

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Gullible Japanese Judges Misuse Law To Rob FFWPU

Knut Holdhus
September 30, 2024



Japanese lawyers discussing consumer law

[Winter's 5-part series](#) See [part 1](#)

Human rights expert reveals shocking story of how lawyers involved in faith-breaking managed to persuade gullible Japanese judges to allow the use of consumer law to rob Family Federation

**BITTER
WINTER**

Patricia Duval, French attorney specialised in international human rights law, sent on 22nd September 2024, a 29-page report titled "Japan: A Witch Hunt to Eradicate the [Unification Church](#)" to several UN offices. [Bitter Winter](#), the leading international magazine on religious freedom and human rights published 3 days later, on 25th September, an [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 2 of comment on [first article of Bitter](#)



Patricia Duval, French attorney and expert on international human 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

After pointing out Japan's non-compliance with UNHRC suggestions, Patricia Duval in her above-mentioned 29-page report exposes in great detail the amazing and shocking grand scheme leftwing lawyers put into action in order to wipe out the [Family Federation](#), formerly called the [Unification Church](#).

Duval describes how for more than 30 years, large-scale faith-breaking was carried out with [Unification Church](#) members as victims, with the implicit approval of the Japanese authorities. The sheer magnitude of the faith-breaking led to what Duval depicts as "an avalanche of tort cases" - alleged civil wrongs that may have caused harm. Such civil cases were initiated by individuals who had once been members, but had been abducted, forcibly detained and become victims of faith-breaking. They were then coerced by professional faith-breakers and the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales to sue the [Unification Church](#), now called the [Family Federation](#).

The network of lawyers was formed in 1987 and has been aligned with the Socialist and the Communist Party. Its goal was to fight the [Unification Church](#), which actively opposed Communism at the time. One of the leftwing network's key objectives was to prevent the passage of the Anti-Espionage Law, which was supported by the International Federation for Victory over Communism (IFVOC), an organization

with the same founder as the [Unification Church](#) - South Korean [Sun Myung Moon](#).



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

At the Network's inception, attorney Hiroshi Yamaguchi, a prominent member, remarked that "money made from spiritual sales is being used to fund the [Unification Church](#) and the IFVOC's efforts to enact the Anti-Espionage Law." The lawyers of the hostile network claimed that funds raised by the [church](#) through so-called "spiritual sales" were being used to fight Communism.

"Spiritual sales" is an expression coined by those very same lawyers based on consumer law and refers to sales conducted by some [church](#) members - often through private businesses - of items like seals, statues, vases, and miniature pagodas at prices far exceeding their actual value. Similar practices can be found in other traditional religions, such as the Catholic Church.

The network of leftwing lawyers also applied the term "spiritual sales" to donations given to help the work of the [Unification Church](#), arguing that the [church](#) "sold" eternal salvation by exploiting anxiety followers may have had. The lawyers made such claims specifically about the [Unification Church](#) even

though concepts like hell and salvation are common in the majority of religions.

The term "spiritual sales" was deliberately chosen by opponents of new religious movements in order to classify donations to minority religions as consumer law issues, thus allowing donors to claim refunds under the pretext of fraudulent sales.

This approach was also seen in other countries, such as Germany in 1997. Then, a law was proposed which aimed to regulate "commercial services of assistance in overcoming life's difficulties". It was labeled by activists against new religious movements as "Psycho Contract Law". However, the bill was abandoned after Lutheran and Catholic Church representatives expressed concerns that it would also restrict spiritual counseling services provided by their churches.

In Japan, the leftwing network of lawyers successfully convinced courts that donations to the [Unification Church](#) were likely made under coercion, claiming the [church](#) created anxiety to deprive donors of their free will. By applying consumer law principles, the network of hostile lawyers dismissed the religious faith of [Unification Church](#) members who collect donations (raise funds), arguing that their beliefs were merely a guise for profit-making.

All former members who were abducted, forcibly detained and exposed to faith-breaking, were subsequently referred to lawyers from the network fighting the [Unification Church](#), either by their faith-breakers or their families, to file lawsuits against the [church](#) for "wrongful solicitation of donations and proselytizing", seeking damages.



*Masumi Fukuda speaking in Kumamoto
16th June 2024*

Masumi Fukuda, a sociologist and investigative journalist, conducted an in-depth investigation of the entire process of faith-breaking and interviewed a considerable number of members of the former [Unification Church](#) who had had their faith broken by so-called deprogrammers. Based on her findings, she sent a letter to the authorities, urging them to withdraw their request for a court order to dissolve the [church](#), now called the [Family Federation](#).

