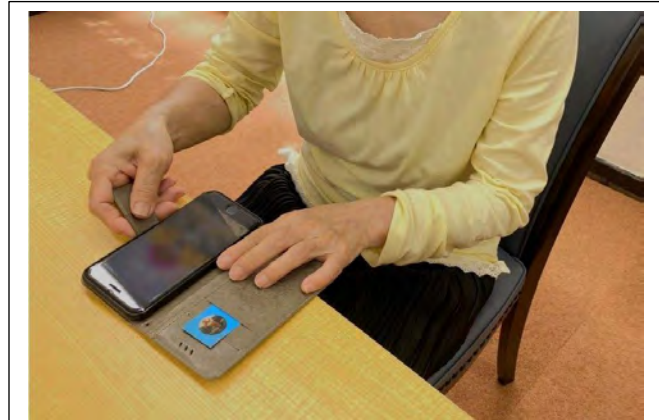


FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Religious harassment drove my daughter to suicide

Knut Holdhus
August 11, 2024



Yoko Nakata (pseudonym), a woman in her 60s from the Tokyo metropolitan area

1988. When I heard about the "three stages of life" in the [Unification Principle](#), namely life in the womb, life on earth, and life in heaven (the spiritual world), I thought, "This is what I have been looking for," and I began to study it in earnest. The [Unification Principle](#) was interesting, and I was happy to attend their lectures because I wanted to hear the rest as soon as possible. Then, to make a long story short, I officially joined in 2001.



A photo taken in Gapyeong, South Korea with her young daughter (courtesy of Ms. Nakata)



voice, "How much are you in debt?!"

Media reports worsened relationship with daughter, leading to her suicide

Originally published by the [Family Federation of Japan](#) 10th August 2024 on their [website](#) [ffwpu.jp](#).

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to the interview today. First of all, can you tell us what year you joined the [Family Federation](#), Ms. Nakata (not her real name)?

Nakata: I became a member in 2001. I was first introduced to the [Unification Principle](#) in

Interviewer: I see. May I ask you to tell us about what happened to you after 2022?

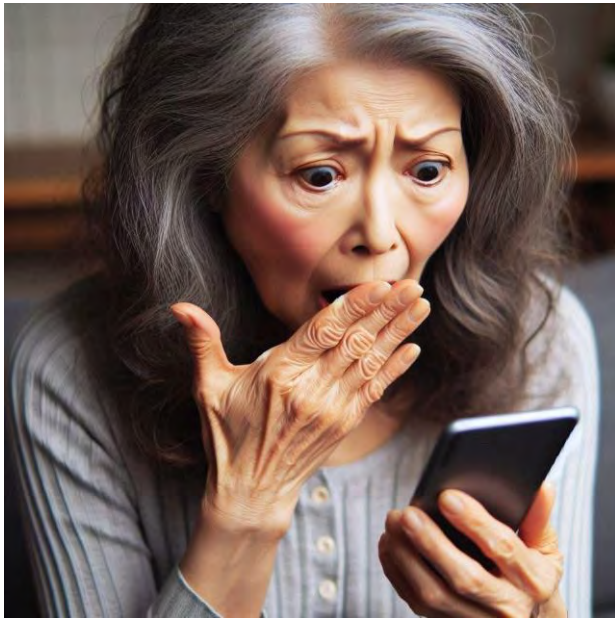
Nakata: At the end of July 2022, my daughter, who was living with me, took her life. She was in her late 20s. Ever since she was a child, she was not very strong mentally and carried a lot of stress in her interpersonal relationships. That affected her health, and she suffered from physical ailments because of that. She stopped going to school in middle school and did not even go to high school, but later took exams so that she was able to get her high school diploma. She also went to a psychotherapist for a long time.

After becoming an adult, she did several part time jobs, but when she faced problems in relationships, her hands would chap, and she would get the hives. Each time she quit her job, the hives went away. This cycle kept repeating itself.

