

## FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japanese Media Ignores 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation who Freely Chose Unificationism

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October 11, 2024



*Mieko Ōshita (right) when she was a baby. On the left is her sister, who is one year older*



**Challenging negative media narrative on 2nd-generation faith: A young Japanese lady tells her story, how she of her own free will chose her faith.**

Tokyo, 1st October 2024 - Published as the 29th article in a series in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat - Part 5: The Distorted Image of the "Second-Generation"

### **Reconciliation with Parents and the Path of Faith**

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

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When parents are devout believers of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the Unification Church), society often perceives their children as being in a miserable situation. While the media has widely covered the experiences of second-generation members who have left the church, such as Sayuri Ogawa (a pseudonym), whose father was a local [church](#) leader, the existence of second-generation members who have chosen faith of their own free will has been ignored.

"The very relationship with my parents was what determined whether I stayed in the [church](#) or left."



Cover of Sayuri Ogawa's book

So says Mieko Ōshita (a pseudonym), a woman in her 30s living in Chiba Prefecture. As a child, she lived in Gunma Prefecture, where her father, a [church](#) leader, was so busy with his work that he only came home once every one to two months. Despite his hard work, his pay was low, and her mother supported the family. She couldn't buy the clothes she wanted, and they used second-hand furniture. Her mother, who single-handedly supported the family, sometimes became hysterically angry.

Oshita says with a wry smile,

"Up until elementary school, I thought that life was normal, but as I reached adolescence, I started comparing my home with those of my school friends and realized how different my family was."

Feeling uncomfortable due to the lack of a relaxing space at home, Ms. Oshita gradually immersed herself in club activities and socializing with school friends. She began coming home

late, and sometimes she even sneaked out at night, causing her parents to worry. However, she couldn't understand why staying out late was such a problem.



One version of [Unification Principles](#) in Japanese

The teachings of the [religious organization](#) required both men and women to maintain "purity" in their relationships in preparation for future marriage. However, the strict guidance on chastity made her feel like she had no freedom, and this stirred feelings of rebellion in her. She said,

"At home, I often clashed with my parents, and there were even times when I threw away food right in front of them."

This led to constant conflicts. Not knowing how to deal with her pent-up emotions, she began planning to "stop being a second-generation believer and run away from home" after graduating high school. She packed her favorite clothes into a bag and confided in her friends about her family's faith, asking them for help.

A turning point came just before graduation. While talking on the phone with her sister, who was living away from home, her sister revealed that she too had struggled with their parents and faith during high school, to the point where she became so stressed that she lost the ability to speak and even considered

suicide.

When Mieko Oshita confided her own feelings, her sister revealed that she too had once thought about leaving the [church](#). She recalled,



"My sister told me, 'How can you deny the faith our parents have dedicated their lives to without even understanding it?' That made me decide to learn about the [church](#) properly before making a choice."

While attending a workshop to study the teachings, Ōshita had the chance to talk with an instructor who was an old acquaintance of her parents. The instructor shared stories about how her parents had been in the past. Hearing about her parents' lives from a third-party perspective, she gradually understood her true, hidden feelings:

"I wanted to be loved by my parents, and I rebelled against them because I was lonely."

Later, when Ōshita had the opportunity to talk

things over with her parents, she expressed everything she had been feeling. Her parents apologized, saying, "We are truly sorry."

Although there were times when she felt emotionally unstable, each time, her parents were there to listen and understand her feelings. She says with a smile,

"Not only did I change and grow, but my parents did too."

Regarding the second-generation believers who have left the [Family Federation](#) and appeared in the media, Ōshita shows understanding, saying, "There are probably second-generation members who have felt forced into the faith without genuine feelings, and their anger is completely justified." However, she also offers her perspective:

"It's painful to resent the parents who raised you. That's why, like me, some might question the [church](#) rather than blame their parents. Perhaps there's a desire to turn what is really a parent-child issue into a political or religious issue. Shouldn't we take such complicated feelings into consideration?"

