

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japanese Anti-Government Protests Spread

Knut Holdhus
July 2, 2024



Members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) and the Tokyo Fellowship Family Church march in a demonstration shouting, "Protect freedom of religion and human rights" - on 30th June 2024, in Shinjuku, Tokyo

Demos and rallies held throughout Japan as part of anti-government protests



[Sekai Nippo](#)

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Family Federation believers hold rallies and protest marches in various places, advocating for the protection of religious freedom.

A member of the city council in Kitakyushu, which passed a resolution to sever relations, also participated.

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

Ahead of the second anniversary of the shooting incident of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on 8th

July, followers of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)) held rallies and marches across the country, calling for freedom of religion.



From the demo in Kitakyushu City 30th June 2024

In Kitakyushu City, on 30th June, about 300 believers and supporters protested against the city council's decision to sever ties with the [Family Federation](#). They marched from the Kitakyushu Municipal Chamber of Commerce and Trade to Kokura Station, shouting, "The government's request for a dissolution order is unjust."

Prior to the march, a rally was held where Shingo Inoue (井上真吾), a member of the city council who attended as a guest, took the stage. He reflected on the unanimous decision made in December 2022 to pass a resolution confirming non-involvement with the former [Unification Church](#), which was deemed "anti-social" due to "numerous victims resulting from spiritual sales" and "extortion of donations".

Although he had supported the resolution at that time, he recalled feeling a strong sense of discomfort, questioning whether it was an issue of freedom of thought and belief. He now pledged to fight for the religious freedom of the [Family Federation](#), even at the cost of his political career.

In Shinjuku Ward, Tokyo, on 30th June, about 100 followers held a protest march, claiming that the declaration by the Liberal Democratic Party to sever ties with the [Family Federation](#) was infringing on the followers' human rights. They chanted slogans such as "Protect freedom of religion".



Discussions about faith experiences and social contributions were held at the 'Akita Rally to Protect Freedom of Religion' on 30th June 2024, in Akita City

On the same day in Akita City [northwestern Japan], a rally was held with the theme "Why Do People Have Faith?" It was attended by about 100 persons. Kimitsugu Usui (薄井君次), a representative of second-generation believers, introduced activities such as holding a bazaar at the church in support of the Noto peninsula [earthquake-stricken area] and visiting about 130 religious organizations to promote interfaith dialogue.

During a panel discussion, there was a speech by Noriaki Kojima (小嶋希晶さ), the president of "Association to Protect the Human Rights of Second-Generation Believers". He mentioned that although they have been interviewed by many media outlets, recently experts have been saying that they were envious of second-generation believers. He emphasized that the media-reported picture of the [Family Federation](#) causing damages is far removed from the actual situation of the [Family Federation](#).



Toru Goto speaking in Niihama City, Japan 29th June 2024

On 29th June in Niihama City, Ehime Prefecture [on southern island of Shikoku], a symposium was held with the participation of over 200 [Family Federation](#) members and supporters. Representing the members, a 74-year-old woman expressed her concern about the current situation, stating, "The media consistently presents biased reports, making it seem as if believers have no human rights." She also voiced her deep concern about being labeled as part of an "evil religion" and even being called an "anti-social force".

Following the testimony of second-generation believers, Toru Goto (後藤徹) gave a lecture. He had been abducted and confined for 12 years and 5 months by his relatives and professional faith-breaker Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻) in order to force Goto to abandon his belief. He cited examples of human rights violations targeting the faith of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), such as the dismissal of employees found to be believers, and the refusal of rental contracts to [Family Federation](#) employees. "Outrageous discrimination and human rights violations take place behind the scenes," he said, referring to the media's biased reporting after the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

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State And Media Creating “Today’s Non-Citizens”

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January 8, 2024 • Knut Holdhus



Japanese journalist exposes how government, media and public opinion effectively have made members into “non-citizens”

Tokyo, 5th January 2024 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

Believers Who Became “Today’s Non-Citizens”

Part 6 of an interview with Masaki Kubota (窪田 順生), author of “Infiltrating the Former Unification Church”

by Seisaku Morita (森田 清策)

[Part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4](#), [part 5](#), [part 7](#)

– The government, media, and public opinion are creating a synergistic effect (相乗効果) [producing a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects], resulting in a “control of

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thought and religion" (思想・宗教統制) we are not aware of.



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

I sense the beginning of fascism. First, they take away freedom of religion, then they take away freedom of speech. They don't suddenly impose a strict control, but gradually tighten it. After publishing the book, I realized that some people will be silenced if they are slammed by those around them. Then, the state will control them more and more. If the state decides, "Anything in this direction is good," then anything other than what the state has decided becomes "anti-social". I think this is the first step towards such a society.