My daughter was happy to come with me when I invited her to church at an early age. Of my three children, she was the most involved in church events. My husband was not a member, and my daughter did not go to church as much after she became an adult, but she helped out when there were church events and went with me to Gapyeong, South Korea, every year, at a place considered holy by [Family Federation](#) members.

However, after the incident with former Prime Minister Abe on 8th July 2022, media reports on TV or online were very critical of the [Family Federation](#), and my daughter watched the reports all the time at home. I was very worried about her because she had just quit her job due to stress in her relationships at work, and she was very weak mentally at that time. After the 8th July incident, my daughter once asked me in a very strong tone of

And then, in the latter half of July, my daughter took her own life at home. When I opened the messaging app on my daughter's smartphone, I found messages exchanged with her closest friend, where she wrote things like, "My mother is donating money to the [Unification Church](#) and getting into debt," and "Is she trying to use me?" It was incredibly painful to read those words, as they showed she didn't trust me.



I had borrowed a little money for my parents' funeral, but I told her that there was nothing to worry about. She never asked me (about my finances) after that. There was also a time when I was chatting with a neighbour, who is also a [church](#) member, at the front door my house. My daughter slammed the door to her room so loudly we could hear it throughout the house.

Interviewer: That must have been very tough for you.

Nakata: My daughter, who enjoyed going to church the most among my children, did not have any ill will that I know of towards the [church](#) before the events of 2022. She attended [church](#) events and workshops several times a year and seemed to find peace of mind in learning things from the [church](#) and interacting with [church](#)

members. Since the incident, while continually hearing the one-sided claims of those referred to as "former believers", I believe my daughter's heart was deeply affected by feelings of resentment toward the [church](#), driving her to the point of exhaustion. Right now, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of helplessness, but I think the only thing I can do is live each day to the fullest, not just for myself but for my daughter as well.

Interviewer: Thank you for the interview today.

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Forced By His Father To Forfeit Inheritance

August 10, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Japanese believer from minority religion tells the story how his own father was influenced so negatively by media coverage that he forced his son to forfeit inheritance.

Originally published by the [Family Federation of Japan](#) 9th August 2024 on their website [ffwpu.jp](#).

Interviewer: Hello, Mr. Kimura. Nice to meet you today. I heard that you dealt with some familial issues. What did your parents originally think about your faith in the Family Federation?

Kimura: I started working after I graduated from high school, and soon after that, I came across the [Unification Principle](#). I was moved by its well-reasoned arguments, as well as the philosophy and activities of the [Family Federation](#), which was based on living for the sake of others, for the country, and for the world, so I joined in the early 1980s. I told my parents that I was attending the [Unification Church \(Family Federation\)](#) after I joined, but they seemed to have a distrust of this new religion from the beginning. Sometime after that, I was almost kidnapped and confined in order to make me renounce my faith.

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
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One day, I



Abduction of young believer. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, 10th August 2024.

finished attending a lecture on the [Unification Principle](#) at church, and on my way home, **a group of about seven or eight men, including my father and uncle, surrounded me and suddenly forced me into a car.** I resisted the best I could, but I couldn't get away. I think the car belonged to my uncle. I didn't know where we were going, but when they stopped for a short break, **I jumped out of the car and ran away.**

After that incident, my parents came to the church several times to try to bring me back to their home, which was in another prefecture. At the suggestion of one of the then staff members of the church, I went back to my parents' house to talk things out with them. My parents made me read a book written by an anti-Unificationist who criticized the church, but I told them that I would continue to attend the church because I had not changed my mind, so we settled the matter as if we had made peace.

However, **I can't say my relationship with my parents was normal after that, and they always seemed distrustful towards me.** Therefore, I **gradually tried to rebuild their trust by contacting them frequently,** or taking my wife back home with me, and taking our children to them after they were born.