Patricia Duval writes,

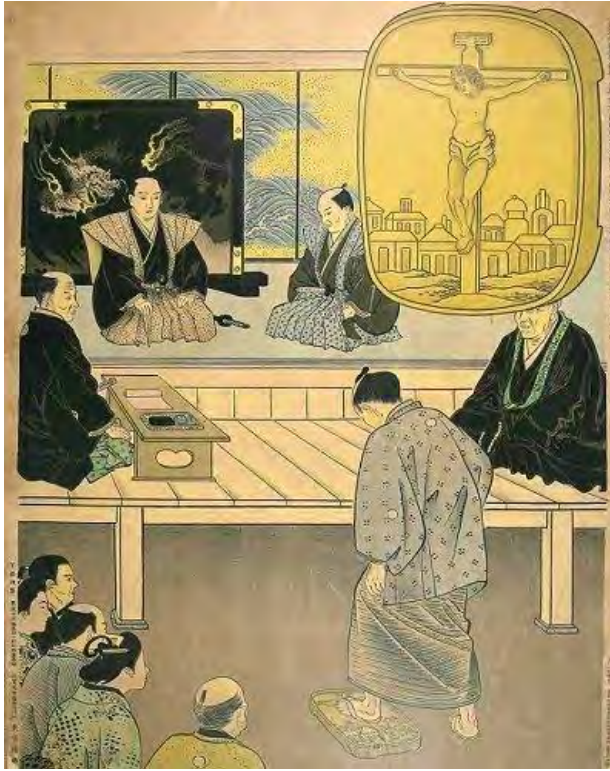
"She [Fukuda] gave a figure of over [4,300 believers](#) in Japan who have been abducted by physical violence or deception, locked up for long periods of time in apartments or other places, and not released until they abandoned their

faith."

Masumi Fukuda came to the conclusion that the majority of individuals who brought legal proceedings against the [church](#) alleging harm suffered and seeking compensation, were former members who had been forced through this inhuman faith-breaking process. On top of that, they were required by the lawyers to prove their genuine intent to leave the [church](#) by filing lawsuits.

Fukuda detailed how faith-breaking was followed by civil lawsuits for damages. She explained:

"In the 17th century persecution of Christians in Japan, to save their life it was not enough for them to tell the authorities they had abandoned Christianity. They were asked to trample a painting of Jesus underfoot to prove they were no longer Christians. Similarly, now it was not enough for deprogrammed believers to state they were no longer members of the [Unification Church](#). They should prove they had really left the [church](#) by claiming they had been 'victims of spiritual sales,' and filing lawsuits demanding that the [church](#) return the money they had paid for the items they had purchased, such as marble vases, two-stories pagodas, seals, and other items."



This print shows Fumi-e (踏み絵: fumi "stepping-on" + e "picture"); step on a picture with the likeness of e.g. the Cross of Jesus or the Virgin Mary. This method was used to discover practicing Christians (Kirishitan) of the Catholic Church and sympathizers, which was banned by the Tokugawa Shogunate at that time. Originally, the method of discovery itself was called efumi (絵踏), but the method itself is often called fumi-e

Fukuda also highlighted how the lawyers from the network combating the [Unification Church](#) were deeply involved in the faith-breaking process. She noted that all those who ultimately renounced their faith were consistently directed to this network to pursue legal action against the [church](#).

She writes that the activist network of lawyers played a significant role

"in this abduction and confinement business because they were the attorneys in the subsequent lawsuits filed by former believers against the [church](#). There were lawyers who became rich through these cases, as did deprogrammers and Christian pastors involved in the abductions, who received substantial amounts of money from the relatives of the believers they deprogrammed."

In some cases, the network's lawyers were involved from the outset, as they were often the ones who advised families to pursue faith-breaking as a solution. Fukuda explains,

"When the lawyers were consulted by the believers' parents, they first introduced them to the deprogrammers. If and when deprogramming was successful, the lawyers took over from the deprogrammers as 'handlers' of the former believers, made them plaintiffs, and filed lawsuits."



Masaki Kito leading activist leftwing lawyer of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS) (2022)



Hostile activist against [Family Federation](#): Yoshifu Arita (有田芳生), former House of Councilors member for CDP, the party professional faith-breaker Miyamura was advisor to. Before that, Arita was a communist politician 1990-2007



Eito Suzuki, born as Kiyofumi Tanaka

The network fighting the [Unification Church](#) - including attorney Masaki Kito and journalists Yoshifu Arita and Eito Suzuki - continues to defend faith-breaking, claiming it was carried out to "protect" former members of the church.

