

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: In Japan Hostile Lawyers May Determine Who Is A Victim

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Okazaki Family Church of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (Koseidori Higashi, Okazaki City, Aichi Prefecture)

Extreme definition of "victim" sold to Japanese authorities by hostile lawyers may well net them earnings beyond their wildest dreams

by Matthias Stephan



The flag of the [Family Federation](#)

On December 30, 2023, Japan enacted Law 89 of 2023, officially titled the "Law on Special Provisions for the Operation of the Japan Legal Support Center for Prompt and Smooth Relief of Victims of Specific Wrongful Acts, and Similar, and Special Provisions of the Disposition and Management of Property by Religious Corporations". This law is part of the government's initiative in response to the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2022 by an individual who harboured animosity towards the [Unification Church](#) (now known as the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)). The assailant aimed to punish Abe for his collaboration with certain initiatives of the [church](#).

As a consequence, the government has submitted a request for the dissolution

of the [Family Federation](#) as a religious corporation to the Tokyo District Court. The legal proceedings are currently underway.

Although more radical proposals were dismissed, Law 89 mandates that religious corporations facing dissolution requests must regularly provide reports on their assets and notify administrative agencies before making any real estate transactions. Additionally, the law permits individuals deemed "victims" of these religious corporations, under specific conditions, to access and scrutinize the inventory of the organizations' assets.



Law 89 has faced criticism for its ambiguous definition of so-called "victims", prompting the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) to release draft guidelines. These guidelines, titled "Criteria for Operation Concerning the Designation of Designated Religious Corporations and Specially Designated Religious Corporations under the Law on Special Provisions for the Operation of the Japan Legal Support Center for Prompt and Smooth Relief of Victims of Specific Wrongful Acts, and Similar, and Special Provisions

of the Disposition and Management of Property by Religious Corporations", are currently open for public feedback before their finalization.

As outlined in Law 89, religious corporations facing dissolution requests can fall into two categories: "designated religious corporations" and "specially designated religious corporations". The classification depends on specific criteria. A group will be labelled a "designated religious corporation" if there is a "substantial" number of so-called "victims". Conversely, if there is a perceived risk that the group's assets might disappear, it will be categorized as a "specially designated religious corporation".

Organizations designated as "specially designated" will undergo more rigorous monitoring of their assets. Additionally, individuals considered "victims" (typically represented by their lawyers) will have easier access to the inventories and accounts of these organizations, facilitating greater scrutiny.

Despite the intention to bring clarity to the definitions of "victims" and "substantial number", the guidelines, in practice, do not provide much clarification. Instead, they leave a wide scope for subjective and arbitrary interpretation by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). The guidelines, as they currently stand, may not offer the precise and objective criteria needed to address concerns surrounding these terms, potentially allowing for varying interpretations and decisions by the MEXT.



One of the architects of new law and advisor to the Japanese authorities: Masaki Kito, one of the hostile lawyers of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales and Nationwide Unification Church Damage Countermeasures Legal Team

The term "victims" is defined in the context of Law 89 as individuals who have endured consequences arising from the "specific torts" upon which the dissolution request is founded. This includes individuals who have experienced harm either prior to or following the submission of the dissolution request. Importantly, these individuals are characterized as having or potentially having legal rights, such as the right to pursue damages, based on the specific torts outlined in the request for dissolution.

The determination of whether a person "may have legal rights" as a "victim" based on "specific torts" is addressed in the guidelines. They explicitly reference and endorse an opinion from the Legal Affairs Committee of the House of Councillors, dated December 12, 2023. According to this opinion, individuals without a clear intention to file a claim, along with those who have already received compensation are purported and recognized as victims. The guidelines broaden the definition of victims to include individuals who may not necessarily be actively pursuing legal action but have suffered from the specified wrongs or torts.

The Ministry's perspective raises concern about the definition of "victims" as outlined by the Legal Affairs Committee and the corresponding guidelines. The broad inclusion of individuals who have settled cases with a religious organization, regardless of the circumstances, presents challenges to the precision and objectivity of the term "victim".

It emphasizes the inherent ambiguity in categorizing those who have settled as "victims". Settlements are typically reached to avoid prolonged and costly legal proceedings, and they do not necessarily establish the veracity of the claims. Entering into a settlement does not automatically certify someone as a "victim" in the sense of having experienced the alleged wrongful acts.

The criteria for defining "victims" appear to go beyond individuals who have successfully pursued legal

action and won court cases, which could contribute to an inflated number of individuals falling under this classification. This raises important questions about the rationale and fairness of such definitions within the legal framework.



Taro Kono, the government minister who personally appointed hostile lawyers as advisors to the government, is known as a maverick politician. Here in 2019

The observation highlights a notable aspect of the guidelines that may raise ethical and conceptual concerns. The inclusion of individuals who have no intention to file claims against a religious corporation, and yet are still labelled as "victims", introduces a subjective element that can be exploited. This seems to leave room for external parties, such as anti-cult lawyers, media, or government entities like MEXT, to potentially influence the categorization of individuals as "victims".

