

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Politician Warns Any Faith May Be Targeted

Knut Holdhus  
July 18, 2024



Norio Hosoya, Japanese author and politician. Among his books is one titled *The Constitution and the Former [Unification Church](#)*



**Japanese politician warns that any religious organization could become target of current persecution of minority faith.**

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

Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat - Part 2: Ripples to local assemblies

"The prime minister's methods are unfair," says Toride City Council Member Norio Hosoya (細谷典男)

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

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In the Toride City Council election in Ibaraki Prefecture held in January this year Norio Hosoya (細谷典男) raised human rights issues related to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) and was re-elected. Despite opposition from his supporters, who disagreed with including the [Family Federation](#) in his campaign promises, he remained steadfast in his beliefs. In the previous election four years ago, he was ranked 18th out of 24 candidates, so "although I felt a sense of crisis, I delivered my views on the [Family Federation](#) to the voters without hiding anything."

Hosoya was elected in second place this time, with 1.9 times the number of votes he received previously.

"It's challenging to increase votes by even 100 in local elections," he said. "My views were not rejected, and I gained considerable support. I believe the citizens of Toride have shown that a dissolution order is unnecessary."



Hosoya had no prior involvement with the [Family Federation](#). His stance against discrimination towards the [Family Federation](#) began in September 2022, when a citizen submitted a petition requesting an investigation into the relationship between the [Family Federation](#) and council members. The petition was introduced by a Communist Party member.

"I personally had no 'connections' as the media claims. In my legislative activities, I made it a principle to listen to both sides of an issue. However, I struggled to hear opposing views to the petition. Through an acquaintance, I was able to hear the [Family Federation](#)'s side. When I listened, the people from the [Family Federation](#) did not seem like the 'anti-social' or 'fraudulent group'

described in the petition."

Hosoya felt uneasy about the media coverage because they labeled the [Family Federation](#) without any specific evidence of harm. When he asked the petitioner, "Has there been any harm or are there people in trouble in Toride?" the answer was, "No confirmed cases."

"If you look at the principle of criminal legality in Article 31 of the Constitution, the Japanese authorities are to punish those who have committed a crime. It is against the Constitution to try to exclude those who have not committed a specific crime."



After debating this in the city council, the overwhelming majority agreed with Hosoya's view. After much discussion, only the four members of the Communist Party supported the petition. Hosoya is confident that "if proper discussions are held in other local councils, they will reach the same conclusion as Toride."

Toride is a hilly area that often experiences flooding. Hosoya argues,

"When flooding occurs, can we say, 'We won't help here because it's a [Family Federation](#) home'?" In the council, he questioned whether there would be any differential treatment of citizens based on their affiliation with the [Family Federation](#) at any public service counters. The authorities responded that "such a thing is impossible."



Regarding the incident in Kanazawa City where student volunteers from the [Family Federation](#) who wanted to remove snow were turned away by the authorities, Hosoya declared,

"This is a significant loss for the administration. The government cannot function without the cooperation of its citizens. Since it is clear that affiliated groups of the [Family Federation](#) are beneficial to the administration, dissolving them would be a loss."

He criticized the government for submitting and passing a victim relief bill in the Diet based on one-sided opinions, and for exercising its right to question the [organization](#) and requesting its dissolution. Hosoya emphasized, "It may be presumptuous, but I want to say from the local level that Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's approach

is unfair. It labels people as 'anti-social' and removes them from society, which is akin to totalitarianism. This method is truly dangerous. It must be nipped in the bud."

Hosoya intends to continue sounding the alarm, as he believes that any group could potentially be targeted, not just the [Family Federation](#).

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# "Communists And Other Faiths Next Target"

July 13, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Japanese newspaper features politician warning that the next target of the current "mass lynching" could be communists and other religious groups.

Tokyo, 12th July 2024 – Published as the **ninth article** in a series in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

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Offered flowers for the late Shinzo Abe, expelled from the Social Democratic Party



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

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One-person faction member Shingo Inoue (井上真吾), a city councilor in Kitakyushu, had been affiliated with the *Social Democratic Party* (SDP) when former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was shot in July 2022. Although Abe and Inoue held opposing political views, Inoue admired Abe for his eloquent speeches and strong convictions. In a gesture of mourning, Inoue and a fellow independent councilor crossed the Kanmon Strait [*Editor's note*: between the two large islands Kyushu and Honshu] to offer flowers at Abe's office in Shimonoseki City, Yamaguchi Prefecture, on the opposite shore from Kitakyushu.