If Prime Minister Fumio Kishida says that from now on he will have no relations

with socially problematic organisations, those taking a stance against the Liberal Democrats can continue to point out the social problems of other religious organisations, such as the Soka Gakkai [創価学会 – the new Buddhist movement on which the political party Komeito is based, the governing Liberal Democratic Party's coalition partner]. They can say, "Why do you declare you have cut ties with the former Unification Church (Family Federation for World Peace and Unification), but not with other religious groups?" It would not be a situation where they could form a coalition. It can be said that Prime Minister Kishida without thinking has destroyed the identity of the Liberal Democratic Party.



The Soka Gakkai International flag. Photo: QueerMichael / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int

Moreover, if we tamper with freedom of thought and religion, our society will become dreadful. They probably did it because they didn't think that far ahead and were afraid their approval ratings would drop. In addition, the officials of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (文化庁) had no choice but to file a request for a dissolution order because it was the Prime Minister's order, and the remaining part of their careers would be in jeopardy should they not obey.

What they did was to accumulate the stories of "victims" by going back in time. On the other hand, they did not listen to the stories of active believers. Normally, if there is a problem, one must first listen to the believers of the group that is thought to have a problem.

Instead of doing that, if they only listen to the stories of former believers who quit 20 years ago, and pile up all of that, saying "there is so much damage," Soka Gakkai [創価学会 – the new Buddhist movement on which the political party Komeito is based, the governing Liberal Democratic Party's coalition partner] will also be in danger. The story is so far-fetched that it should be pointed out by the media. But on the contrary, they are pleased that "support" is overwhelming in public opinion polls. It's a terrifying situation where even extrajudicial matters are approved as long as everyone agrees.

– In your book, the situation of the believers surrounded on all sides (四面楚歌), is described as "today's non-citizens" (令和の非国民).



From Japanese history: Flag used by the Righteous Army during the February 26, 1936 coup attempt. The four characters reading "Revere the Emperor, Destroy the Traitors" (尊皇討奸) are placed in the corners of a standard Japanese flag. Photo: Cckerberos / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image

Believers might feel bad, but the term "today's non-citizens" which I used, means they have become the same as renegades during wartime.

Those who were said to be non-citizens then, were not beaten up because of laws such as a "Non-Citizens Exclusion Act" (非国民排斥法). At that time, the media frequently wrote articles about the war at a time when the fate of the Japanese people was at stake. As the stories of the soldiers were published in newspapers and broadcast on radio, the word "non-citizen"

was spread, and ordinary people lynched those who opposed the war.

Indeed, now, believers from the former Unification Church are not lynched these days. However, they can't rent a hall, and they are told not to come to summer festivals, and they are treated like non-citizens. This is deeply related to the media reports and Prime Minister Kishida's declaration of cutting all ties.

– Even media people are afraid to meet today's non-citizens.

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After I interviewed Masayoshi Kajikuri (梶栗正義), chairman of *International Federation for Victory over Communism* (国際勝共連合), I suggested to my media acquaintances, "I'm going to introduce you, so why don't you interview him and listen to his story?" However, they refused out of fear what he would do. They even said no to just meeting him and listen to his story.



Masayoshi Kajikuri (梶栗正義). Photo: IFVOC

The image that has been created is scarier than the reality. Many people think they can't communicate with members. By publishing a book, I wanted to shatter that image. Followers might be talkative and have different values from you in some areas, but they are people with whom you can have a dialogue.

Continued in [part 7](#).

[Part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4](#), [part 5](#), [part 7](#)

Featured image above: Masaki Kubota, Japanese author and journalist.
Photo / graphics: Sekai Nippo.

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Masaki Kubota (窪田順生) is a non-fiction writer who has contributed to weekly and monthly magazines. He has also worked first as a producer, then as an advisor for TV-documentaries. He is journalist for a weekly magazine and a newspaper, and editor of a monthly magazine. In addition, he works as a media consultant, having conducted over 200 public relations consultations and media training sessions (training on how to handle interviews).

His books include

- "Spin Doctor – Techniques of Information Manipulation Used by Professionals Who 'Hush up Bad Information'" (Kodansha Alpha Bunko – 2009), which deals with Japan's political and corporate public relations strategies, and
- "14 Stairs – Reportage on the Niigata Girl's 9 Years and 2 Months Confinement Case" (Shogakukan – 2006), which won the 12th Shogakukan Non-fiction Award for Excellence.
- His new book, "Infiltrating the Former Unification Church – the Complete Story of the Request for a Dissolution Order and the Deepest Secrets of the 'No Good Coverage'", is currently on sale.

The front cover of 'Infiltrating the Former Unification Church' (潜入旧統一教会「解散命令請求」取材NG最深部の全貌 – Tankobon Softcover, Nov. 2023), by Masaki Kubota (窪田順生).
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