

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan's PM Kishida Uses Blatant Discrimination Against the Unification Church

Knut Holdhus  
July 22, 2024



Mamoru Kamono (2024)

**Fumio Kishida's cutting of ties with religious minority makes city councils pass resolutions that cause blatant discrimination**



Tokyo, 19th July 2024 -  
Published as the 13th article in a series in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#).  
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Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat - Part 2: Ripples to local assemblies

Concerns About the City's Departure from Neutrality

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

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The organization Toyama Prefecture Peace Ambassadors Council is an affiliated group of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF). They have organized several events in Toyama City, with the support of the city and the municipal board of education. These events include the Peace Road, where young people cycle to pray for world peace, and the Toyama Open College, where experts teach history, culture, and education.

However, the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe occurred on July 8, 2022. In Toyama Prefecture and City, the media began to scrutinize the relationships between the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) and related organizations as well as their connections with

local authorities and politicians. UPF and its related groups also became targets.

In June last year, Mamoru Kamono (鴨野 守), founder and representative director of the general incorporated association Toyama Prefecture Peace Ambassadors Council, said, "I have met with the mayor several times and collaborated with local council members through meetings for events such as lectures."

Kamono expressed his disappointment that during the three months following the incident [Editor's note: the assassination of Shinzo Abe], various events lost their support from Toyama City and the municipal board of education. Three months after the incident, in October 2022, Toyama City and its Board of Education sent notifications to cancel their support for the events, and politicians sent notifications of withdrawal from related organizations and resignation from positions. Kamono said with a somber expression,

"During this period, not once did they listen to our side of the story. It's truly regrettable."

After the assassination of Abe, the first local assemblies to pass resolutions to sever ties with the [religious organization](#) were Tondabayashi City Council in Osaka Prefecture and Toyama City Council on 28th September. While the proposal in Tondabayashi was made by the Communist Party (JCP), the conservative administration led the initiative in Toyama.

Hirohisa Fujii (藤井裕久), who was first elected mayor of Toyama City in 2021, served four terms as a prefectural assembly member with the endorsement of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). When he ran for mayor as an independent, he received recommendations from the LDP, the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP), and the Democratic Party for the People (DPP). During the election, he visited the facilities of the [religious organization](#) and received support from it and related associations.



Hachiro Nitta, governor of Toyama prefecture since 2020

The media's scrutiny continued relentlessly, including targeting Governor Hachiro Nitta (新田八朗), who received election support from the [Family Federation](#) and related groups during the 2020 Toyama Prefecture election of governor.

