

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Legal Expert: Drag Japan to the UN for Quashing Freedom of Religion

Knut Holdhus  
July 24, 2024



*Pema Gyalpo speaks at the general assembly of the Japanese Committee for the International Coalition for Religious Freedom in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo on the afternoon of the 22nd July 2024*



[Sekai Nippo](#)

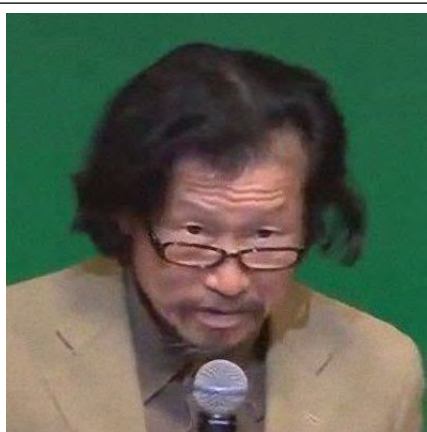
### Expert on law for religious corporations recommends that Japan be taken before UN over its state persecution of religious minority

Tokyo, 23rd 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 22nd July 2024, the Japanese Committee for the International Coalition for Religious Freedom (ICRF), chaired by Kyushu University Professor Emeritus Shoichi Ito (伊東正一), held its general assembly in Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, focusing on the theme of freedom of religion and democracy. During the assembly, a resolution was passed which contained five recommendations related to religious freedom. One of these recommendations emphasized caution in defining religion or "cults" by means of overly simplistic legal measures.



*Dr. Shoichi Ito (2022)*

The ICRF, which advocates for religious freedom, began in the United States in the 1980s. Since 1998, which marked the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ICRF has conducted international conferences and other activities in Japan to support and promote Article 18, which pertains to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

The general assembly was prompted by the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe two years ago. In Japanese society, adherents of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) have faced threats to their religious freedom. These concerns were highlighted in the U.S. State Department's [annual report on religious freedom](#) and were also discussed at an [international academic conference](#) held in France. As a result, the issue has gained attention on the global stage.

Marco Respinti is an Italian specialist in religious freedom and human rights and director of the magazine [Bitter Winter](#), which has correspondents throughout China. He summarized the situation where the [Family Federation](#) faced a dissolution order from a Japanese court following the shooting incident involving former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as "absurd". He emphasized that religious freedom is inviolable, transcending any authority - state, church, or organization - and constitutes an individual's

"primary political human right".



Marco Respinti. Photo (April 2023)



Professor emeritus Seishiro Sugihara



Pema Gyalpo (2015)

Former Musashino Women's University Professor Seishiro Sugihara (杉原誠四郎), an expert on the Religious Corporations Act, highlighted the 11th July Supreme Court ruling that rendered the personal pledge made by a donor to the [Family Federation](#) "invalid" after her death. Sugihara stressed that the current situation faced by the [Family Federation](#) should be brought to the attention of the United Nations.

Additionally, Pema Gyalpo [Editor's note: Japanese political scientist, originally from Tibet], a visiting professor at Takushoku University [Editor's note: private university in Tokyo] and the first representative of the Dalai Lama for the Asia-Pacific region, drew on his own experience of being in exile from Tibet and Chinese religious persecution. He asserted the critical importance of valuing "human dignity" in a democracy. The assembly was attended by 320 participants.

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# State And Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"

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January 8, 2024 • Knut Holdhus



*Japanese journalist exposes how government, media and public opinion effectively have made members into "non-citizens"*

Tokyo, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2024 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

## Believers Who Became "Today's Non-Citizens"

**Part 6** of an interview with Masaki Kubota (窪田 順生), author of "Infiltrating the Former Unification Church"

by Seisaku Morita (森田 清策)

[Part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4](#), [part 5](#), [part 7](#)

– The government, media, and public opinion are creating a synergistic effect (相乗効果) [producing a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects], resulting in a "control of

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thought and religion" (思想・宗教統制) we are not aware of.



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

I sense the beginning of fascism. First, they take away freedom of religion, then they take away freedom of speech. They don't suddenly impose a strict control, but gradually tighten it. After publishing the book, I realized that some people will be silenced if they are slammed by those around them. Then, the state will control them more and more. If the state decides, "Anything in this direction is good," then anything other than what the state has decided becomes "anti-social". I think this is the first step towards such a society.