Until my mother's death in 2021, my wife and I took the most time, among my siblings, to visit my parents in order to take care of them and help them out. Therefore, my father came to trust us. Shortly before my mother passed away, my father repeatedly asked me if we would come back (home), and he even wrote a letter to my wife and I saying,

"This house will be passed down to Toshihiro Kimura (not his real name)."

Interviewer: How has your relationship with your parents deteriorated since the incident [Editor's note: assassination of Shinzo Abe] in July 2022?

Kimura: The mainstream media bashing the [Family Federation](#) only intensified, and my father's opinion of my wife and I deteriorated dramatically. Whenever I called my father, he would tell me that I did not have to come back or even return home.

My father also told me that he did not want me to come to the first anniversary of my mother's death, but I managed to get permission, and I attended. When I returned home, I found a postcard on my father's desk from a member of the *Japanese Communist Party*, which my father had never supported in any way. And my father wrote, "Quit the church! Even if I tell you to quit, you're brainwashed anyway, so there's nothing I can do about it!" He was so insistent that no matter what I said to him, it was useless, and he revealed his disbelief in me.

The situation got worse at the time of the third anniversary of my mother's death in 2023. Up until then, my father told us not to attend the memorial services, but this time, he contacted us and told us to be sure and come to the service together. Because of that, I felt a little uneasy, but we went anyway.

After the memorial service finished, and the priest had left, my wife and I were



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Japanese couple facing relatives. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, 10th August 2024.

surrounded by about seven relatives, including my father, two of my brothers, my aunt, and my aunt's husband. They all pressed us and said,

"We don't know what you're going to do because you are part of an anti-social group. If you aren't going to sever ties with us, sign this document pledging you will forfeit (your father's) inheritance!"

The document was handwritten by my father, and I had to fill out my name and address. My wife was also terrified, and we couldn't leave until we signed it, so we **reluctantly signed the document**.

Interviewer: So that's how it happened. How is your relationship with your father after that?

Kimura: I call my father from time to time to ask how he's doing, but the conversations always become one-sided where he criticizes our faith. It doesn't look like our relationship will improve anytime soon.

Earlier this year (2024), I visited my father, who lives alone, and asked him again about the document I signed on the third anniversary of my mother's death. We talked about it a lot, but it seemed unmistakable that my father made me sign the forfeiture because of my religious belief. My father's property was mainly his house and land, but he seemed to be concerned that if I inherited it, it would be used as a base for the [Unification Church](#).

I never once mentioned that I wanted to inherit the house or land; I was going to leave it to my father. Nor did I ever think of using it as a base of operations for the [Family Federation](#).



The Chugoku region of Japan. Image: TUBS / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp. Cropped

My father's story came from his own imagination, and I was surprised at how far removed from reality it was. I had genuinely taken care of my mother and helped my father as a son, but now my father says to me, "You must have had some sort of ulterior motive!" I am really shocked that the parent-child relationship we had built up was destroyed so quickly; this is much more shocking than the inheritance

issue. My wife is also saddened by this fact.

By the way, my father always watches the mainstream media, especially tabloid shows, and often believes the biased content of the programs. When I tell him about my experiences in the [church](#) or at home, he says, "No, that's not what the TV says," and he doesn't listen to me at all. For example, some of my children have inherited the faith and some have not, but as a parent, I treat every child the same. However, my father has no doubt in his mind that "all second-generation children are victims of their parents," and blamed my wife and me.

I would like the mainstream media to be fair in their reporting. I am not opposed to them featuring the voices of former believers in their TV programs, but I would like them to feature the voices of current believers who are living their lives of faith with gratitude just as much. I believe we must make an effort to continue to speak out and not give up.

Interviewer: We'll pray that the relationship between you and your father will be restored as soon as possible. Thank you for sharing your story with us.

Featured image above: Forced to forfeit his inheritance. Toshihiro Kimura (pseudonym), a man in his 50s from the Chugoku region. Photo: FFWPU

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