

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: 2nd-Generation Unification Church Members Protest Persecution

Knut Holdhus
September 19, 2024



A woman appeals for the protection of religious freedom and human rights, afternoon 16th September 2024, Shibuya, Tokyo



2nd-generation members of religious minority protesting severe persecution by Japanese authorities and media

Tokyo, 17th September 2024 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

To believe is of one's own free will

2nd-generation members of the [Family Federation](#) speaking out on the streets of Shibuya, Tokyo

by the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

On 16th September 2024, current second-generation members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the Unification Church) did street preaching in front of Shibuya Station in Tokyo. The event was organized by the "Association of Believers Advocating for Freedom and Human Rights", a group of volunteers from the [Family Federation](#). The second-generation members who took to the streets shared their thoughts on being born and raised by parents who are members of the [Family Federation](#).

Rie Mitsuhashi (24), a resident of Tokyo, emphasized,

"I am practicing my faith out of my own free will, not because it was forced upon me."

She shared her personal experience of how her faith improved her previously strained relationship with her father, and appealed, "I want people to see for themselves what kind of activities the [Family Federation](#) is actually involved in."

A man in his 20s who lives in Saitama Prefecture argued, "Second-generation religious believers are not

poor victims. There are second-generation believers who feel happy, like me." He pointed out that the more the media portrays them as victims, the more the self-esteem of second-generation believers who have faith is hurt. He called on people to "not just accept the reports at face value, but to listen to what current believers have to say and make sensible decisions."



The area around Shibuya station, Tokyo

A male believer who participated in the gathering with his child commented after listening to the street preaching, "Parent-child issues are difficult problems that no one can avoid. I am also undergoing training in love."

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Media Helping Terrorist Reach His Goal

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Japanese media helping terrorist Yamagami accomplish his objectives

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Investigating the Request for an Order to Dissolve the Family Federation – Politics and Media out of Control

Part 3: Biased Media: "Information Disaster" Fueled by Terrorist

by the Editorial Department of Sekai Nippo

See [part 1](#), [part 2](#)

In the media coverage of the incident when former Prime Minister Abe was shot on 8th July 2022, there was extremely little criticism of the terrorist act itself committed by defendant Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也). On the contrary, the media outlets that had opposed Shinzo Abe's politics



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On the contrary, the media outlets that had opposed Shinzo Abe's politics during his tenure as prime minister, rather focused on the **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** (formerly the Unification Church). Those news channels were rather more critical of the **religious organisation**, **emphasizing Yamagami's feelings of being a victim** due to his mother's large donations to the **religious organisation**. The defendant claimed those feelings were his motive for committing the crime.

The press conferences of *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales*, which is in dispute with the **religious organisation**, have been widely reported. At the same time, the **claims of the religious organisation and individual believers have hardly ever been mentioned**. Amidst this, there was a **widespread one-sided discourse** demanding sanctions against the **Family Federation**. Naturally, this had a negative impact on the Kishida cabinet's approval rating in public opinion polls.

On 19th October 2022, Fumio Kishida without much effort and **without Cabinet approval**, made a change in the interpretation of the *Religious Corporations Act*. The move was criticized as "**changing one's mind like the wind**", yet both the ruling and opposition parties joined the Prime Minister in his **disregard for procedure**. At that time, the Japanese media stood by and watched as the **authorities readily violated the basic human right of "freedom of religion" guaranteed by the constitution**. This exposed a double standard that is in stark contrast to the openly opposing attitude of the media shown during the 2015 security legislation.



Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand 2017-2023. Photo: New Zealand Government, Office of the Governor-General / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int. Cropped

Especially since the terror attacks on the United States 11th September 2001, terrorism has been regarded as one of the greatest threats to the security of modern society. Former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, said of a terrorist [who was seeking notoriety], "We [...] will give him nothing, not even his name." However, the lessons learnt from that have not been heeded [in Japan]. By allowing the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* to request a dissolution order – in other words, effectively giving the **religious organisation** a "death sentence" – the Japanese **media inadvertently has helped the terrorist accomplish his goals**.

At a public symposium held on 20th January 2024, author



Fumihiko Kato 20th Jan. 2024. Photo: Screenshot from video recording by UPF-Japan.

Fumihiko Kato (加藤文宏) analyzed big data using AI and announced that the huge amount of news coverage critical of the **religious organisation** was ultimately directed at the Kishida administration. In order to deflect this criticism, Fumio Kishida clearly demonstrated his stance by aiming to cut ties with the **Family Federation** and related organizations from then on, and by issuing a dissolution order against the **religious corporation** in an effort to avoid blame and gain support for his cabinet.

Under these circumstances, the **religious organisation** and ordinary believers have become targets of people's hatred. The above-mentioned Kato has **condemned the media's behavior**, which rather than checking the power, has allowed it to run amok. He calls this an "information disaster". At a press conference, the **religious organisation** revealed a number of **discriminatory incidents**, including members being fired at their workplace, cancellation of job offers, teachers criticizing the **religious organisation** during class, suicides, suicide attempts, and graffiti marking the facility as belonging to a "cult". Despite the Kishida Cabinet requesting a dissolution order, its support rate has decreased. Also, the opposition parties pursuing the matter, have been unable to escape from low approval ratings.

Some say that the one-sided media coverage bashing the **religious organisation** has led to a rift between executives and young reporters within major media outlets. 2nd-generation members of the **religious organisation** have held panel discussions with journalists and experts in open forums. In addition, meetings have been held steadily to denounce 4,300 members of the **religious organisation** being abducted and locked up in an attempt to forcibly break their faith. The **articles written by reporters who covered those events have not seen the light of day**.

However, it was reported that *Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* Masahito Moriyama (盛山正仁),



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who filed a request for a dissolution order with *Tokyo District Court*, had exchanged an "endorsement-affirming form" with a [Unification Church](#)-related organization in Hyogo Prefecture ahead of the 2021 House of Representatives election. Believers had actively made phone calls to support his election.



Masahito Moriyama, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Photo (2023): [首相官邸ホームページ](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int. Cropped](#)

As a result, **the very minister who received support from that organization ended up requesting a dissolution order.** That led to voices of discontent from employees and believers of related organizations being covered by various media outlets. In the future, it should be further examined whether his action violates the freedom of religion guaranteed by the constitution. In addition, his action raises issues regarding governance.

See [part 1](#), [part 2](#)

Featured image above: Positional relationship between former prime minister Shinzo Abe and the shooter Tetsuya Yamagami on his assassination. Sourced from [Nikkei.com](#). Photo: [Asanagi / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC CC0 1.0 UPDD](#)

"Media Helping Terrorist Reach His Goal" – text: Religion and politics covering team of the Editorial Department of [Sekai Nippo](#).

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