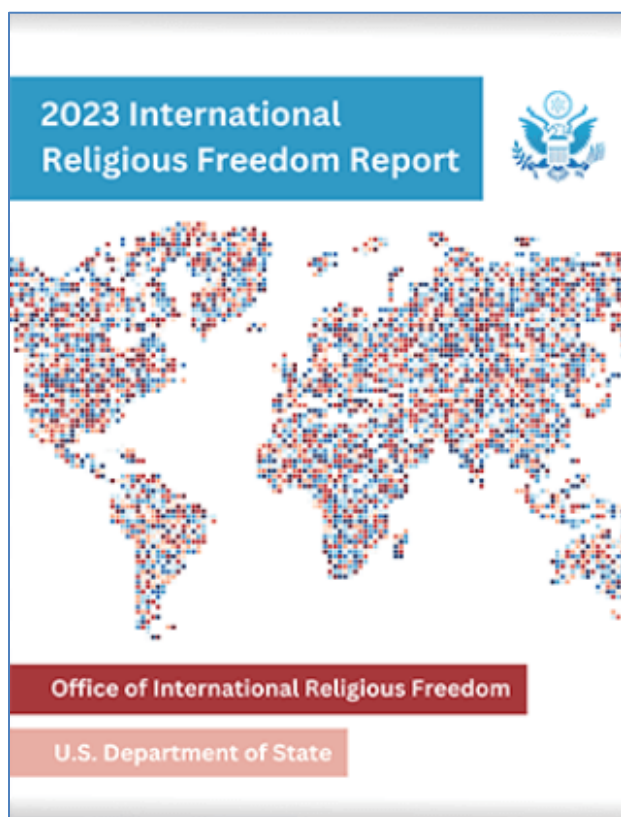


FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: USA Report Wrongly Excuses Japanese Government Persecution Of Unificationists

Knut Holdhus
June 28, 2024



Front cover of U.S. Department of State's 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom, published 26th June 2024.

The 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom contains a one-sided report that excuses gross violations of religious freedom by the Japanese government

by Knut Holdhus

The 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom was published 26th June 2024 by the U.S. Department of State. Its yearly report on religious liberty is considered the most comprehensive of its kind published internationally. The 2023 report "documents systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom that have occurred in the last year". It also "provides recommendations to the U.S. government intended to deter religious persecution and promote freedom of religion and belief abroad."



The headline of the part on Japan

The fierce persecution of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan is given considerable space in this year's report on Japan. To give readers an idea of the extent of the persecution, the report mentions the size of the [movement](#) in the land of the rising sun,

"The [Family Federation](#) officially says it has 560,000 followers in the country (approximately 0.45 percent of the population). In a September 22 press conference, [Family Federation](#) director general for promoting the

reform of the [Church](#) Teshigawara Hideyuki stated the church has nearly 100,000 active followers in Japan (approximately 0.08 percent of the population)." (Section I. Religious Demography)

A large part of the 2023 report's section on Japan is devoted to the [Family Federation](#). That section opens with an "Executive Summary". About 50 % of the text there is about the Family Federation, and it is the first religious freedom case that is being described. But unfortunately the long paragraph that introduces the persecution of the [Family Federation](#) does it in a way that is really soft on the Kishida administration. Exactly like in the 2022 report, which briefly mentioned that the [Unification Church](#) had become a victim of 'a campaign of intolerance, discrimination, and persecution' in Japan since Abe's assassination.

The fact that Prime Minister Fumio Kishida deliberately changed the law in order to be able to dissolve

the [Family Federation](#), is simply described in the 2023 Report as "a deviation from the norm". The "deviation" referred to is in fact a major change that could have far-reaching implications. Previous dissolutions of registered religious corporations have until now only been ordered following violations of criminal law, while this dissolution requested by Kishida now is on the basis of violation of civil law.



Tomihiko Tanaka. Here at press conference in Tokyo 7th Nov 2023

Tomihiko Tanaka, President of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan, warned against this in a [speech 13th June](#), saying,

"Furthermore, because all religious organizations find themselves in some kind of civil trouble, a dissolution order could be arbitrarily applied by the government to any religious corporation. Recently, several religious organizations have become aware of this issue and have expressed their opposition to the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#)."

And what makes Kishida's deliberate move of changing the law overnight, all the worse is the fact that a network of activist left-wing lawyers has for almost 40 years worked to produce civil lawsuits against the [Family Federation](#). And the Japanese government bases to a large extent its case on advice from and "evidence" produced by those hostile lawyers.

Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa, a leading Christian pastor, points this out,



Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa 25th May 2024

"[...] the request for dissolution uses a lot of evidence, court documents, and findings gathered by the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (全国霊感商法対策弁護士連絡会). Some may say, 'The evidence is true, so there is no problem about who supplied it,' but it is almost as if the government is endorsing and relying on the claims and information of a private organization that has long been hostile and antagonistic to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). This is highly questionable in terms of the neutrality of the procedure." (December 2023 issue of the Japanese monthly opinion magazine Seiron (正論). See [article in News and Insights](#)).

Also professor emeritus Seishiro Sugihara points out the problematic nature of the advisors the Japanese government has chosen in the case against the [Family Federation](#). See [Maverick Minister Lets "3 Foxes in the Henhouse"](#).



Professor emeritus Seishiro Sugihara

Above-mentioned Tomihiko Tanaka stated on 22nd February 2024, at the first day of hearings in the current court case in Tokyo District Court,

"Our [church](#) and its affiliated group, the International Federation for Victory Over Communism (IFVOC), have advocated against the threat of communism, worked to prevent the leftward shift in Japan, and actively promoted the enactment of spy prevention legislation. NNLASS aimed to thwart these activities. They adopted the principle of 'any means justifying the end' and closely collaborated with deprogrammers behind the scenes. They utilized former

believers who had lost their faith through deprogramming by means of abduction and confinement as plaintiffs in legal battles against our [church](#).

Moreover, the courts adopted a policy of admitting the claims of NNLASS and testimonies of apostates as truthful unless our [church](#) could prove the falseness. Consequently, our church faced a series of defeat judgments over an extended period.

However, our [church](#) finally succeeded in proving the falsehood of their claims and testimonies, achieving complete victories in two civil cases in 2021. In one of these cases, our [church](#) proved not only the falseness of the plaintiffs' claims and testimonies, but also the fact that the evidence submitted by the plaintiffs to the court was fabricated. On July 7, 2022, the Tokyo High Court delivered a complete victory judgment for our [church](#) in one of the two cases. It seemed that this brought an end to the history of legal

battles orchestrated by the NNLASS using false claims and testimonies." See [full speech](#))



Norishige Kondo (近藤徳茂), author and Deputy Director of the Legal Affairs Department of the [Family Federation](#) of Japan, describes the Kishida administration's attacks on the Family Federation as an "outrageous human rights violation",

"More than half of the ex-members who filed lawsuits against the [Unification Church](#), or who wrote the testimonies against it, were victims of deprogramming.

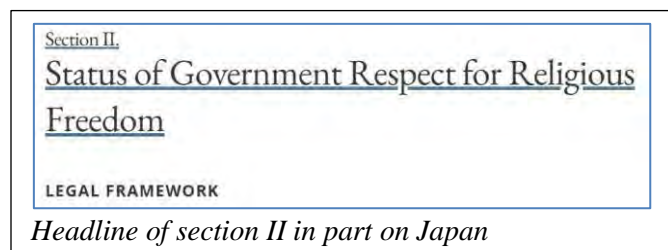
The courts basically issue judgments in accordance with apostates' narratives.

As for the deprogramming issue, in 2014, the UN Human Rights Committee issued a recommendation to the Japanese government to resolve the situation of deprogramming in Japan.

Originally, the government should have addressed this issue, but instead the Kishida administration now tries to dissolve the [Unification Church](#) using testimonies from deprogrammed

apostates. This is an outrageous human rights violation.

I also am a victim of kidnapping [...]." (From [article in News and Insights](#))



Section 2 in the part on Japan in the 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom is titled "Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom". More than half of it is devoted to an explanation of the legal framework for religious corporations in Japan. The rest of section 2 is subtitled "Government practices" and goes into detail about the

persecution of the [Family Federation](#).

And here we see most clearly how the US report is soft on the Kishida administration. Much in this part is written about the [Family Federation](#), but is mainly stating the claims of a government determined to dissolve the religious organization. One easily gets the impression that the report is not in defense of religious freedom, but rather does its best to shut its eyes to the Kishida administration's gross violations of religious liberty.

The report mentions, "Children of certain [Family Federation](#) and Jehovah's Witnesses members stated at 2022 Diet hearings that the [Family Federation](#) and Jehovah's Witnesses violated religious freedom by using force to compel minors (younger children and teenagers of their members) to participate in [Family Federation](#) and Jehovah's Witnesses practices."



