawmaker Hiroyuki Konishi (小西洋之), who elicited a change in interpretation from the Prime Minister, said, "Changing one's interpretation overnight is excessive." Konishi did not however pursue the matter further regarding the change in interpretation.

Later, Konishi said at a talk event in August 2023,

"I'd like to say that I changed my mind and said that civil law torts can also be applied. Because I won't pursue that part, and when I said that, Prime Minister Kishida said exactly that."

The video of this was spread on X (formerly Twitter). The opposition parties, which often chant slogans such as "We won't tolerate government excesses," were the ones who incited the government's excesses.



Shinzo Abe March 2022

During the debate over the security legislation in 2015, the main opposition party at the time was the Democratic Party [民主党, Minshutō - a centrist to centre-left liberal party in Japan from 1998 to 2016]. It fiercely opposed the Cabinet decision that changed the interpretation of the constitution to allow limited exercise of the right of collective self-defense, and were hostile to then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, accusing him of "Abe politics". Within the parliament, they employed delay tactics, and outside, they held protest demonstrations almost every day.

In the "Opposition Coalition" then the Democratic Party cooperated with the Communist Party with the aim of potentially sharing power with it. That coalition began with the justification of revoking the Cabinet decision that serves as the basis for the security legislation. The "Opposition Coalition" now, on the other hand, provided support for flawed procedures, such as the lack of a Cabinet decision regarding the interpretation change of the Religious Corporations Act, which could potentially

undermine the guarantee of freedom of religion as stipulated in the constitution.

The political forces that make up the "Opposition Coalition" share the same view as defendant Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也), who shot Shinzo Abe, that "Abe and the former [Unification Church](#) were close." After the shooting incident, they opposed Abe's state funeral and criticized the "contacts" between the Liberal Democratic Party and the former [Unification Church](#) as well as groups associated with it, such as the International Federation for Victory Over Communism. While using this as material to attack the conservative politics of the Abe administration, it can be said to have encouraged the exercise of the right to question the former [Unification Church](#) in order to request an order to dissolve it.

However, democracy emphasizes the importance of procedures. Is there no problem with that?

Before the war, the opposition party had caused the military to go out of control. In the Imperial Diet [Parliament] of 1930, the opposition party, the Rikken Seiyukai (立憲政友会 - Association of Friends of Constitutional Government), attempted to corner the civilian government led by Prime Minister Osachi Hamaguchi (濱口雄幸) of the Rikken Minseitō party by pursuing accusations of having "absconded the right to command" at the London Naval Disarmament Conference. The dissatisfaction with disarmament stimulated the public sentiment and the media, and the atmosphere of the times could no longer be prevented from heading towards war. Isn't there a resemblance to the ruling and opposition parties, and the media, in their pursuit of dissolution requests?

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Kishida's Self-Defeating Populist Decisions

February 16, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Request for an Order to Dissolve the Family Federation – Politics and Media out of Control



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Part 1: Sudden Change in the Government and Ruling Party – Overturning a Cabinet Decision Overnight Behind Closed Doors.

by the Religion and Politics Reporting Team of the Editorial Department of Sekai Nippo

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Last October, the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* filed a request with the *Tokyo District Court* for an order to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). It was revealed in the answer to the question submitted by Senator Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡参) on 31st January 2024 that Prime Minister Fumio Kishida **changed the interpretation** of the *Religious Corporation Law*, which is the basis for the request, **without holding a cabinet meeting**. We will investigate the out-of-the-ordinary political move, such as Kishida's decision to simplify the procedure for requesting a dissolution order, which is equivalent to a **"death sentence"** for a religious corporation.

The *Religious Affairs Division of Agency for Cultural Affairs* is part of the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* and oversees religious corporations. It responded to the request for a dissolution order for the former [Unification Church](#), stating that 'it is not applicable' because the [church](#) leaders have **not committed a criminal offense**. This was also confirmed in the cabinet meeting on 14th October 2022.

In response to a written question from Senator Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡) regarding Prime Minister Kishida's parliamentary answer that he changed the interpretation of the law to include civil cases as well, the government admitted that it had not gone through a cabinet meeting. This is indeed **backroom politics**.



Satoshi Hamada in Dec. 2023. Photo: Tamiron / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image. Cropped



Seishiro Sugihara. Photo: Sekai Nippo. Published with permission.

Seishiro Sugihara (杉原誠四郎), a former professor at *Musashino Women's University* (武蔵野女子大) [In Tokyo], who is knowledgeable about the issues of religion and politics, points out,

"If the government changed its interpretation through consultations with relevant ministries and agencies

without going through a Cabinet meeting, its response would be difficult."

He is critical,

"At least it has become clear that the interpretation was changed **without a Cabinet decision**, which in itself is a big problem."

