

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Religiocide - Japan's Murder of a Religion

Knut Holdhus
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Dr. Massimo Introvigne addressing the side event to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland on June 16, 2025

Leading scholar condemns the state persecution of large religious minority Family Federation, calling recent dissolution order an act of "religiocide"

No Evidence, No Justice: The Killing of a Religious Organization in Japan After 40 Years of Militant Leftist Lawfare



Dr. Massimo Introvigne addressing the side event to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland on June 16, 2025. From left: Attorney Patricia Duval, Heiner Handschin, Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Dr. Hirohisa Koide

A speech by Dr. Massimo Introvigne at a side event organized by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council, in hall 25 of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland June 16, 2025. Massimo Introvigne is an Italian sociologist of religion and editor-in-chief of [Bitter Winter](#), and one of the most well-known scholars of religion internationally. He is Managing Director of CESNUR, Center for Studies on New Religions, Torino, Italy.

As you have heard, on 25th March, the Tokyo District Court [ordered the dissolution](#) of the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below], and the case is [under appeal](#).

You may have heard, however, in the international media a lie that being dissolved only means you lose your tax-exempt status. This is false.

If you are dissolved in Japan, all the assets are transferred to a liquidator - bank accounts and places of worship. The believers could still believe in their heart, but they cannot meet in any place, they cannot own property, they cannot function. So it's a homicide.



About to become victim of "religiocide", the "murder" of a religion, in Japan: The [Family Federation](#), formerly the [Unification Church](#). Here, its flag waving in Tokyo

And some scholars have even coined the word "religiocide" for this case.

We don't have much time left, so I will try to answer four questions about the "religiocide": Why, when, by whom, and how was this, or is this crime being perpetrated?

Why? There are many colleagues who have studied the general hostility of Japan to religion. Japan is a very secular society, but it also has a long tradition of scapegoating foreign religions for all the problems of the country.

It was once Christianity, during the interwar period. But up until now, what's going on now, it was the Jehovah's Witnesses which are of course an American religion. And now it's the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below], which is Korean. And there is a lot of anti-Korean racism going on as a subtext of this story.

In 2022, Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister, was assassinated by a man whose mother is a member of the [Unification Church](#). The assassin, Tetsuya Yamagami, was never a member, but he claimed he had killed Shinzo Abe to punish him for his sympathy for the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below]. 20 years before, in 2002, Yamagami's mother went bankrupt - he said - because of excessive donations to the [church](#).



Tetsuya Yamagami, the man who killed Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister of Japan

Never mind that he waited for 20 years. Never mind that members of the [church](#) gave back to the family half of the donations when the relatives started complaining.

But that [the assassination] was a golden opportunity, which leads me to the third question - who?

Who promoted this? This was promoted not by politics. Politics initially tried to resist it - the government. It was promoted by the media, and the media had been agitated for more than 20 years by an anti-[Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below], an anti-cult association called the National Network of Lawyers Against

Spiritual Sales.



Hiroshi Yamaguchi, activist leftwing lawyer and founder and leading member of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS)

And we know this association, as hinted before, was founded by members of the Socialist and Communist parties to eliminate the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below], an anti-communist organization, but then to fight conservative religion in general.

And that's why they also go against the Jehovah's Witnesses, but also against evangelical conservative Christianity and many other groups.

And this national network was founded in 1987. They tried for many years, unsuccessfully, to have the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below] dissolved, until the assassination of Shinzo Abe offered them a golden opportunity.

But the opportunity was caught because the campaign existed before. It had the existed for more than 30 years actually, when Abe was assassinated.

And finally: how - how they did it.

They did it - and that's the long and the short of the court decision - by accusing the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below] of

what they called "spiritual sales".

"Spiritual sales" is an expression invented by this anti-[Unification Church](#) association for sales of small

pagodas, seals and other artifacts - believed to bring good luck - that some believers from the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below] back in the 1980s and early 90's were selling for high prices. And then the lawyers extended the expression "spiritual sales" to donations.



Miniature pagoda sold by members of the [Unification Church](#) in Japan

Now question: Did these sales of artifacts for prices higher than their value happen? Yes. It happened decades ago and that was not an activity of the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below] as a church. [Unification Church](#) is a Christian religion - they don't deal in Buddhist charms or pagodas. It was an individual activity of some believers, and these believers were stopped eventually by the [Unification Church](#). After the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below] stopped them, the number of complaints for the so-called "spiritual sales" decreased to almost zero.

That's not my opinion. That's not the scholars' opinion. That's written in the decision of the dissolution case that in the last nine or ten years there have been almost no cases - three or four.



Persuaded the government: Masaki Kito, one of the hostile lawyers of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales and Nationwide Unification Church Damage Countermeasures Legal Team. He worked in league with faith-breakers forcing believers into lawsuits and exploiting them to fit narrative: One of the architects of new law and advisor to the Japanese authorities

So why was the [dissolution pronounced](#)? Because these lawyers persuaded the government and the court that even if there are no cases of "spiritual sales", there can be - perhaps hypothetically - because of the [church](#) being a "bad organization". It's true they stopped, but perhaps tomorrow, they will start again. And it seems they stopped, but perhaps they didn't, and things are going on under the table, etc.

