

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Abusive Communists Soliciting in Japanese Government Offices

Knut Holdhus
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Soliciting for subscriptions in Japanese office building



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Red councilor's outrageous twist of the story in effort to block establishment of committee to investigate abusive communists in Japanese municipal office buildings

The Tokyo newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#) has in a series of articles exposed how subscriptions to the Japanese Communist Party's organ paper Shimbun Akahata are being solicited through what in Japan is called "power harassment" within municipal office buildings nationwide. "Power harassment" refers to the most common form of harassment in Japan - bullying or abuse in the workplace.

Based on investigative reporting, the [Sekai Nippo](#) has unearthed several instances of such abuse.



Shimbun Akahata

In its [latest report](#), on 31st May 2024, the paper's "Investigation Team for the Shimbun Akahata Issue" describes a case in the city of Utsunomiya (宇都宮), the capital of Tochigi (栃木) prefecture. There, a petition was made to the city council protesting the abusive solicitation and asking for it to be investigated. But not everyone on the city council was happy with the proposed

investigation. Councilor Kumiko Fukuda (福田久美子), a member of the Communist Party, made strong opposition against the establishment of a committee to investigate the alleged power harassment.

Essentially, her tactic boiled down to portraying the persons behind the petition for an investigative committee as belonging to an "anti-social group".

At city council meetings where such a committee was being discussed, she ignored council rules meant to protect petitioners from being harassed, e.g. by having their religion or personal details disclosed. Councilor Fukuda alleged that the persons making the petition were members of the [Family Federation](#), an organisation she claimed to be "anti-social". She further maintained that the materials attached to the petition were taken from the [Sekai Nippo](#) website, a newspaper owned by News World Communications, which was established by the [Unification Church](#) in 1976.

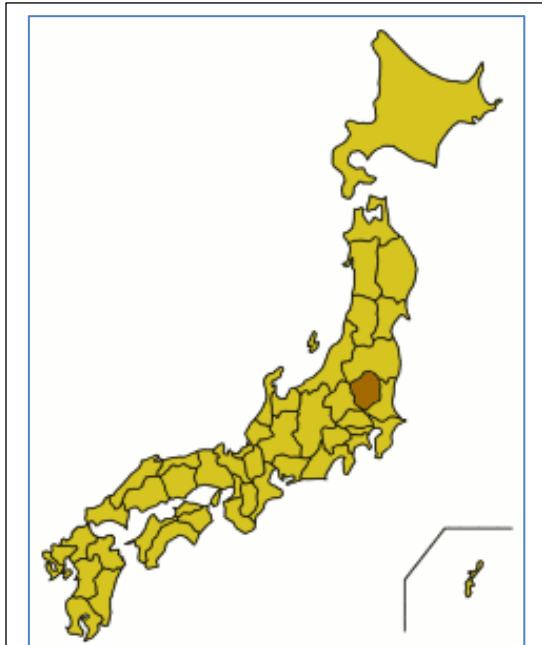
The [Sekai Nippo](#) [reported 31st May](#) that the communist city council member,

"referred to incorrect details about the newspaper's founding, and spent a significant amount of time on issues unrelated to the petition's purpose, such as 'potentially supporting the intentions of the anti-social group formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)' [...].

During the committee meeting, the Communist Party member argued, 'the term 'anti-social organization' is used even in the National Diet, so it is a well-known fact.'

However, several other committee members countered, stating, 'There are also voices saying not to use that term, so we need to be careful' and 'We should be cautious in our statements.' Opinions such as 'Harassment is determined by how the affected party feels. While you may think your remarks were appropriate, the petitioner feels victimized. We want you to reflect on this,' were expressed by all ten

committee members except for the one Communist Party member. As a result, with ten votes in favor and one against, Councilor Fukuda was sanctioned with an 'apology'."



Japan with Tochigi prefecture highlighted

On [29th May](#), the Sekai Nippo clarified that possible sanctions under consideration included a reprimand, an apology, suspension from attending for a certain period, or expulsion from the council. An "apology" means that an apology will be demanded of the city council member.

According to [Sekai Nippo 29th May](#), communist councilor Kumiko Fukuda tried her best to turn the key issue on its head, claiming,

"The adoption of the petition, under the guise of preventing harassment, aims to suppress freedom of thought and belief, and could end up supporting the intentions of an anti-social organization."

Earlier this year, on [13th February](#), the Sekai Nippo reported on a similar case in an article headlined "70% subscribe to the organizational paper due to 'pressure'."

The paper writes,

"In relation to the issue of illegal solicitation of organizational newspapers, including the Japanese Communist Party's newspaper Shimbun Akahata, within government offices on a nationwide scale, our paper has obtained the results of a survey conducted by Samukawa (寒川) town in Kanagawa (神奈川県) prefecture targeting all management staff. According to the survey, 70% of management staff had been solicited to subscribe to party newspapers, and of those, more than half felt pressured to subscribe.