The idea that individuals might be considered "victims" based on an external perception that they "ought to" have complaints, even if they don't, raises questions about the objectivity and fairness of the process. The concept of being "brainwashed" and the presumption that individuals may not be aware of their own grievances could lead to an overly broad classification of people as "victims", potentially inflating the numbers for reasons unrelated to genuine harm or wrongdoing.

This aspect of the guidelines highlights the importance of clear and objective criteria in legal definitions to ensure fairness and prevent the manipulation of categories for various agendas.

The absence of a defined procedure through which a religious organization can dispute the designation of an individual as a "victim" is a notable omission in the guidelines. This lack of a formal process for challenging the status of individuals identified as "victims" by MEXT, particularly when the affected person denies such victimization, raises concerns about due process and the potential for subjective determinations.



Another advisor to the Japanese government vehemently opposed to the [Family Federation](#): Shiori Kanno, here in 2016

In the absence of a clear mechanism for dispute resolution, the designation of someone as a "victim" may indeed rely heavily on the assessment made by MEXT, potentially influenced by external sources such as anti-cult lawyers. This scenario could be problematic, especially if the affected person disputes the label and denies being a "victim". The absence of a formalized procedure for religious organizations to present counterarguments or evidence challenges the fairness and transparency of the process.

The lack of a mechanism for dispute resolution emphasizes the importance of incorporating checks and balances into legal frameworks to ensure a fair and impartial assessment of claims, particularly in cases where the designation of individuals as "victims" has significant legal implications.

The definition of a "significant number" of "victims" in the guidelines, with a general indication that "a few dozen victims" may be considered "substantial", introduces a subjective element that can be debated. One

may ask how one should determine what constitutes a substantial number, especially within the context of a large organization like the [Unification Church](#).

If, hypothetically, the [Unification Church](#) has had 600,000 members in Japan during the relevant period, 48 complainants (representing "a few dozen" as per the guidelines) would indeed constitute less than 0.01% of the total membership. The question of whether this percentage is "substantial" is subjective and open to interpretation. Some may argue that it is a small fraction, while others may contend that any form of victimization, regardless of the numerical percentage, is significant.

This flexibility in defining "significant" on a case-by-case basis may lead to varying interpretations, potentially raising concerns about the precision and fairness of such criteria. It underscores the importance of clear and objective standards in legal frameworks to avoid ambiguity and ensure equitable treatment, especially when assessing the significance of the number of persons pointed out as victims in a given context.

There are significant concerns about the effectiveness and fairness of the guidelines in providing clarity on the definitions of "victims" and a "substantial number". The apparent reliance on information from anti-cult organizations and the lack of a robust mechanism for religious organizations to challenge designations or estimates raise serious questions about due process and objectivity.



Sign at the entrance of the headquarters of the Family Federation of Japan in Shibuya

If the guidelines effectively place the determination of who qualifies as a "victim" and the estimation of their numbers in the hands of external entities with potential biases, it could lead to outcomes that may not accurately reflect the reality of the situation. The fact that designations and estimates may not be disputed, even by individuals identified as "victims" who deny such victimization, further complicates the fairness and integrity of the process.

These observations emphasize the importance of refining legal frameworks to ensure transparency, accountability, and a fair balance of

perspectives in the assessment of claims. The aim should be to prevent potential misuse of the system and protect the rights of all parties involved, including the religious organizations under scrutiny. Concerns raised about the potential broader implications for freedom of religion or belief in Japan are valid and significant. If criteria for identifying and counting "victims" of religious organizations are established without clear safeguards, it raises the risk of the same criteria being applied to other groups that may be designated as "cults" based on subjective or biased perspectives from the media or anti-cult organizations.

The potential for these criteria to be applied indiscriminately, especially during periods of heightened public emotion or media influence, can undermine the fundamental principles of freedom of religion or belief. Such actions may lead to unfair targeting and punishment of religious organizations, regardless of the actual merit of the claims against them.

It is crucial for legal frameworks to incorporate protections that ensure the rights of religious organizations and their members are respected, and that criteria for identifying and counting so-called "victims" are objective, transparent, and subject to fair scrutiny. The importance of preserving freedom of religion or belief as a fundamental human right cannot be overstated, and careful consideration of the potential consequences of such legal measures is necessary to safeguard these rights in the long term.

"Hostile Lawyers May Determine Who Is a Victim" - text: Matthias Stephan

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Family Federation

The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification

The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification is a global federation of individuals and families who aim to create a world of peace and unity beyond national, cultural, religious and ideological barriers, a world where everyone may live together in peace and harmony.



Father and Mother Moon 1st August 1996.

In a nutshell

Name: Family Federation for World Peace and Unification

Founded: 1996

Founders: Rev. [Sun Myung Moon](#) (1920-2012) and Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#)

Teachings: [Unificationism](#), a long series of revelations received by [Sun Myung Moon](#). See: [Brief about the Teachings](#) of the Family Federation

Goal: The [Kingdom of Heaven](#) on Earth. A harmonious world family, where everyone may experience peace, security, freedom and love.

Strategy: Unite all good forces

Distribution: Largest in South Korea and Japan, but found in most nations.

Background: The Family Federation took over many of the functions of the [Unification Church](#) and its basic teachings.