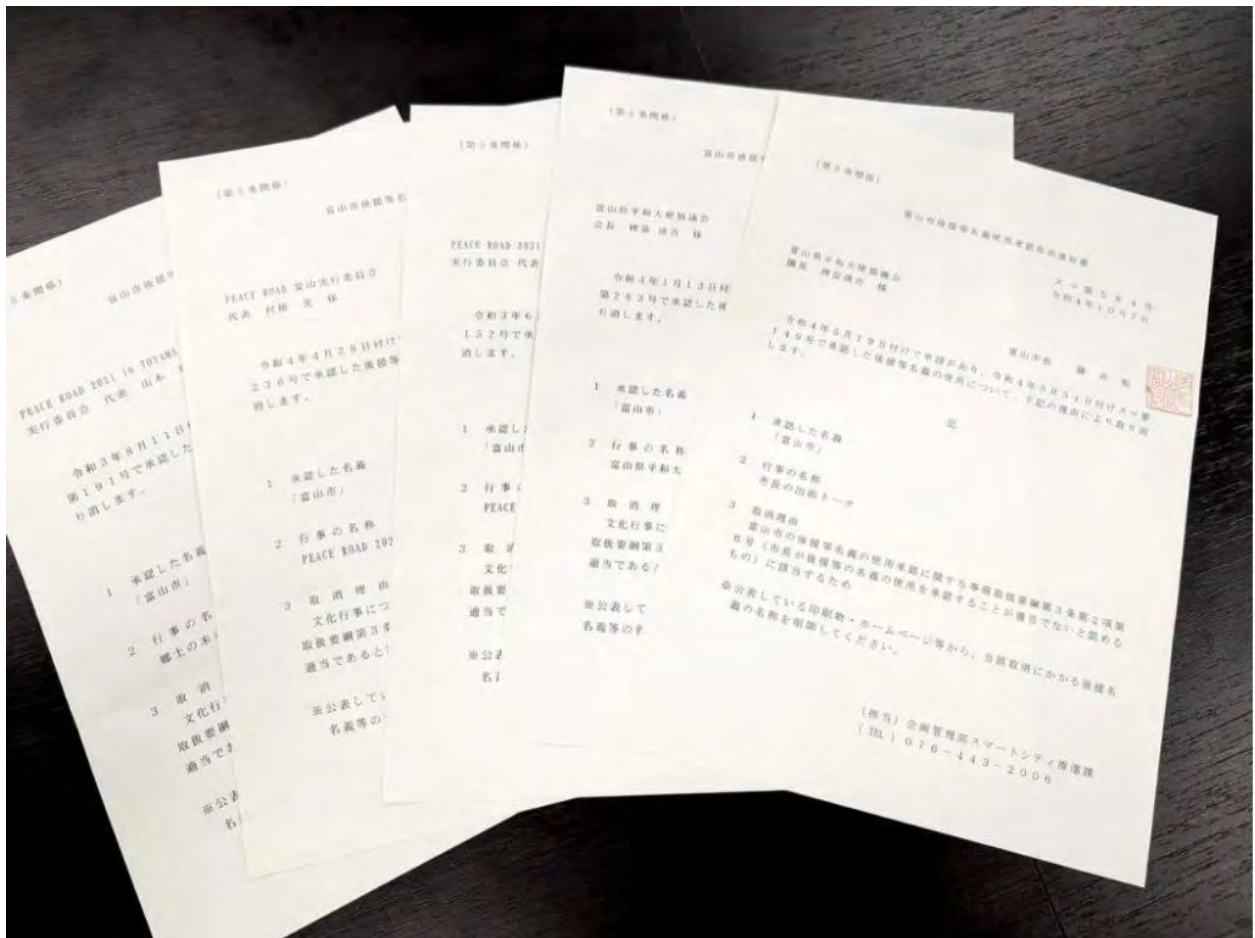
On 21st July 2022, shortly after the assassination, Fujii acknowledged the relationship at a press conference, saying,

"I want to take a moment to pause and think about it thoroughly."

On 10th August, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida carried out a cabinet reshuffle with the aim of excluding those who had ties with the [religious organization](#). A week later, on 17th August, Fujii declared his resolution to "completely sever ties" with the [Family Federation](#).

Following this, the Toyama City Council adopted a resolution on 28th September. It stated that their decision was in line with the mayor's stance,

"Mayor Fujii and the authorities have declared their decision to completely sever ties with the former [Unification Church](#) and its related organizations, recognizing that the former [Unification Church](#) as an extremely problematic organization. In alignment with Mayor Fujii and the authorities, the Toyama City Council also declares to have no future relations whatsoever with the former [Unification Church](#) and its related organizations."



"Notification of Cancellation of Toyama City's Support and Name Usage", among other documents received by the Toyama Prefecture Peace Ambassador Council

Toyama is a stronghold of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and it is evident that decisions are influenced by the Kishida's administration's top-down directive.

However, the "mayor and the authorities" and the "city council", which are supposed to be fair and neutral local public bodies, made a significant decision to "sever all ties" without listening to the perspectives of

individuals affiliated with the [religious organization](#). And they include a considerable number of the citizens. Kamono expressed his anger, saying,

"For instance, no one would sever ties with a friend just based on hearing that the friend did something wrong. One would listen to the friend's side of the story before making a judgment."

Deeply hurt by the wording of the resolution, members of the [Family Federation](#), who could no longer submit applications to the city council, sued Toyama City for infringement of their right to hand in applications. The Toyama Prefecture Peace Ambassadors Council, which had to cancel multiple events, also sued the city.

It's understandably frustrating when events which had been organized in cooperation with Toyama City and its council members, were unilaterally labeled as malicious activities, and the hosting organization being branded as a socially harmful group.

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# Election System Big Part Of Crusade Of Kishida

July 20, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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*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*.  
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by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the



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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.

Masubuchi was the sole guest to attend the 55th-anniversary event of the federation held in Tokyo on 16<sup>th</sup> 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.



Masayoshi Kajikuri (梶栗正義). Photo: IFVOC

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, 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."



Toshikazu Masubuchi. Photo (2024): *Sekai Nippo*

Notably, not a single member of the LDP stands up to defend the human

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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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**Featured image** above: 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. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

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