

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Anti-Religion Playbook

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Japan being influenced by communist China



[Sekai Nippo](#)

China's playbook? How Japan's media and courts follow a communist narrative in dissolution case

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The Dissolution Order of the Family Federation Progresses as China Intended

Newspapers Have Been Reduced to Government Mouthpieces

by Kiyoshi Masu (増 記代司)

China, where there is no religious freedom

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The Tokyo District Court has decided to [order the dissolution](#) of the former [Unification Church](#) ([Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)), a decision that seems to echo China's triumphant laughter.



Justified by CCP? Tetsuya Yamagami, terrorist and assassin of Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister of Japan

Religious freedom is one of the fundamental human rights in modern society. This is a universally accepted norm. Even the Chinese Communist Party claims in its constitution that "citizens have freedom of religious belief" (Article 36). However, the latter part of the article is the real issue. It goes on to state that "the state protects normal religious activities," with the Communist regime, naturally, deciding what is considered "normal".

Religious groups that are deemed "abnormal", meaning those that do not align with the Communist Party's interests, are labeled as "cults" and suppressed.

After the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍 晋三), when Japanese media widely reported that the suspect, Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也), was motivated by resentment toward the [religious organization](#), China boasted that it had long ago recognized

the [group](#) as an "evil cult" (邪教) and outlawed it.

The Chinese Communist Party-affiliated Global Times claimed that this demonstrated the correctness of China's effort to eradicate cults, stating,

"If Yamagami had been living in China, the government would have helped him pursue justice and eliminate this [religious group](#)."

This was essentially China preaching to Japan, portraying the terrorist as a justified figure. (Kyodo News / Mainichi Shimbun, 30th July 2022, online edition).



*One of the architects of new law targeting the [Family Federation](#) and advisor to the Japanese authorities: Masaki Kito, leading hostile lawyer of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales and Nationwide Unification Church Damage Countermeasures Legal Team*

Since then, the issue surrounding the [religious group](#) has unfolded precisely as China has preached. When the Consumer Affairs Agency convened a review panel on fraudulent religious sales practices on 29th August 2022, attorney Masaki Kito (紀藤正樹) of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales brought a contact list of the "Christian Liaison Committee on Cult Issues" as material. He labeled the [group](#) a cult and called on the government to intervene (i.e., eradicate the [organization](#)). Kito's stance essentially mirrored that of the Chinese government.

**Media jumping to conclusions**

Leftist media outlets also unilaterally labeled the [group](#) as a cult, [stirred sympathy for the terrorist](#), and waged a campaign against the [religious organization](#) that seemed to "help him pursue justice" by seeking its eradication. The [court's order](#) to dissolve the [group](#) is merely a continuation of this narrative.

In a democratic society, the pursuit of truth is supposed to be the journalist's mission. However, Japanese media have effectively abandoned this duty. Instead of investigating the court's decision, they merely reported it as it was stated, with almost no newspapers

making an effort to uncover the truth. Such behavior is characteristic of government-controlled newspapers - essentially identical to those in China.



*Seishiro Sugihara, served as a professor at Josai University and Musashino Women's University (now Musashino University)*

Seishiro Sugihara (杉原誠四郎), former professor at Musashino Women's University, criticized the "[dissolution order](#) as a non-transparent administrative act" (Sankei Shimbun, 26th March edition), pointing out,

"The testimonies submitted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology from so-called victims are sloppy in content, lack evidential credibility, and should be examined in an open trial."

However, the media has completely ignored such perspectives.

Particularly, leftist newspapers, which usually champion the Constitution, have remained silent. Article 32 of the Constitution guarantees that "no person shall be denied the right to a trial," and Article 82 mandates that "court trials and judgments shall be conducted in public [...]" and cases involving fundamental rights under Chapter 3 of the Constitution must always be held publicly." Yet, no newspaper is discussing this issue. A trial without transparency - this is precisely China's specialty.

**Warning of deterioration of Japan-U.S. alliance**

In November 2022, when the Diet was debating new legislation to assist victims of fraudulent religious practices, House of Representatives member Goshi Hosono (細野豪志) remarked in an online Sankei Shimbun article (8th November 2022 edition):

"(Abe's assassination) has destroyed the democratic process of elections. Is it right to legislate based on the intentions of a terrorist? We must not allow the perpetrator to be regarded as a 'successful terrorist'."

The [dissolution order](#) is, in fact, an act that creates a "successful terrorist", following China's exact

narrative. On 24th March 2025, former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich posted on X (formerly Twitter) that "the current attack on the [Family Federation](#) in Japan is an attempt to weaken the Japan-U.S. alliance and pave the way for reconciliation between the Chinese Communist Party and Japan." (Sankei Shimbun, 26th March edition). This view is not entirely off the mark.



