

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: PM Kishida Controlled by Pressure from Extremist Media

Knut Holdhus
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Hamada Satoshi, born in Kyoto in 1977. After completing a graduate degree in education at the University of Tokyo Graduate School, he graduated from Kyoto University's School of Medicine in 2011. After working as a radiologist, he ran in the proportional representation district of the July 2019 House of Councillors election as a candidate for the Party to Protect the People from NHK. Although he lost, he was elected in October of the same year after party leader Senator Tachibana Takashi lost his seat automatically due to his running in a by-election for the Saitama constituency of the House of Councillors



Japanese parliamentarian criticizes Fumio Kishida succumbing to pressure from biased media against religious minority, completely ignoring its views

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

The persecution of religious organizations leaves a lasting stain on history

House of Councillors member Satoshi Hamada

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

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On 20th March this year, there was a [symposium on religious freedom in Chiba City](#) organized by members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). Among the attendees was a member of parliament, Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡), from the "Party to Protect the People from NHK" (NHK Party).

Earlier that month, on the 12th, [Hamada had asked](#) during a session of the House of Councillors Committee on General Affairs whether it was inappropriate for members of parliament to attend meetings of the [Family Federation](#), a group with which the Liberal Democratic Party had declared a severance of relations.

Akiko Honda (本田顕子), Vice-Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, responded that she was not in a position to comment on the activities of individual members of parliament

or their participation in meetings of specific groups. Hamada interpreted this as government approval to maintain relations with the group.



From the Chiba Prefectural Convention of the "Symposium to Protect Freedom of Religion and Human Rights", held in Chiba City 20th March 2024. On the right is Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama, beside him Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa

When Fumio Kishida, the president of the Liberal Democratic Party (and Prime Minister), declared in August 2022 that the party would sever ties with the [Family Federation](#), this directive was communicated to local organizations as well. This had significant repercussions, and concerned [Family Federation](#) followers, who were worried about having their applications rejected in local assemblies, turned to Hamada as a last resort. They noticed Hamada due to his frequent YouTube broadcasts discussing the irregularities in government and local policies. Upon receiving their message, Hamada readily agreed to meet with them.



Akiko Honda (LDP), Vice-Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) 26th Oct. 2023

Subsequently, Hamada met with multiple followers, listened to their stories, and attended meetings organized by them. Through these interactions, he began to question whether the government and the Liberal Democratic Party's stance was excessively one-sided.

What surprised Hamada the most was the fact that over 4,000 [Family Federation](#) followers had been [forcibly abducted and confined by professional "faith-breakers"](#) (individuals who specialize in coercing people to leave religious groups), compelling them to renounce their faith. He had vaguely thought of the [Family Federation](#) as a problematic organization, but he came to realize that they were more often victims rather than perpetrators.

Despite these facts, Hamada questions why there are no members of parliament defending the [Family Federation](#). On 22nd July 2024, he attended the "International Religious Freedom (IRF) Summit Asia" held in Tokyo and stated in his guest speech,

"I think it is unfair that only the [Family Federation](#) is being oppressed. Out of 700 members of parliament, it is strange that

not a single one addresses the issue of the [Family Federation](#)."

In an interview with our newspaper, Hamada stated,

"Considering the possibility that religious freedom could be unduly threatened by politicians distancing themselves en masse, I believe that politicians should now listen to the voices of [Family Federation](#) followers and take action."

Takashi Tachibana (立花孝志), the leader of the NHK Party to which Hamada belongs, also shares the understanding that the government and the Liberal Democratic Party's decision violates the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution.

Hamada also questions the lack of transparency in the procedures for a dissolution order. During the 213th regular session of the National Diet (from 26th January to 23rd June), he submitted multiple written questions to the House of Councillors regarding the [Family Federation](#), such as the legality of the dissolution order and issues related to abduction and confinement. However, to all those questions, he received virtually zero response.



Takashi Tachibana 2021

On 18th June, during a symposium in Tokyo that examined the Kishida administration, Satoshi Hamada delivered a video message. He candidly expressed his impression, saying,

"Regarding the dissolution order request, I felt it was like brute force, and I believe there were plenty of opportunities to reconsider it. However, I sense that Kishida succumbed to pressure from the media."

Nevertheless, Hamada has no intention of backing down. He explained,

"The government's stance has already been decided, so what I can do is create a record that the issue has been raised in the

Diet. The proceedings in the Diet are recorded in the minutes, and future historians will see that during this administration, unjust actions were taken against religious organizations. That is my intention behind my actions."

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[Editor's note on meaning of headline "The persecution of religious organizations leaves a lasting stain on history": Whether it's the suppression of Buddhist practices in Japan during the Kamakura period (1185-1333) or the Christian persecution in the Edo era (1603-1868), these instances have been recorded and remembered as significant challenges to religious freedom. Similarly, in more recent times, actions against religious groups have continued to shape our understanding of this complex issue. It's essential to recognize and learn from these historical events to ensure the protection of religious liberties today.]

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“Kishida’s Totalitarian Declaration Unreasonable”

July 25, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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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



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

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Tokushima City Councilor 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*.



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

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.

NHK

The flag of NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai), the state-owned Japan Broadcasting Corporation, [Public domain image](#). Cropped

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."

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](#)



Yusuke Nakanishi. Photo (2021): [首相官邸ホームページ](#) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

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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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Featured image above: 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. Photo (2024): [Sekai Nippo](#)

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