

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Haters Terrorize Unification Church Members With Impunity in Japan

Knut Holdhus
August 9, 2024



A hole in the window glass of a believer's home in Fukushima Prefecture



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Members of religious minority suffer vandal attacks on their cars and homes and harassment at work

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Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat - Part 3: Believers Suffering Discrimination and Human Rights Violations

Members get graffiti sprayed on their cars and windows broken in their homes

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

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In 1992, international [mass weddings](#) and "spiritual sales" were widely covered on television talk shows, and critical reports about the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) were repeatedly broadcast. As a result, believers faced discrimination, prejudice, and sometimes even hostility due to their faith, causing them distress and suffering.

Before the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a woman in her 30s named Eri Shimada (a pseudonym), who currently works in customer service in the Tokyo metropolitan area, experienced harassment from a male manager at her previous job. Shimada had already been uncomfortable with the manager's excessive physical contact and had written about her frustration in her diary.

One day, she accidentally left her diary at work, and the manager read it. Upon discovering that she was a member of the [Family Federation](#), the manager began harassing her further, using her faith as a pretext. Through social media, he started making new criticisms, such as "You don't seem motivated," and "Your work attitude is bad." He had never mentioned such things before. Shimada recalled,

"I heard directly from a female customer I know that the manager had told her, 'Since she's a [Unification Church](#) member, you should avoid contacting her.' Apparently, he said the same thing to several other mutual acquaintances."

Eventually, Shimada quit the job. Reflecting on the harassment she had faced due to her [Family Federation](#) faith, she expressed concern, saying,

"Honestly, I think there are quite a few cases like mine that haven't come to light. Believers tend to see endurance as a virtue."

Amid the media frenzy criticizing the [Family Federation](#) following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, several individuals have faced harassment due to their faith. For instance, in October last year, a 60-year-old female believer named Chihiro Kamimura (a pseudonym) from the Chubu region found derogatory words scribbled on the hood of her car parked at her home.

Because the graffiti was written with a permanent marker, it "couldn't be easily removed." The incident was reported to the police, and patrols were conducted around her home, but the perpetrator has not been found. The woman said,



A hole in the window glass of a believer's home in Fukushima Prefecture

"Faith is undoubtedly a source of comfort for me. Being vandalized like this has deeply hurt me."

There have also been cases of windows of the homes of members being broken. Around 12:30 AM on August 12, 2022, Kyoko Sasaki (a pseudonym), who lives in Fukushima Prefecture, heard a loud noise as if something had struck the window next to her front door. Although she was frightened, she went to bed that night. The next morning, she found a hole about 1 cm in diameter in the double-glazed window, which should not have been easy to break.

It is suspected that a slingshot-like device was used, and a police report was filed later, but the perpetrator remains unknown.

Many neighbors knew that the Sasaki were members of the [Family Federation](#), but they had never openly spoken ill of them before.

After that, incidents that seemed like harassment continued, such as the switch-operated light in their parking area being mysteriously turned on, and empty oil cans for agricultural machinery being discarded on their property. Sasaki expressed her fears, saying,

"I can't sleep at night due to the fear that a similar incident might happen again."

She is still tormented by the anxiety that, in the worst case, an intruder might break into her home.

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Witch Hunt Compromises Safety For Believers

August 8, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Safety for believers seriously compromised by Kishida administration's campaign against religious minority

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Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat – Part 3: **Believers Suffering Discrimination and Human Rights Violations**

Graffiti perpetrator shows no remorse







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

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"I think many followers felt outraged when they heard that the perpetrator considered himself a hero fighting against evil."



The Meijo Family Church of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). Photo (May 2021): [円周率3パーセント / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int](#)

Those are the words of a male staff member of the [Meijo Family Church](#) (Meijo Church) of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture. Two years ago, on the night of 15th August 2022, the Meijo Church suffered vandalism, with graffiti spray-painted on its entrance doors, with words like "cult" and "danger". This was a month after the shooting incident of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, during a period when media's bashing of the [Family Federation](#) was intensifying.

The Meijo Church was not the only one affected by graffiti. On the night of 14th August 2022, the [Ichinomiya Family Church](#) (Ichinomiya Church) in Ichinomiya City, Aichi Prefecture, about a 20-minute drive from the Meijo Church, also suffered graffiti damage on its walls with spray-painted messages like "Cult, get out!", "Yamagami, Banzai!", and "Traitors". A male staff member of the Ichinomiya Church, who happened to arrive early to prepare for the meeting on the 15th, discovered the graffiti.

The Ichinomiya Police Station, which investigated the incident, arrested a man in his 40s who works for a company in Aichi Prefecture, based on footage from nearby security cameras. The man also admitted to the charges.

According to the man's statement, his motives for the graffiti were "anger towards the [Liberal Democratic Party's](#) connection with a quasi-criminal religious organization" and "to make people aware of the malicious nature of the former [Unification Church](#)." However, he also admitted that it was "a pastime during the Obon holiday" and that he thought "he might get attention by doing such things."

The man had researched the [religious organization](#) through online searches and magazine articles, concluding that it was "nothing but a group of traitors sending large donations to Korea." He felt a compulsion to take "action with a message".

He looked up the location of the nearby Ichinomiya Church and, using the spray paint he had, he hid his face with sunglasses and graffitied words like "cult" on the wall of the place of worship late at night on the 14th August 2022. He also painted over the nameplate of the church with black spray paint.



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

Feeling that he had managed to damage the [religious organization](#), he decided to graffiti another place of worship. Using a map app, he drove to the Meijo Church in Nagoya City. He painted over the mailbox with black spray paint and left similar graffiti.

During the interrogation, the man expressed satisfaction with his graffiti acts, saying, "I am very pleased because I

managed to challenge the corrupt relationship between politics and religion." Judging by the content of his statement, he showed no sign of remorse. In September of the same year, he was fined 200,000 yen by a summary order from the Ichinomiya Summary Court for property

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damage and insult.

In February 2023, the [Family Federation](#) filed a civil lawsuit in the Tokyo District Court seeking damages. On 25th January of this year, Judge Chieko Shimizu (清水知恵子) recognized defamation, stating that the expression "cult" lowered the social evaluation of the plaintiff, and ordered the man to pay approximately 590,000 yen, including repair costs for the two facilities.

The [religious organization](#) appreciates that the court recognized the expression "cult" as something that lowers social credibility. However, they are concerned that if a dissolution order is issued against the [corporation](#), the situation could spiral out of control, and even worse damage is expected to occur.

After the graffiti incident, the Meijo Church instructed its members,

"Graffiti can be fixed, but if you encounter the perpetrator, anything could happen. If you find the perpetrator, do not make contact under any circumstances."

Hatred towards the [religious organization](#) casts a dark shadow over the safety of its believers.

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Featured image above: Graffiti damage at Ichinomiya Family Church.
Photo: [Family Federation](#)

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