Frequently asked questions: See: [Faq](#)

Three ideals

As the name indicates, the Family Federation is based on three ideals – family, world peace, and unification.

- **The family ideal.** Most religions focus on the individual and its spirituality. The Family Federation teaches a broader concept of spirituality, where your [relationships](#) to your loved ones are of decisive importance for your eternal life. As [God](#) is the source of love, [marriages](#) blessed by [God](#) and families full of [true love](#) are the very foundation for the [Kingdom of Heaven](#) that [God](#) longs for. It is a love kingdom, and the family is a [school of love](#).
- **World peace.** If there is love and peace in the home, there is hope that we may also create societies and nations with peace. The family is the fundamental social institution. If we can learn to love our fellow human beings on micro-level, in a family, we may also do so on macro-level, i.e. in the society around us and in the big world we live in. Well-functioning families are the very key to reducing crime, alcohol and drug abuse, the number of suicides and many other social problems.

- **Unification.** We talk about unification on all levels, from the individual to the global level. [God](#) is the source of unity, evil the source of division. Therefore, the goal of the Family Federation is to remove the barriers and create a world of unity, a social unity, such as that between husband and wife, between parents and children, different social groups, nations and religions, but also unity between the inner world and the outer, between mind and body, spirit and matter, religion and science.

The inauguration

The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification was first founded in the USA 31st July 1996 by [Sun Myung Moon](#) and his wife [Hak Ja Han](#), and in many European nations soon after that.

As co-founder, [Mother Moon](#) gave the inaugural address titled "View of the Principle of the Providential History of Salvation", reading a prepared text. [Father](#)

[Moon](#) spoke without a script at the closing banquet the following day, 1st August, at the Sheraton Washington Hotel. His speech was titled "In Search of the Origin of the Universe".



The Inaugural World Convention of the Family Federation 31st July 1996

Gerald Ford, U.S. President 1974-1977, spoke at the inauguration 31st July 1996. He said,



Gerald Ford 31st July 1996

"While the world's finest athletes test themselves in Atlanta, this gathering is sort of a spiritual Olympics. Like the Olympians, you have assembled from all over the world to further the cause of peace among nations.

But while those Olympians are dedicated to gold and glory, you in this room pursue other objectives. The glory you seek, comes from God, not gold.

I sound a bit like an Old Testament prophet, it's because there is nothing about which I feel more strongly, more deeply, than the survival and the strengthening of the family. No civilization that neglects the family, can be called civilized for long, and no political philosophy that takes the family for granted, will be taken seriously by anyone who values morality, compassion and peace."

The chronicle "40 Years in America" describes the event,



Mother and Father Moon 31st July 1996

If at times



National Building Museum, Washington DC. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

"The movement's most spectacular world convention was held in Washington, D.C. from July 30-August 1, 1996, inaugurating the Family Federation for World Peace (FFWP).

This event included a cast of luminaries rivaling anything the movement had yet undertaken: two former Presidents of the United States, Gerald Ford and George Bush; former President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias of Costa Rica; former Prime Ministers Edward Heath of Great Britain and Brian Mulroney of Canada; thirty-six one-time heads of state or governments; university presidents including Boston University's John Silber; Christian television personality Robert Schuller; Christian Coalition Executive Director Ralph Reed; Coretta Scott King, the widow of Martin Luther King, Jr.; Maureen Reagan, the daughter of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan; well-known comedian Bill Cosby; and Christian singer-actor Pat Boone. In addition, the main proceedings were covered live by C-SPAN television network. (p.443) [...]

The establishment of the FFWP represented a new stage in the movement's development. Rev. Chung Hwan Kwak, who was appointed International President, maintained that the FFWP was more important than the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) or [Unification Church](#). HSA-UWC, he noted, was "not [True Parents'](#) ultimate organization".

The rationale for this assertion was connected to the historic shift that underlay the emergence of the Completed Testament Age. As noted previously, Rev. Kwak



[Completed Testament Age](#). As noted previously, Rev. Kwak explained,

'Religious organizations have always been centered upon the salvation of the individual, but we have now progressed to the salvation of the family. [...] Such an organization is not a church; it is the Family Federation for World Peace.'



[Sun Myung Moon](#) 1st August 1996



From the Inaugural Convention 31st July 1996.

Given this understanding, it wasn't surprising that the FFWP rather than the [Unification Church](#) was the main sponsor of the World Culture and Sports Festivals and International [Marriage Blessings](#) after 1996." (p.444) (From the section "Federations for World Peace and Unification", in "40 Years in America – 1959-1999 – An Intimate History of the Unification Movement", by Michael Inglis and Michael L. Mickler, published by HSA Publications Oct. 2000, 624 pages.)

The Family Federation was launched on the foundation of the [Unification Church](#), a spiritual movement [founded](#) in South Korea in 1954. The original intention was neither to establish a church nor a new religion.

The Family Federation took over many of the activities and tasks of the [Unification Church](#) and the same basic teachings, but has a pronounced goal of creating a world of peace and unity based on well-functioning families.

[More](#) about the Family Federation

Text: Knut Holdhus



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