

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Getting Re-Elected is the Motivation for PM Kishida's Crusade against Unificationists

Knut Holdhus
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Toshikazu Masubuchi speaking at a conference held by Federation for Victory over Communism on 13th July 2024 in Tokyo. He was born in Utsunomiya, Tochigi Prefecture in 1946. After graduating from Tamagawa Gakuen High School, he joined Masubuchigumi, a company run by his father. He was first elected to the Tochigi Prefectural Assembly in 1975. He served nine terms until 2011. He is a former Speaker of the Tochigi Prefectural Assembly (1991-2011) and former Secretary General of the Tochigi Prefectural LDP



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Experienced Japanese politician explains how politicians' fear of not being re-elected plays a major role in current crusade of Kishida administration against religious minority

Tokyo, 18th July 2024 - Published as the 12th 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

Behind the severing of ties lies the single-seat constituency system

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

[Nippo](#)

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"In the past, at the anniversary events of the Federation for Victory over Communism (国際勝共連合), members of the Diet would line up like shining stars, but at last year's 55th-anniversary event, for some reason, I was the guest representative. It's puzzling why there were no National Diet members present. They have no backbone."

That's what Toshikazu Masubuchi (増淵賢一), a conservative stalwart who served as speaker of the prefectural assembly (1991-2011) and secretary-general of the Tochigi Prefectural Branch of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), said in an interview with this newspaper at his home in Utsunomiya City. He said it with an expression that looked like he had bitten a bitter worm.

The International Federation for Victory over Communism, led by chairman Masayoshi Kajikuri (梶栗正

義), is a political organization with ties to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), which advocates for the defeat of communism.



Masayoshi Kajikuri

Masubuchi was the sole guest to attend the 55th-anniversary event of the federation held in Tokyo on 16th June last year. He was astonished to see not a single Diet member present, whereas over 50 Diet members had filled the front rows at the 50th-anniversary event. This was before the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

One year later, during the recent Federation for Victory over Communism conference held on 13th July, both national and local legislators were present. When Masubuchi took the stage for his guest address, he appeared somewhat relieved and stated,

"Many comrades have taken a cold attitude since this issue arose but seeing that there are still comrades here strengthens my resolve."

Masubuchi has been associated with the Federation for Victory over Communism for 50 years. When he established the Tochigi Prefecture branch of the Federation, public security officials warned him that there seemed to be connections with South Korea. He found common ground in their political goals, however, and they hit it off.

In August 2022, the government and the Liberal Democratic Party announced a policy to cut all ties with the former [Unification Church](#) and its affiliated organizations. As a result, believers across the country started experiencing discrimination, such as being denied apartment contracts or the use of public facilities, as well as even receiving death threats.

Masubuchi lamented,

"If public awareness were higher, this kind of thing wouldn't happen, but the public's understanding of basic human rights hasn't reached that level. The leftists, especially those who loudly advocate for human rights, including the media, are actively promoting and supporting this negative campaign against the [Family Federation](#)."



Toshikazu Masubuchi

Toshikazu Masubuchi, who has always been targeted by progressive groups and the media for his conservative statements, even before the incident, says he feels a sense of despair beyond disappointment with the media.

"I've been a prefectural assembly member for 34 years, and I've never dealt with human rights issues even once. It is just a given thing. For members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and conservative politicians, basic human rights and freedom of religion are taken for granted. The fact that the LDP's leader himself would undermine this fundamental premise is clearly absurd. It is concerning that Japan's Prime Minister intrudes upon something sacred and inviolable - such as religious freedom - without shame. Moreover, the party forbids its members from interacting with the [Unification Church](#) and related organizations. It's

all very strange."

Notably, not a single member of the LDP stands up to defend the human rights of the [Family Federation](#) believers. When asked why, Masubuchi immediately responded,

"It's the adverse effect of the single-member district system in the House of Representatives elections. In a single-member district system, the party leader wields dictatorial power. They hold the power of 'life and death' over the party members. If you go against the party leader, you will lose official endorsement in the next election. It's extremely difficult to run as an independent candidate in a single-member district."

From the perspective of someone who has observed politics from the local level, the root cause leading up to the request for a court order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#) as a religious corporation seems to be related to "elections".

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Kishida Got On Leftist Anti-Religious Bandwagon

July 19, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Japanese politician points out how the Kishida administration all of a sudden jumped on anti-religious bandwagon



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

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

A sense of crisis in Japan where faith is declining

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

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"The very basic principle of protecting religious freedom is not being upheld. What is religion? When human beings encounter situations beyond their control, they naturally put their hands together and pray to God."