But that's all speculation. Their own data, the data of the government, the data of the court in the dissolution case, say in recent years there have been no cases of "spiritual sales". That's extremely important because the reason the court issued a [dissolution order](#) is because of the "spiritual sales".

In the media there has been a campaign that they [[church](#) members] give a bad education to the children. No, that's not part of the court case and of the [dissolution decision](#). It's only about the donations and the "spiritual sales", which did not happen in recent years.

Summing it up: within the climate of general hostility to religion, particularly to foreign religion, an organization founded more than 30 years ago by communist and socialist lawyers to destroy conservative religion, and in particular the anti-communist [Unification Church](#), took the opportunity of the assassination of Shinzo Abe to revamp its campaign and used as the final weapon the "spiritual sales". The name (term) was invented by those lawyers, but it was referring to something which some members of the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below] did decades ago, and which had stopped.

But it was said perhaps it didn't stop, perhaps it goes on secretly,

but there is no evidence for this.

So we have a legally sanctioned "religiocide", or killing of a religion, which is not supported by evidence. It's motivated by politics and takes advantage of a climate hostile to conservative religion in general in a deeply secular society, and a society with a considerable degree of xenophobia where many are happy to bash a [church](#) whose headquarters are in Korea.

Thank you.

[Editor's note: Although Dr. Introvigne uses the name [Unification Church](#), in 2015 the religious organization in Japan officially changed its name to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#).]

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Attorney Patricia Duval speaking at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland 16th June 2025. Photo: Screenshot from video recording by UPF.

stress in his [Koide's] testimony is that at some point he realized he could not escape from the confinement because he had the whole family, a team of 12 people, watching him night and day.

The deprogrammers asked the parents to quit their jobs, and they spent a fortune for not having a job anymore and paying the deprogrammer.

They were there until the end. The father even said, "I have to kill you; I will kill you." It meant they were going to the end. This is what the deprogrammers asked the parents to do. They were pushing the parents to do full confinement.

So he understood he could not escape. What happened is that he feigned. He pretended to have lost his faith, and the deprogrammers were really looking for those who were pretending. So he was put through a rehabilitation period where he had to prove that he actually had lost his faith.

This is why he was asked to do criticism in the media. He had media interviews where he was coached by the deprogrammer, and he had to be really strong against the Church.

He had to visit other confined members to give them a lot of criticism against the Church. And then finally he was taken to the lawyers to file a financial claim against the Church. He had to do all that to prove his apostasy from the Church.

This is something that we don't really understand here in the West because we think,

"OK, they have decided to not believe in the church anymore. And they could just change their mind, and that's it."

But it's not the point. The point is, years later, even 20 years later, they thought they could be abducted and confined again. They still had the pressure.



Front cover page of "Escape from Kidnapping" by Hirohisa Koide, published in Japanese 2023 by

59th session of the Human Rights Council, in hall 25 of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland 16th June 2025. Patricia Duval is a member of the Paris Bar Association, specializing in international human rights law. She has defended the rights of religious and faith minorities both in France and internationally.

See [part 1: 4,300 Victims: Huge Ignored Deprogramming Scandal](#)

The last point I want to



Dr. Hirohisa Koide speaking at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland 16th June 2025. Photo: Screenshot from video recording by UPF.



Working in league with faith-breakers forcing believers into lawsuits and exploiting them to fit narrative: One of the architects of new law and advisor to the Japanese authorities: **Masaki Kito** (紀藤正樹), one of the hostile lawyers of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (全国霊感商法被害対策弁護団) and Nationwide Unification Church Damage Countermeasures Legal Team (全国統一教会被害対策弁護団). Photo: Screenshot / [Bitter Winter](#)

The only thing that freed him, gave him freedom of speech and freedom of choice is that he wrote a book. He published a book before coming open again. So he was protected. He could not be confined again.

And this is why now he's testifying.

Send us a message

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Kogensha. This is a revised edition of his 1996- publication with the same name.

The thing is that all the cases that were built against the [Church](#) and serve as a dissolution basis, all those cases have been fabricated. They have been filed by people [under coercion](#) who had no resentment against the [Church](#), and who did not consider themselves as victims.

They considered themselves as having a serious problem with family that they wanted to solve.

And this is the way they did it.

And so I really wanted to make this point clear because this is what I think is really striking in your [Hirohisa Koide's] [testimony](#).

See [part 1: 4,300 Victims: Huge Ignored Deprogramming Scandal](#)

Featured image above: Attorney Patricia Duval speaking at the side event to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland on 16th June 2025. From left: Norishige Kondo, Attorney Patricia Duval, Heiner Handschin. Photo: Screenshot from video recording by UPF.

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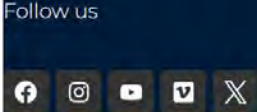


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