

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japanese Government Oppression of Unificationism Protested by Faith Leaders

Knut Holdhus
July 23, 2024



Kenryu Kageyama speaking in Niigata 20th July 2024



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Leaders from Family Federation and 17 other faiths gathered in city of Niigata sending protest to regime of Kishida

Tokyo, 22nd July 2024 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

Conference Advocating for Religious Freedom, Without Prejudice Towards Religions
by the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

On 20th July 2024, a symposium was held in Chuo Ward, Niigata City organized by Niigata Prefecture's Citizens' Association to Protect Religious Freedom. The event was in response to the request by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to the Tokyo District Court for an order to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). The theme for the symposium was "Citizens' Meeting for Niigata Prefecture to Protect Religious Freedom and Human Rights".

In addition to members of the [Family Federation](#), religious leaders from 17 religious organizations participated, including Soka Gakkai and Rissho Kosei-kai. They adopted a declaration promoting the protection of "freedom of religion and democracy in Japan" and firmly protesting "religious discrimination and persecution due to prejudice against any religion".

During the meeting, [Family Federation](#) staff member Kenryu Kageyama (影山権龍) (36) delivered a speech on behalf of second-generation believers. In response to the prevailing narrative that second-generation individuals are victims coerced into the faith, Kageyama countered that there are many second-generation believers who are happy to inherit the faith. He emphasized that his life of faith within the [Family Federation](#) has served as the underpinnings of his life and been the reason for his personal happiness. Additionally, he conveyed the pain felt by believers who have had their faith - an integral part of their identity - brushed aside due to religious persecution.

Guest speaker Norio Hosoya (細谷典男), a member of the Toride City Council in Ibaraki Prefecture, warned that the request for the dissolution order was an "unjust act that violates religious freedom" and would lead to totalitarianism and the secularization of the state.



Norio Hosoya, Japanese author and politician. Among his books is one titled "*The Constitution and the Former [Unification Church](#)*"

The declaration will be submitted to the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

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Kishida Causes Blatant Discrimination Locally

July 22, 2024 • Knut Holdhus



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



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

Tokyo, 19th July 2024 – Published as the **13th 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

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

See the [1st article](#), [2nd article](#), [3rd article](#), [4th article](#), [5th article](#), [6th article](#), [7th article](#), [8th article](#), [9th article](#), [10th article](#), [11th article](#), [12th article](#)

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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.



Location of the cities mentioned. Illustration: Maximilian Dörrbecker (Chumhwa) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp

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. Photo: 地方創生図鑑 / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int

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**



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Council adopted a resolution on 28th



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

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."

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.**

See the 1st article, 2nd article, 3rd article, 4th article, 5th article, 6th article, 7th article, 8th article, 9th article, 10th article, 11th article, 12th article

Featured image above: Mamoru Kamono. Photo (2024): *Sekai Nippo*

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