See [part 1](#)

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Japan's Non-Compliance With UNHRC Suggestions

• September 27, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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French expert on international human rights points out Japan's non-compliance with repeated recommendations from UN Human Rights Committee

On 22nd September 2024, Patricia Duval, French attorney specialised in international human rights law, sent a 29-page report titled "Japan: A Witch Hunt to Eradicate the Unification Church" to several UN offices. *Bitter Winter*, the leading international magazine on religious freedom and human rights published 25th September 2024 an 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.



The logo of Bitter Winter

Part 1 of comment on first article of Bitter Winter's 5-part series

See **part 2** Terms from Consumer Law Used to Rob Faith

Patricia Duval first mentions that this report follows up on a previous submission regarding abductions, forcible detentions and faith-breaking

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(also known as "deprogramming") in Japan.



Heiner Bielefeldt, German philosopher, historian and Catholic theologian. He served as United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief from 2010 to 2016. Photo (2011): Arnfinn Pettersen / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 2.0 Gen. Cropped

The submission was sent on behalf of victims of faith-breaking to the UN *Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief* on 23rd July 2013.

The current report addresses ongoing practices in Japan, which have led to "an avalanche of tort cases" where the **Family Federation** (formerly the **Unification Church**) was sued for damages. These cases were initiated by former followers who, after being deprogrammed, became apostates – persons who have abandoned their beliefs – and then were made to file complaints about "fraudulent and brainwashing evangelism". Here, Duval refers to a ruling of the *Kobe District Court*, page 83, later upheld by the *Osaka High Court*. Such tort cases were later used as grounds for the authorities to begin proceedings for the dissolution of the **Family Federation**, in a case which is currently pending.

The 2013-report on faith-breaking contained documented cases and letters where victims made allegations. The report was also submitted to the UN *Human Rights Committee*. During its sixth periodic review of Japan in August 2014, the UN *Human Rights Committee* engaged with the Japanese government on this issue, despite the government's attempts to dismiss the problem. Following the submission of evidence showing the authorities' refusal to act, the Committee included the following recommendation in its Concluding Observations on 20th August 2014 (CCPR/C/JPN/CO/6):

"Abduction and forced de-conversion: The Committee is concerned at reports of abductions and forced confinement of converts to new religious movements by family members in efforts to de-convert them (arts. 2, 9, 18, 26). The State party should take effective measures to guarantee the right of every person not to be subjected to coercion that would impair his or her freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief."

The same year, on 14th November 2014, Toru Goto, a victim of kidnapping, forcible detention for more than 12 years, and repeated attempts to break his faith, was awarded substantial damages in a civil case by the *Tokyo High Court*. The court ruled against his family and two deprogrammers for their inhuman mistreatment of Goto to make him abandon his faith. The court deemed the deprogramming conducted by pastor Yasutomo Matsunaga illegal and awarded compensation in proportion to the harm suffered. This decision was later upheld by the *Supreme Court* of Japan.

Although the practice of deprogramming seemed to have stopped afterward, efforts



Toru Goto outside Tokyo High Court at the beginning of a civil case in March 2011. Photo: FFWPU

targeting the **federation**, the implementation of a new state-led faith-breaking for second-generation members, and other drastic instances of discrimination against its members.

It is important to highlight that over the years, the UN *Human Rights*



From header of the webpage of the Human Rights Committee, a subpage on the site of the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner



Faith-breaker: pastor Yasutomo Matsunaga (松永康智) of the Niitsu Evangelical Christian Church. Photo: FFWPU

to wipe out the **Family Federation** and its members continued and have even intensified to this day. This report outlines a series of developments, including numerous tort cases – alleged civil wrongs that may have caused harm – leading to the threat of the dissolution of the **Family Federation**, the potential confiscation of its assets, the passage of two new laws specifically

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Committee has consistently issued recommendations to the Japanese government regarding its unlawful restrictions justified on the grounds of "public welfare" on the right to freedom of religion or belief. In its recurring Concluding Observations in 2008, 2014, and 2022, the Committee reiterated its concerns. It called on Japan to address these issues (8th December 2008, CCPR/C/JPN/CO/5 §10; 20th August 2014, CCPR/C/JPN/CO/6; and 30th November 2022, CCPR/C/JPN/CO/7 §37):

Japan has not complied with these repeated suggestions. To this day, the Japanese Constitution retains provisions allowing human rights restrictions in the name of "public welfare" (Articles 12 and 13). Even more concerning is that the legal article the government is using to request the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#) explicitly refers to the violation of "public welfare" (Article 81(i) of the *Religious Corporations Act*).

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Featured image above: Patricia Duval presenting her report in Geneva 25th September 2024. Photo: [FOREF](#)

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