

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: FFWPU Certain Appeal Japan's Unprecedented Dissolution Order

Knut Holdhus
March 25, 2025



Defiant members of the [Family Federation](#), here protesting against state persecution in the city of Toyama, Japan, March 23, 2025



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Family Federation condemns "unacceptable" dissolution verdict: Certain appeal for Tokyo ruling that is blatant violation of religious freedom

Tokyo, 25th March 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Tokyo District Court Rules in Favor of Dissolution Order for Family Federation

First Dissolution Case Based Solely on Civil Law Violations

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

The Tokyo District Court issued a verdict on 25th March to order the dissolution of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) after the court had been reviewing the dissolution order requested by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).



Sign outside Tokyo District Court

According to the Religious Corporations Act, a court may order the dissolution of a religious organization if it is found to have committed acts that "violate laws and significantly harm public welfare" or "grossly deviate from the organization's religious purposes". While the law requires careful consideration due to the constitutional protection of freedom of religion, the Tokyo District Court determined that the criteria for dissolution were met.

In the past, only Aum Shinrikyo and Myokakuji [See editor's note below] were officially dissolved due to legal violations, both of

which were based on criminal cases.

This case marks the first time a religious organization is being dissolved based solely on civil law violations, as no criminal charges were brought against [Family Federation](#) leaders. The [organization](#) has the right to appeal the decision.

Regarding the closed-door hearings, some media outlets, including the [Sekai Nippo](#), reported that statements submitted by MEXT as grounds for the dissolution request contained [fabricated information](#).

In response to the court's ruling, the [Family Federation](#) states, "This decision is the result of an incorrect interpretation of the law and is completely unacceptable." The [organization](#) announced plans to file an immediate appeal with the Tokyo High Court.

Full Statement by the [Family Federation](#):



Defiant members of the [Family Federation](#), here protesting against state persecution in Otaku, Tokyo, March 22, 2025

"Today, the Tokyo District Court has ruled in favor of the dissolution order requested against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). While we deeply regret this outcome, we take the ruling seriously and will consider filing an immediate appeal with the Tokyo High Court.

We cannot help but conclude that this decision is based on a misinterpretation of the law, and as such, it is entirely unacceptable to our [organization](#).

Additionally, the decision incorporates "civil law violations" as grounds for dissolution, which had never before been considered a valid reason under the Religious Corporations Act. This essentially means that civil law violations [are now grounds](#) for dissolving a religious organization. We believe that will leave a serious negative impact on Japan's freedom of religion and the Japanese religious world as a whole.

Since our compliance declaration in 2009, no major civil law violations have occurred. Moreover, we have actively implemented internal reforms, such as requiring written confirmation from believers regarding donations. As a result, according to a survey by the Japan Legal Support Center (Houterasu), new donation-related disputes are now nearly nonexistent.



Sign at the entrance of the headquarters of the [Family Federation](#) of Japan in Shibuya, Tokyo

We will provide a detailed explanation regarding the unfairness of this decision later, but there is no doubt that it will shake Japan's religious landscape significantly.

Following the incident involving former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍 晋三), widespread misinformation about our [organization](#) has been disseminated through the media and social media. As a result, there have been numerous cases where our members' [human rights were violated](#). We sincerely urge that this ruling does not lead to further unjust [discrimination](#) against our followers by the public or society at large.

Our organization is a religious organization where each believer sincerely practices his or her faith daily.

More than 70% of second-generation believers born into [Family Federation](#) homes have expressed that they are glad to have been born into the organization. We hope the public will recognize the injustice of this dissolution order and understand how fundamentally flawed this decision is."

[Editor's note: Aum Shinrikyo (1996) - Due to its leaders' criminal acts, including the Tokyo subway sarin attack. Myokakuji (2002) - Dissolved after its leaders were involved in criminal cases.]

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Tokyo Court To Rule On 25th In Dissolution Case

• March 23, 2025 • Knut Holdhus



Lower court to rule on 25th March in landmark religious dissolution case with wide-ranging implications for all religions

3 Judges to Decide Fate of Religious Organization That Has Committed No Crimes

by Knut Holdhus, editor

Several Japanese news outlets – NHK World, Mainichi Shimbun and The Japan Times – reported 23rd March 2025, that Tokyo District Court is expected to decide on Tuesday 25th March whether to issue a dissolution order for the religious organization formerly known as the Unification



The logo of the Mainichi Shimbun. Public domain image

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Church. The Japanese government's education and culture ministry requested the court's intervention in 2023, arguing that the **organization** engaged in unethical fundraising practices and frightened members with stories about eternal damnation in hell.

This case follows an extensive investigation by the ministry, which claims to have interviewed over 170 former members who had sought "damages" and their donations being refunded after being advised to do so by activists and hostile lawyers campaigning against the **religious organization** since the 1980s.



According to NHK World, government ministry officials claim that the **religious organization** forced its members to offer substantial donations over a long period of time.

The Japan Times reports that the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* claims that members of the former **Unification Church** "committed illegal acts" when soliciting "people to make large donations to the group by stirring up their anxiety".



The Japan Times article was provided by *Jiji News Agency*, which states,

"The **Unification Church** has rebutted that the receipt of donations is part of religious activities and is not a way to acquire property through illegal acts. In January, the group filed with the court a claim that the evidence submitted by the ministry was fabricated."

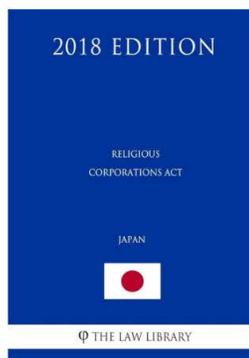
The **Unification Church**, which in 2015 changed its name in Japan to **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification**, denies forcing anyone to offer donations and stirring up potential donors' anxiety.

As NHK World reports, the **religious organization** points out that "receiving donations is part of its religious activities." According to Japanese law, all registered religious corporations are entitled to solicit donations. And donors are entitled to offer large donations if they wish to do so.



An English exact reproduction of *The Civil Code of Japan, vol. 1, 4th edition, first published 1906.*

According to the media reports, the government ministry contends that asking for donations using wrongful methods constitute unlawful acts under Japan's Civil Code, providing grounds for dissolution under the *Religious Corporations Act*. Up until now, only criminal acts would be ground for dissolution of a religious corporation. However, after the Abe assassination, the Kishida administration **changed**



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

the law overnight in order to allow claimed civil wrongdoings to suffice for issuing a dissolution order.

Although NHK World does not mention specifically that the authorities **changed the law** to specifically target the **Family Federation**, the large state-run media outlet writes,

"The latest request [for a dissolution order] is the first case filed based on illegal acts under the Civil Code."

NHK describes that it "is the third time that a Japanese government ministry or agency has sought the dissolution of a religious group for violating laws." The state channel describes the two previous cases:

- the Aum Shinrikyo movement, responsible for the deadly 1995 Tokyo subway sarin gas attack
- the Myokakuji group, whose leader was convicted of fraud.

In order for the **Family Federation** to be placed in this category, the **law had to be changed**. Unlike these prior instances, the case against the former **Unification Church** is entirely based on alleged violations of the Civil Code rather than criminal offenses.

Text: Knut Holdhus

Featured image above: The sign outside Tokyo District Court. Photo: FFWPU

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