

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Protests across Japan against state persecution of the Unification Church

Knut Holdhus
July 16, 2024



Members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) gathered at the Shibuya scramble intersection in front of JR Shibuya Station in Tokyo on 15th July 2024



Thousands out on the streets of Japan protesting state persecution of minority faith

Tokyo, 16th July 2024 - Published as an editorial in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

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



During the Golden Week holidays from 13th to 15th July, members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) gave street speeches in approximately 140 locations nationwide. They protested the injustice of the dissolution order requested by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and called for the human rights of members to be protected.

At the scramble intersection in Shibuya, Tokyo, about 200 followers gathered, primarily from within the city, to address passersby regarding the unfairness of the request for a dissolution order.

A second-generation female believer from Chiba Prefecture expressed, "I am truly happy to have been born as a second-generation member of the [Family Federation](#)." However, she also highlighted

instances where believers faced discrimination, such as being denied medical treatment at hospitals due to their faith or facing discrimination from teachers leading to school absenteeism. She appealed for people to recognize the "current situation where they can no longer even live a normal life."

A second-generation male believer from Adachi Ward, Tokyo, expressed his honest feelings, saying it is shocking that senior members who had worked for world peace without regard for their families are being spoken of as if they are "evil". Despite this, he conveyed his determination to not give up but continue making efforts to spread the word that the [Family Federation](#) is a good organization.



In Kashiwa City, Chiba Prefecture, a rally was held on 15th July in front of JR Kashiwa Station. It was attended by about 70 believers from Kashiwa City and surrounding cities and towns.

A female believer residing in Kashiwa, whose parents participated in a [mass wedding](#) ceremony in 1982, emphasized, "People lump all second-generation religious believers together as victims to be pitied, but my parents raised me like a treasure. Their love is what drives me, and I am grateful to them." She added, "I don't deny those who claim to be 'victims', but I want people to know that there are second-generation believers who take pride in their faith."

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Inhuman Government-Supported Mass Deprogramming

January 28, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Some of Fumio Kishida's administration 13th Sep. 2023. Photo: [安倍首相ホームページ](#) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC-Attr 4.0 Int. Cropped

Extreme China-inspired leftwingers rejoicing as Kishida administration introduces laws for mass deprogramming tens of thousands with "wrong views"

In an article in Bitter Winter, the leading online magazine for human rights and religious freedom, Dr. Massimo Introvigne points out in an article 25th Jan. 2024 what extreme anti-religious measures the Kishida administration are introducing.










The headline is "Is Japan Introducing State-Sponsored Deprogramming?"

Read the [whole Bitter Winter article](#).

Kishida and his government ministers have apparently bought the anti-religious narrative of a network of radical leftwing lawyers, *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales*.

The background to the proposed government-supported faith-breaking is a cabinet meeting on 19th January, where suggestions were put forth to encourage current members of the [Unification Church](#) to leave the

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to encourage current members of the Unification Church to leave the group, aided by individuals who have left the organization, known as apostates.



Dr. Massimo Introvigne, april 2023. Photo: FOREF

The Italian sociologist of religion explains how such extreme plans stem from events starting on 8th July 2022, when former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated. The assassin's motivation was attributed to his mother's involvement with the **Unification Church**, leading to her financial ruin due to excessive donations to the group. This incident sparked a media frenzy against the **Unification Church**, supported by anti-cult organizations.

Subsequently, the Japanese government sought legal action to dissolve the **Unification Church** and passed laws targeting "cults", including measures to recover donations and prevent the

indoctrination of minors. Introvigne emphasizes that these efforts are fueled by a belief in the discredited theory of brainwashing.

He mentions how the laws represent a serious infringement on religious freedom and aim to not just control the **Unification Church**, but also other religions. Introvigne spells out how one of the laws,

"ordered religious groups not to 'indoctrinate' minors, with provisions clearly targeting not only the **Unification Church** but also the Jehovah's Witnesses and conservative Christian groups. A third law offered assistance to 'victims' of 'cults'. Recent draft guidelines proposed a very extensive notion of 'victim', also including those who deny having been victimized – again, because of 'brainwashing'. In practice, every member of the **Family Federation** is a 'victim', including those who say they are perfectly happy to remain in the movement."

Despite deprogramming being declared illegal by the *Japanese Supreme Court* in 2015, recent proposals suggest reintroducing a form of state-sponsored deprogramming. This proposal is based on the idea that all members of the **Unification Church** are victims of brainwashing and need rescuing through deprogramming.

Introvigne describes the reasoning behind the extreme measures,

"Now, however, Japan is considering re-introducing a state-sponsored form of deprogramming. This is a logical consequence of the broad notion of 'victim' being proposed and of the Japanese government's support of the pseudo-scientific theory of brainwashing. If all Japanese **Unification Church** members are 'victims' who do not realize they are 'victims' because they are under the effect of 'brainwashing', the only way to 'rescue' them is deprogramming."

This approach mirrors practices in authoritarian states like China and Russia, where state-sponsored deprogramming is common. Japan's plan involves collaborating with apostate ex-members to train counselors who will provide support to current members, including approaching second-generation members in schools. Additionally, there are proposals to establish "shelter homes" for second-generation members, purportedly to assist those in poverty but likely aimed at isolating them from their families and facilitating deprogramming efforts.



Artistic rendering created by AI Image generator of Chinese communist party indoctrination.

These measures draw parallels to China's "Love Homes", where individuals are subjected to Communist Party indoctrination.

Introvigne writes,

"The 'shelter homes' are very similar to the 'Love Homes' where the Chinese Communist Party deprograms 'cultists' and their children, teaching them to repudiate the 'cult' and learn to 'firmly believe in the Communist Party, love the Party and follow the Party!'"

The Japanese Communist Party has expressed support for actions

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against the [Unification Church](#), suggesting a concerning trend towards government intervention in religious affairs reminiscent of authoritarian regimes.

The Italian scholar makes plain the connection to the Japanese Communist Party,



For mass deprogramming: Masahito Moriyama, 8th Dec. 2023. Photo: [文部科学省 / Wikimedia commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

"In fact, we learn



For mass deprogramming: Akira Koike, 30th March 2023. Photo: [首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

from the official website of the Japanese Communist Party that on October 16, 2023, the 'Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Masahito Moriyama visited the office of Akira Koike, Secretary General of the Japanese Communist Party, at the House of Councilors, and reported that he had requested the Tokyo District Court to order the dissolution of the [Unification Church \(Family Federation for World Peace and Unification\)](#). Koike demanded that the government and the ruling party take responsibility for the care of active believers.'

What this 'care' is all about can be easily guessed. Perhaps Koike shared with the Minister the good example of China's 'Love Homes!'"

Massimo Introvigne is an Italian sociologist of religions and founder and managing director of Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), an international network of scholars who study new religious movements. Introvigne is also author of some 70 books and hundreds of articles in the field of sociology of religion.

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