The accusation of issuing a **"death sentence"** to a religious corporation and criticism of disregarding the **human rights of tens of thousands of believers** are unavoidable.

February 10, 2024

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The Religious Corporations Act stipulates that a religious corporation that has committed an act that is clearly recognized as "violating laws and regulations and significantly harming public welfare" can be ordered to be dissolved by a court, based on requests from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, among others. However, the government's response on 14th October 2022 pointed out that there is no criminal violation, which is a requirement for requesting a dissolution order against the former **Unification Church**.

Even when Senator Hiroyuki Konishi (小西洋之) of the *Constitutional Democratic Party*, who pressed Prime Minister Kishida to request a dissolution order, asked in a question paper why he (Kishida) had not made a request, he **avoided making a clear statement** on the grounds that it is a "matter related to a pending case".



Hiroyuki Konishi in March 2020. Photo: 石垣のりこ / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 3.0 Unp.](#) Cropped

The *Liberal Democratic Party* (LDP), at the urging of opposition parties, the media, and left-wing intellectuals, conducted an investigation into whether its members of the Diet had any connections with the **religious group** and related organizations. In August 2022, the LDP admitted that there had been relationships and announced a policy of "having no relationship whatsoever with the former **Unification Church** and related organizations, and not having any relationship with organizations that have been identified as socially problematic." By removing from ministerial positions those members who admitted to having a relationship, the LDP tried to deflect criticism.



Taro Kono, government minister who brought extreme leftwing lawyer Masaki Kito, who is hostile to the **Family Federation**, in as special advisor to the Kishida government. Photo (2019): Kuhlmann / MSC / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 3.0 Ger](#)

Furthermore, the **lack of neutrality** is evident from the fact that Taro Kono (河野太郎), the Minister in charge of Consumer Affairs, arbitrarily, and in order to denounce the **religious organization**, appointed several individuals to the *Consumer Affairs Agency's* "Study Group on Measures against Bad Business Practices such as Spiritual Sales".

Fumio Kishida's **reckless nature** also surfaced in the issue of unreported income from the Liberal Democratic Party faction party tickets (slush funds), which became a problem from the end of last year. As soon as this issue came to light, Kishida suddenly announced on 7th December 2023 that he would resign as the

chairman of the Kishida faction.

Amid **suspicious of slush fund involvement** of both the *Kishida faction* and himself, Kishida served as the head of the party's political reform headquarters and declared the dissolution of the Abe and Nikai factions, in



Taro Aso, Prime Minister 2008-2009. Here in 2017. Photo: 首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int.](#)



Toshimitsu Motegi in May 2023. Photo: U.S. Department of State / Wikimedia Commons. **Public domain image.** Cropped

a “sneak attack” *Cropped*

move against them. Those

factions were in dire straits due to the slush funds issue. He put forth a reform proposal that included a ban on faction-hosted parties.

The fact that he overrode the objections of Vice-President of LDP Taro Aso (麻生太郎) and Secretary-General Toshimitsu Motegi (茂木敏充), who both had voiced their opposition to abolishing factions, caused a rift in the cooperative relationship between the three, which has been referred to as the “three-headed leadership”.

As evident from the handling of the former [Unification Church](#) and the secret funds issue, Prime Minister Kishida has a **widespread reputation within the party as a populist.**



Daishiro Yamagawa in Oct. 2021. Photo: 内閣府 / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

In October 2022, *Economic Revitalization Minister* Daishiro Yamagawa (山際大志郎) from the Aso faction, was said to have ties with the [religious organization](#) and was **forced to resign.**



Masahito Moriyama, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Photo (2023): 首相官邸ホームページ. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). *Cropped*

However, even in the current cabinet, connections have come to light. The *Minister of Education*, Masahito Moriyama (盛山正仁) from the Kishida faction, who requested the dissolution order, was revealed to have received support from the former [Unification Church](#) in the October 2021 general election and is fiercely questioned by the opposition. Kishida defends Moriyama by saying, “He has now severed all ties with the former [Unification Church.](#)”

Still, **Kishida himself is known to have had a past meeting** with the head of a related organization. He is however afraid of a domino effect of resignations and is trying to get through by pretending not to have been aware of past connections. This makes it impossible to maintain consistency with lawmakers who were removed from the cabinet because they had a relationship in the past to the [Unification Church](#).

Originally, it was the Prime Minister and the Liberal Democratic Party themselves who raised the issue of “no illegality” in their election cooperation [with the [Unification Church](#)]. They will pay a high price for being **swayed by public opinion just to prolong their political lives.**

See [part 2](#)

Featured image above: Prime Minister Fumio Kishida 16th April 2023. Photo: 首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

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