*Goshi Hosono*

Text: Kiyoshi Masu (増 記代司)

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March 28, 2025

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rights law. She has defended the rights of minorities of religion or belief in domestic and international fora, and before international institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Union, and the United Nations. She has also published numerous scholarly articles on freedom of religion or belief. Photo: [FOREF](#)

Text: John Milton / Knut Holdhus

## Japanese authorities have designed a whole legal apparatus forged on debunked concepts in order to eliminate new religious movements

Japan enacts law based on debunked concepts of “undue influence” and “mental manipulation” in order to make it impossible for large minority faith to operate

See also [Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook](#)

Patricia Duval points out in her report to UN 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2024, how all the civil cases in Japan against the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) were based on the debunked concepts of “undue influence” and “mental manipulation”.

These **outdated notions are also the basis for Japan's recent legal actions against the [Family Federation](#)**. Critics naturally argue that **this approach violates both scientific standards and international human rights principles, setting a concerning precedent for religious freedom**. This has intensified global debates on religious freedom and state neutrality.

### Mental manipulation thrown out as legal argument in Europe

In recent years, the Japanese government has heightened scrutiny over new religious movements, targeting especially the [Family Federation](#). Echoing leftwing activist lawyers who have campaigned against the [Family Federation](#) for more than 40 years, the authorities suddenly after the Abe assassination in July 2022, started to claim that the [federation](#) exerts undue influence on members, resulting in harm through solicited donations and proselytizing practices considered not “socially acceptable”. Legal experts and rights advocates have voiced **concerns about the subjective and discriminatory nature of these claims, highlighting the lack of clear, scientific basis for the concept of mental manipulation**.

Japan's reliance on these unproven claims aligns it with certain authoritarian governments, like Russia, which have taken steps



[executive summary](#) of the report. The day after, the magazine started publishing a 5-part series where Duval gives a more detailed description of the content.

**Part 1** of comments on [fifth article of Bitter Winter's 5-part series](#)

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to restrict minority religious groups under similar arguments. The European Court

Courtroom of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Photo (2014): Adrian Crycuk / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 3.0 Pol. Cropped

of Human Rights (ECHR) examined a similar issue in *"Jehovah's Witnesses of Moscow v. Russia"* (IC-302/02) in 2010. The Russian government dissolved the Jehovah's Witnesses' community in Moscow, alleging the group employed psychological pressure and "mind control" techniques that compromised members' freedom of choice.

However, the **ECHR ruled against Russia, concluding that claims of mind control were unsubstantiated by scientific evidence and that no clear definition of the concept exists.** The Court found that members of the Jehovah's Witnesses voluntarily chose to practice their faith and ruled that Russia's dissolution of the group violated members' right to religious freedom.

The ECHR underscored that it was **legally and ethically flawed to discount members' voluntary choices based on unproven psychological theories.** As a result, Russia was found to have infringed on the rights of its citizens to practice their chosen religion. This ruling set an important precedent, clarifying that freedom of conscience cannot be compromised by unfounded claims of undue influence.

#### Japan's framework targeting new religious movements

Duval emphasizes that Japan's revival of the mental manipulation theory to justify actions against the **Family Federation** raises **questions about state impartiality in religious matters.** Recently, **Japanese authorities implemented a legal framework explicitly targeting the Family Federation.** Critics believe this framework is designed to remove certain new religious movements from Japan's religious landscape. The framework includes **redefining "victims" to encompass potential future claimants** who may not currently consider themselves victims but might later be persuaded to file complaints. By framing certain beliefs and practices as socially unacceptable, **Japan risks invalidating members' free will and effectively labeling them as incapable of making their own religious decisions.** Nothing less!

This framework suggests that the **state could intervene to determine what constitutes acceptable religious beliefs,** invoking public welfare as justification. However, such intervention risks infringing upon individual liberties by assuming a paternalistic role in religious matters and deciding which beliefs are valid and who is competent to choose them.

#### Violations of international agreements on religious freedom

Critics argue that by targeting religious organizations based on mental manipulation, **Japan risks undermining its commitment to international human rights standards, including the right to religious freedom.**

Under treaties like the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), Japan is obligated to maintain religious neutrality and protect its citizens' freedom of belief. The current legal strategy of the Japanese authorities undermines these protections by setting a precedent in which the state questions the legitimacy of certain religious choices.



#### International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

*Japan violates international treaties it has ratified, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).*

#### Broader implications for religious freedom

Japan's approach raises broader concerns about religious freedom within democratic societies. If courts continue to accept mental manipulation arguments without scientific support, minority religious groups could face stigmatization and legal restrictions if deemed outside traditional norms. By employing unproven theories to dissolve religious groups, Japan could inadvertently embolden other nations to adopt similar tactics, raising global concerns about state intrusion on personal beliefs.

The case against the **Family Federation** marks a pivotal moment in balancing state authority with individual freedoms. The future of

Japan's religious landscape – and that of other democracies – will hinge on governments' respect for religious autonomy amid growing social and legal pressures.

See also [Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook](#)

**Featured image** above: Outrageous dehumanizing Japanese human rights violations: International human rights expert states that Japan risks invalidating members' free will and effectively labeling them as incapable of making their own religious decisions. Here, members of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan participating in a Happy Family seminar aimed at improving the relationships between husband and wife and parents and children. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

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