Shingo Inoue in June 2024. Photo: *Sekai Nippo*

After leaving Abe's office, Inoue was surrounded by the media and questioned about his SDP affiliation. When asked why he visited despite the party's opposition to a state funeral for Abe, Inoue responded that he couldn't tolerate violating the right to freedom of thought and conscience protected by the constitution. Shortly afterward, the SDP Fukuoka Prefecture chapter's leadership confronted him, resulting in a one-year suspension of his party membership. Later, in February of the previous year, after introducing a petition from followers of the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (formerly

known as the [Unification Church](#)), Inoue submitted a resignation letter, but he was subsequently expelled.

**Inoue, who often advocates for human rights, is deeply committed to the fundamental human rights enshrined in the constitution.** Even though he was not an atheist, he joined the *Communist Party* at the age of 18. His encounter with a Communist-affiliated organization while volunteering in Kobe after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake influenced his decision. After completing evening courses at university, he joined the party, serving as a *Communist Party* member for two

terms (eight years). During this time, he focused on local activities for the community but declined to work more for the party, leading to his departure and giving up a third term.



From the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Photo (17th January 1995): Akiyoshi's Room / Wikimedia Commons. *Public domain image.*

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Subsequently, Inoue faced rejection in interviews with as many as 30 companies due to his *Communist Party* background. He experienced it as a hindrance. He persevered through odd jobs, including construction work, and returned to politics eight years later with support from the *Social Democratic Party* (SDP).

Following the incident involving Abe, the [Family Federation](#) was labeled a group deserving dissolution, and it began to be publicly known that many members were reported to have been harmed in various parts of the country. However, during his eight years as a *Communist Party* member and after his political comeback in 2021, **Inoue never received consultations related to the [Family Federation's](#) substantial donations or spiritual sales.**



Records from the Kanto Great Earthquake reveal atrocities where Koreans and *Communist Party* members were massacred.

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Koreans in Japan about to be stabbed by Japanese vigilantes with bamboo spears immediately after the 1923 Great Kanto earthquake. The Kanto Massacre was a mass killing that took place in the Kanto region of Japan following the earthquake there on 1st Sep. 1923. With the overt and covert approval of certain segments of the Japanese government, the Japanese military, police, and vigilantes murdered an estimated 6,000 individuals. The victims were primarily ethnic Koreans, but also included communists and socialists. In recent times, mainstream Japanese politicians and right-wing groups have continued to deny or downplay the massacre. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image. Cropped

Inoue finds it puzzling that the Communist Party and SDP, which usually advocate for human rights, remain silent. He warns that if dissolution orders are granted, both the Communist and SDP, along with other religious groups, could become

targets of repression. "Today it's them, tomorrow it could be us," he cautions.

In August last year, the [Family Federation](#) filed a lawsuit against Kitakyushu City in the *Fukuoka District Court*, **claiming that its resolution to "have no relationship whatsoever"** [with the [Family Federation](#)] **was an unlawful act that incites discrimination against a specific religion**, and is seeking 11 million yen in damages for defamation. The current bashing of the [Family Federation](#) by the government and the media appears to Shingo Inoue to be a **"mass lynching"**. He emphasizes the importance of this significant trial to change the fabric of exclusion and bullying.

On 16<sup>th</sup> June, Inoue participated in a [rally](#) organized by [Family Federation](#) followers in Kumamoto City. Inoue marched with the believers in a demonstration, calling out, **"The government must protect freedom of religion."** He was concerned about potential trouble from onlookers, but his worries were unfounded. "There was no security presence, and the surrounding people watched supportively," he said. He also participated in another [demonstration](#) held in Kitakyushu City on 30<sup>th</sup> June.

Inoue believes that more people are now calmly assessing the issue of the [Family Federation](#), recognizing that the prevailing sentiment is no longer "Family Federation is evil." He strongly appealed, "Not only politicians but also the judiciary should uphold the dignity of the religious organization."

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**Featured image** above: Shingo Inoue (left), at the forefront of a demonstration calling for freedom of religion, 30th June, Kokurakita Ward, Kitakyushu City, Japan. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

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