

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japanese PM Kishida's Fascist Removal Of Unificationists

Knut Holdhus
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Hideo Mima, born in Tokushima City in 1949. Graduated from the Faculty of Commerce and Faculty of Law at Keio University. First elected to the Tokushima City Council as an independent in 1995. Since 2015, he has been elected in two elections with the LDP's endorsement. He is currently serving his seventh term. 2024

Japanese politician criticizes "totalitarian declaration" of Fumio Kishida to cut ties with religious minority as unreasonable from the start and detached from the reality of the regions



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

Tokushima City Councillor Hideo Mima made his religious identity public and remains with the LDP even after being elected for a seventh term

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

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Tokushima City Councillor Hideo Mima (美馬秀夫) has openly declared himself a follower of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) and has also continued his political activities. In August 2022, following Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's declaration as the head of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to sever ties with the [Family Federation](#), the media began investigating the connections between local council members and the [religious organization](#). Mima received a questionnaire from local media, such as the Tokushima Shimbun.

Although Mima felt the questionnaire itself was a kind of witch hunt that could lead to religious discrimination, he honestly responded that he was a member of the [Family Federation](#). After all, he had already made his faith public.

In the most recent two elections, Mima ran as an official LDP candidate, but in the city council election of April 2023, he ran as an independent without seeking LDP endorsement.



*Nippon Hoso Kyokai,
the state-owned Japan
Broadcasting
Corporation*

Even so, as an incumbent who openly professes his faith, the media paid close attention, with NHK even dispatching a director from Tokyo for in-depth coverage.

Amidst this scrutiny, Mima secured 1,978 votes and won his seventh term. Although his votes decreased by about 200 from the previous election, his ranking improved from 21st to 20th (with 30 seats available). It is estimated that about 500 of Mima's votes came from [Family Federation](#) members,

while approximately 1,500 votes were from the broader electorate. The Mima family is one of Tokushima's prominent families, enjoying significant local support. And Mima has cultivated a network

of connections. Mima reflects,

"Despite facing headwinds, I felt that my political stance was received and accepted by conservative voters."

After the election, Mima remained part of the LDP Tokushima City Council and continued his activities as Vice Chairman. In October 2023, the government filed for a dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#), intensifying the situation surrounding the [organization](#). However, Mima's council activities have not significantly changed. He said,

"Even with various challenges, I believe that gaining support from citizens through democratic elections remains crucial. I feel a greater sense of responsibility and the weight of the votes."



Yusuke Nakanishi 2021

According to the Tokushima Shimbun, Yusuke Nakanishi (中西祐介), chairman of the LDP Prefectural Federation, commented on the ties with the [religious organization](#) facing the dissolution order, saying,

"We will simply act based on the party's governance code, which states we do not maintain relations with the [religious organization](#), so this decision does not significantly impact us."

There appears to be a considerable gap between Prime Minister Kishida's declaration to sever ties and the reality at the local level. This is not surprising when we consider that the Liberal Democratic Party has historically embraced people of various religions and ideological beliefs based on freedom and democracy. Kishida's totalitarian declaration was unreasonable from the start and detached from the reality of the regions.

Mima criticized the request for a dissolution order, saying,

"It's a decision based on a predetermined conclusion that panders to public opinion. I particularly cannot accept the sudden change of policy, so that civil cases are now included as a requirement for dissolution."

However, he added, "I hope the court will make an appropriate decision."

As for his future legislative activities, Mima intends to continue voicing his opinions based on his faith and beliefs. One key issue he aims to address is the declining birthrate. Hideo Mima said,

"The government's approach to the declining birthrate focuses on financial incentives, but unless more young people want to marry, start families, and have children, there won't be a real solution. I hope to foster a societal mood where young individuals actively choose marriage and parenthood."

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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

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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.



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.**

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

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