Trampling on the religious freedom of the [Family Federation](#): Some of Fumio Kishida's cabinet on 13th September 2023. Kishida on the left and Taro Kono on the right. Kono, Minister for Digital Transformation and Minister for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety, is known to have lobbied Kishida to get the [Family Federation](#) investigated. In August 2022 Kono appointed Masaki Kito as expert advisor in a study group Kono established in the Consumer Affairs Agency for the issue of the [Family Federation](#). Kito is an activist radical leftwing lawyer who has been campaigning against the [Family Federation](#) / [Unification Church](#) for decades

This is a completely one-sided version of what happened. Nowhere does the report mention that those are not children, but adult sons and daughters of members. And on top of it those are apostates working in league with the hostile network of lawyers whose aim is to to destroy the [Family Federation](#). Scholars of religious studies agree that statements by apostates are most unreliable.

And nowhere does the report mention that a delegation of second-generation members who actively support the [Family Federation](#) were not received by the same authorities who received the hostile apostates. Even though a meeting was requested by the young believers.

Conclusion

The authors of the part on Japan have only to a small degree included the views of the [Family Federation](#). That makes the whole report one-sided and biased. The report gives a detailed overview of the Kishida administration's case, but does only to a small extent present the views of the side that is having its religious freedom trampled upon by the same administration. Often, the US report merely states that the religious organization will fight or is opposed to the government's request for a dissolution order.

And one serious flaw of the report is the fact that it does not point out that there have been virtually no civil cases against the [Family Federation](#) the last 15 years. The government bases its arguments on old material, most of it produced by the hostile network of lawyers.

The 2023 report completely fails to mention that the Japanese government has embraced the views of activist left-wing lawyers hostile to the [Family Federation](#). And even more shocking is the fact that the US Department of State in a religious freedom report embraces those same viewpoints.

The report is meant to defend religious freedom. Much of it does the opposite.

Text: Knut Holdhus

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Kyodo News: 100s Of Rights Violations Claimed

June 24, 2024 • Knut Holdhus



Large Japanese news agency reports on hundreds of rights violations suffered by minority faith

by Knut Holdhus



After *Kyodo News*, the leading news agency of Japan, issued its report on 23rd June 2024, dozens of Japanese newspapers, including large ones like the *Sankei Shimbun* and *Tokyo Shimbun*, have reported on hundreds of human rights violations and other damages suffered by members of the **Family Federation**, formerly the **Unification Church** throughout Japan.

According to the *Kyodo News* report, the **Family Federation** had received a number of inquiries from various news outlets, and in response to those, it released a statement on 22nd June claiming that since 8th July 2022, there had been "a total of 337 cases of human rights violations and other damages had been reported by believers and churches nationwide up to December of last year". 8th July 2022 is the day former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was killed by assassin Tetsuya Yamagami, who claimed grudges against the **Family Federation**.



Graffiti sprayed on **Family Federation**

The huge number of open hostilities against the **Family Federation** include graffiti sprayed on cars, and windows of church facilities being broken during prayer sessions.

According to the large news agency, the **Family Federation** also alleged that contracts to purchase cars under the church's name were signed at used car dealerships affiliated with Toyota and Nissan, but the purchases were later refused. Toyota denied these claims,

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facilities in Japan after the Abe assassination in July 2022. Photo: FFWPU

stating, "There is no truth to it," while Nissan commented, "We do not disclose individual transactions and have not

issued any directives regarding sales to the church."

The Family Federation announced that it will present these details in writing to Tokyo District Court during the hearings for the dissolution order requested by the Kishida administration. The religious organization also reported recurring incidents of graffiti with messages like "Traitor cult" and "Cult, get out," along with nuisance phone calls at churches in various locations across the nation.



Grffiti sprayed on Family Federation facilities in Japan after the Abe assassination in July 2022. Photo: FFWPU

Kyodo News also reported that conflicts within families belonging to the Family Federation regarding faith and donations have intensified. For example, a woman in her 70s from the Tokyo metropolitan area sustained a fracture after being assaulted by her husband, who acquired negative views of the religious organization following the assassination of the popular former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. In another case, a woman in her 60s from the same region reported that her relationship with her daughter rapidly deteriorated after the media linked the cold-blooded murder of Abe to the Family Federation. It culminated in the daughter's suicide in July 2022, soon after the assassination.

The statement issued by the Family Federation on 22nd June gives a detailed overview of the human rights violations and other damages suffered by the religious organization and its members since the huge number of sensationalist biased media articles that turned truth on its head, claiming it was the Family Federation that was the perpetrator and the assassin a victim.

Featured image above: Shidome Media Tower, located in Shiodome, Minato, Tokyo, Japan. Floors 1–24 are the headquarters of Kyodo News, Japan's largest news agency. Photo: ↗ License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp.

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