On
16th
June,
the



On June 16, 2024, the 'Kumamoto Citizens' Association for the Protection of Basic Human Rights and Freedom of Religion' held a protest march in the arcade district of Kumamoto City against the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's request for a dissolution order for the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

followers of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) held a [conference and a street demonstration in Kumamoto City](#) on the theme of religious freedom. In his opening remarks, Isao Tonomi (主海偉佐雄), a former chairman of the [Kumamoto City Council](#), spoke about the importance of having faith. He used the example of prison chaplains (often monks or pastors) who guide criminals in detention centers to atone for their sins and reform themselves. Tonomi emphasized,

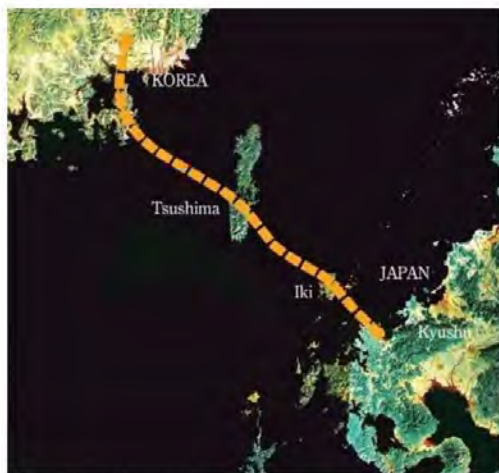
"Having faith and being able to guide others is extremely important for human beings."

Following the shooting incident involving former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, criticism was directed at the [Family Federation](#). Lawmakers with "ties" to the [Family Federation](#) or related organizations, such as attending gatherings and events, became the focus of media attention. In Kumamoto Prefecture, **Tonomi was the first "former politician with ties" to become a media target.**

In an interview with this paper, Tonomi laughed it off, saying, "Perhaps because I said what needed to be said outright, I haven't been interviewed by anyone since." Nevertheless, he lamented that **people who had previously participated together in gatherings and events of related organizations, or sent congratulatory messages, "all suddenly distanced themselves"**.

For Tonomi, who has an **unwavering belief in the importance of protecting religious freedom**, it was easy to accept the request to become a representative leader of a related organization and the request to become the chairman of the "[Kumamoto Citizens' Association for the Protection of Basic Human Rights and Religious Freedom](#)", which was established in conjunction with the conference.

During his time as a city council member, Tonomi was inspired by the [Japan-Korea Tunnel Project](#), which envisioned a tunnel connecting Karatsu City in Saga Prefecture with Korea. He also became sympathetic to activities promoting world peace, such as young people riding bicycles to advocate for the peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula.



A proposed tunnel project between the Japanese island of Kyushu and South Korea. Illustration: [The International Highway Foundation \(IHF\)](#)

He not only joined the board of related organizations but also deepened his friendships with the believers.

"Even though we do good things and work hard, **people who don't know anything are making a fuss about dissolving the religious organization, and Prime Minister Kishida jumps on that bandwagon. It's ridiculous to raise one's voice without knowing the truth. It makes me think, what a pathetic**

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state Japan is in. I feel that Japanese politics has truly become pitiful."

Lamenting this, Tonomi advises the members of the [Family Federation](#), "The **believers should more boldly say what needs to be said.**" He believes that the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's* **request for a court order to dissolve the Family Federation was influenced by leftist ideas held by politicians and the media, who lack religious values.** Tonomi asserts,

"All the wonderful aspects of the Japanese heart come from religion. If they destroy religious organizations like this, what will become of Japan and the Japanese people?"

Tonomi himself practices Jodo Buddhism and serves as a responsible officer of the *Kumamoto Prefecture Gokoku Shrine*. Among the twelve officers of the *Kumamoto Prefecture Association of Shinto Shrines*, he is the only one who is not a Shinto priest. "Religion is important for humanity, but households without Buddhist altars or Shinto shrines are increasing. The number of shrines without priests is also on the rise," he said, expressing his concern about the diminishing presence of religion in communities and homes.

Japan has traditionally been a religious country centered around the Imperial family. Tonomi recalls, "Before the war, there was something called 'moral education'. The *Imperial Rescript on Education* was taught, and there were statues of Kinjiro Ninomiya (二宮金次郎)." [\[Editor's note: Japanese sage and agrarian reformer, also called Sontoku Ninomiya \(1787-1856\).\]](#)

In light of the loss of the Japanese spirit, Tonomi reflects on the case of Tetsuya Yamagami, who killed former Prime Minister Abe:

"We're creating heinous criminals who easily kill people they hate."

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Featured image above: Isao Tonomi, born in 1935 in Aso City, Kumamoto Prefecture. After graduating from Kumamoto Technical High School, he joined Shukai Construction. He served as a member of the Kumamoto City Council for 28 years over seven terms. He is a former chairman of the Kumamoto City Council and a former chairman of the Kumamoto Prefecture City Council. He is also an advisor to the National Association of Volunteer Probation Officers. Photo (2024): [Sekai Nippo](#)

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A statue of Kinjiro Ninomiya. Photo (2009): Masato Ota / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp. Cropped

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