AS building where the Akahata Shimibun's editorial department is located in Tokyo

In September 2023, the Samukawa Town council adopted a petition requesting the self-restraint of party newspaper solicitation within government offices. Consequently, a survey was conducted among municipal employees from January 9 to 16. Out of 55 management staff, 49 responded.

Among the respondents, 34 (64.9%) reported having been solicited by council members to subscribe to party newspapers within the government office. Of these, 18 (52.9%) felt some form of pressure to subscribe. In reality, 25 (73.5%) succumbed to the pressure and subscribed to party newspapers.

In other municipalities across the country, employees have voiced that it is 'difficult to refuse' solicitations for subscriptions to newspapers like Shimbun Akahata within government offices due to customary practices. In Samukawa Town as well, it has come to light that many employees have continued to subscribe to certain party newspapers due to psychological pressure or customary practices."

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Part 2 of interview with Sergio Redo, Chairman of the São Paulo State Press Association

Opposition to the dissolution of the Family Federation.

by Satoru Ayamura (綾村 悟) in Sao Paulo

Read part 1 of the interview



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

Could the Japanese government's request to the Tokyo District Court for a dissolution order against the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (formerly known as the Unification Church) be seen as acquiescing to the demands of the terrorist who assassinated former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe?

The intense hatred directed at Shinzo Abe transformed into a surge of emotions that engulfed society and was directed towards the Family Federation and its followers.

Japanese society reacted according to the intentions of the terrorist.

It is said that Abe sending a video message to an organization related to the Family Federation (formerly known as the Unification Church) evoked in people a feeling of him having a friendly relationship with the religious organisation. However, even in Brazil, where the constitution mandates the separation of religion and state, it is common and legal for politicians to attend events of religious associations and deliver greetings. Isn't it contrary to the separation of church and state for the state to persecute a particular religion?



Shinzo Abe in 2017. Photo: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 2.0 Gen. Cropped

Is there solid evidence that can be verified, that Shinzo Abe was in a close enough relationship with the Family Federation to warrant severe criticism from the media and public? Perhaps Japanese society needs to calmly reassess and reevaluate what the hatred of a terrorist has brought upon society as a whole.

Essentially, doesn't the media have a role to play in curbing the government's recklessness?



Some Japanese media outlets. Image: Knut Holdhus

purpose of all media, including television, newspapers, radio, and online media, is to convey information. In addition, media professionals are required to have a professional ethic that conveys the truth to society, and as professionals take responsibility for the content of their reporting. I hope that taking such a responsibility will lead to "watchdog journalism" and a professional reporting that tells the truth.

In the Japanese parliament, the position of members of the Family Federation was ignored. and there was no criticism

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of the government's request for a dissolution order that would strip the believers of their places of worship and other sources of support. Some have even pointed that the situation is similar to the totalitarianism of pre-war times.

Just like in Japan, in Brazil as well, freedom of religion and its rights are guaranteed by the constitution. **Suppressing what is naturally recognized as an individual's fundamental right would constitute a violation of constitutional rights.**

I hope that Japan will not open the door to totalitarianism, akin to the neo-fascism that arose in Italy after World War II. **I urge the Japanese government and the judiciary to listen carefully to opinions from active members** of the [Family Federation](#) and explore possibilities other than issuing a dissolution order. **The court's decision will also serve as a recommendation to Japanese society.** Japan must never step into a 'dark age' where freedom is taken away.

As someone involved in journalism and the legal profession, I believe that opposing any possibility of dissolving the [Family Federation](#) is essential. Restricting and prohibiting fundamental rights such as freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of association would be unacceptable.

Does the infringement on religious freedom in Japan have the potential to spread from Japan to other countries?

Of course. **Attacks on freedom of religion carried out by Japanese politicians would quickly spread worldwide as a chain reaction.** There is no doubt that Brazil would also become one of the countries affected by such an influence.

Japan is respected around the world, but Japan's current position of issuing an order to dissolve a religious organisation that have not been criminally punished, does not seem reasonable from a common sense and ethical point of view.

I also feel that there is an **ideological aspect behind the movement to dissolve the [Family Federation](#).** We must not forget that many instances of national division, conflict, and war have started from ideologies. **Behind the persecution of the [Family Federation](#) lies the ideology of communism.** It is particularly important for those who identify as conservatives to perceive this as a serious issue. Volunteers should gather and engage in democratic opposition activities against the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#).

(Interviewer: Satoru Ayamura, São Paulo)

Featured image above: Sergio Redo, Chairman of the São Paulo State Press Association, posing for a photo in front of pictures of past chairmen. Photo: Sekai Nippo.



In Nov. 2022 interview, Kazuo Shii, chairman of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) said the party is fighting the "final war" against the [Family Federation / Unification Church](#). Here Shii on 30th March 2023. Photo: Attribution: [首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

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