If Prime Minister Fumio Kishida says that from now on he will have no relations

with socially problematic organisations, those taking a stance against the Liberal Democrats can continue to point out the social problems of other religious organisations, such as the Soka Gakkai [創価学会 – the new Buddhist movement on which the political party Komeito is based, the governing Liberal Democratic Party's coalition partner]. They can say, "Why do you declare you have cut ties with the former Unification Church (Family Federation for World Peace and Unification), but not with other religious groups?" It would not be a situation where they could form a coalition. It can be said that Prime Minister Kishida without thinking has destroyed the identity of the Liberal Democratic Party.



The Soka Gakkai International flag. Photo: QueerMichael / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int

Moreover, if we tamper with freedom of thought and religion, our society will become dreadful. They probably did it because they didn't think that far ahead and were afraid their approval ratings would drop. In addition, the officials of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (文化庁) had no choice but to file a request for a dissolution order because it was the Prime Minister's order, and the remaining part of their careers would be in jeopardy should they not obey.

What they did was to accumulate the stories of "victims" by going back in time. On the other hand, they did not listen to the stories of active believers. Normally, if there is a problem, one must first listen to the believers of the group that is thought to have a problem.

Instead of doing that, if they only listen to the stories of former believers who quit 20 years ago, and pile up all of that, saying "there is so much damage," Soka Gakkai [創価学会 – the new Buddhist movement on which the political party Komeito is based, the governing Liberal Democratic Party's coalition partner] will also be in danger. The story is so far-fetched that it should be pointed out by the media. But on the contrary, they are pleased that "support" is overwhelming in public opinion polls. It's a terrifying situation where even extrajudicial matters are approved as long as everyone agrees.

– In your book, the situation of the believers surrounded on all sides (四面楚歌), is described as "today's non-citizens" (令和の非国民).



From Japanese history: Flag used by the Righteous Army during the February 26, 1936 coup attempt. The four characters reading "Revere the Emperor, Destroy the Traitors" (尊皇討奸) are placed in the corners of a standard Japanese flag. Photo: Cckerberos / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image

Believers might feel bad, but the term "today's non-citizens" which I used, means they have become the same as renegades during wartime.

Those who were said to be non-citizens then, were not beaten up because of laws such as a "Non-Citizens Exclusion Act" (非国民排斥法). At that time, the media frequently wrote articles about the war at a time when the fate of the Japanese people was at stake. As the stories of the soldiers were published in newspapers and broadcast on radio, the word "non-citizen"

was spread, and ordinary people lynched those who opposed the war.

Indeed, now, believers from the former Unification Church are not lynched these days. However, they can't rent a hall, and they are told not to come to summer festivals, and they are treated like non-citizens. This is deeply related to the media reports and Prime Minister Kishida's declaration of cutting all ties.

– Even media people are afraid to meet today's non-citizens.

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After I interviewed Masayoshi Kajikuri (梶栗正義), chairman of *International Federation for Victory over Communism* (国際勝共連合), I suggested to my media acquaintances, "I'm going to introduce you, so why don't you interview him and listen to his story?" However, they refused out of fear what he would do. They even said no to just meeting him and listen to his story.



Masayoshi Kajikuri (梶栗正義). Photo: IFVOC

The image that has been created is scarier than the reality. Many people think they can't communicate with members. By publishing a book, I wanted to shatter that image. Followers might be talkative and have different values from you in some areas, but they are people with whom you can have a dialogue.

*Continued in [part 7](#).*

[Part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4](#), [part 5](#), [part 7](#)

Featured image above: Masaki Kubota, Japanese author and journalist.  
Photo / graphics: Sekai Nippo.

More about "non-citizens": [A One-Sided, Prejudiced, Unfair Japanese Media](#)

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Masaki Kubota (窪田順生) is a non-fiction writer who has contributed to weekly and monthly magazines. He has also worked first as a producer, then as an advisor for TV-documentaries. He is journalist for a weekly magazine and a newspaper, and editor of a monthly magazine. In addition, he works as a media consultant, having conducted over 200 public relations consultations and media training sessions (training on how to handle interviews).



The front cover of 'Infiltrating the Former Unification Church' (潜入旧統一教会「解散命令請求」取材NG最深部の全貌 - Tankobon Softcover, Nov. 2023), by Masaki Kubota (窪田順生).

His books include

- "Spin Doctor – Techniques of Information Manipulation Used by Professionals Who 'Hush up Bad Information'" (Kodansha Alpha Bunko – 2009), which deals with Japan's political and corporate public relations strategies, and
- "14 Stairs – Reportage on the Niigata Girl's 9 Years and 2 Months Confinement Case" (Shogakukan – 2006), which won the 12th Shogakukan Non-fiction Award for Excellence.
- His new book, "Infiltrating the Former Unification Church – the Complete Story of the Request for a Dissolution Order and the Deepest Secrets of the 'No Good Coverage'", is currently on sale.

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