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# Kishida Relying On Info From Archenemy Of Faith

• July 9, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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*Campaigning against minority faith, Kishida administration ignores its voice and relies entirely on information provided by archenemy of faith*

Tokyo, 8th July 2024 – Published as the **sixth article** in a series in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article*

Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat – The Kishida Administration's Reckless Actions

A scapegoat to prolong the life of the government

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



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In an **unprecedented overnight change of policy**, the **Fumio Kishida administration included wrongful acts according to civil law as grounds for requesting the dissolution of religious corporations**. Because of that, the administration could use its “right to collect reports from and ask questions to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) for the first time on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022.

The **right to ask questions was used seven times**, and **interviews were conducted with former members who claimed to be victims**. On 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023, almost one year after Prime Minister Kishida ordered the use of the right to ask questions, the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* decided to **request a court order to dissolve the religious organization**. The following day, 13<sup>th</sup> October, such a request was filed with *Tokyo District Court*.

This is the **first time that the government has requested a dissolution based on acts that are wrongful according to civil law**. Masahito Moriyama (盛山正仁), *Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*, emphasized at a press conference that the damage from large donations had continued for many years, stating that it “had had a negative impact on many people.” In response, the [Family Federation](#) criticized the decision on its website, saying, “It is deeply regrettable that the Japanese government has **made such an important decision based on biased information**.”



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](#)

Prior to the decision, at a meeting of the *Council of Religious Corporations* held on the 12<sup>th</sup> October, Moriyama, *Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*, announced his intention to make the request. It was unanimously recognized as “appropriate”. He **obtained the consent of the Council, which consists of academics and religious leaders**.

However, although the **decision was said to be “unanimous”, it was not without dissenting voices**. There were serious behind-the-scenes developments before the decision was made that cannot be overlooked. The *Sankei Shimbun* reported as follows on 13<sup>th</sup> October,



“A certain Council member selected from the religious community revealed to those around him in September of this year, when the investigation by

Agency for Cultural Affairs was in its final stages, ‘I still do not agree with the government’s change of opinion.’ The religious community was concerned about the **impact on ‘freedom of religion’ due to the legal interpretation that was overturned overnight**. Nevertheless, the Agency for Cultural Affairs appealed during the deliberations at the meeting [of the Council of Religious Corporations], stating **‘if nothing is done about the religious organization, the Cabinet will be blown away.’** The Agency emphasized that the use of the right to ask questions – the basis for requesting a dissolution order – **had to be legitimate**. [Editor’s note: **Only the Council of Religious Corporations could grant them such a legitimacy.**]”

The **Council was established to hear objective and fair opinions from experts**. Advocating from the outset for the **Council to legitimate the dissolution request** is putting the cart before the horse. Moreover, the fact that the reason for this is that “the Cabinet will be blown away” is tantamount to **using a religious organization as a scapegoat for the prolongation of political power**. The administration is only temporary. However, if freedom of religion, which is the foundation of a democratic society, is blatantly violated for the sake of prolonging the administration’s life, it will leave a **legacy of problems for the future**.

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The cover front page of Monthly Seiron December 2023.



Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa. Photo: Sekai Nippo



Professor Tsutomu Nishioka. Photo: U.S. Department of State / Wikimedia Commons. *Public domain image. Cropped.*

December 2023

issue of the monthly magazine Seiron (正論) featured a special section titled "Doubts about the Dissolution Order Request". In an article titled "Why the Government's Approach is Problematic," Haruhisa Nakagawa (中川晴久), secretary of the Tokyo Christian Theological Institute, has a discussion with Tsutomu Nishioka (西岡力), professor at the Institute of Moral Science of the Ethics and Moral Education Foundation.

Criticizing the government, Nakagawa said in their discussion,

"For example, in the current request for a dissolution order, **evidence, court documents, and various insights collected by the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (Zenkoku Benren) are being used.** Some may say, 'It's based on facts, so there's no problem.' However, it's **highly questionable that the government is advocating for an organization's claims – especially a private group that has long been at odds with the religious organization – and relying on their information.** It raises **serious concerns about procedural impartiality.**"

Nishioka commented,

"There were many religious figures among the members of the Council of Religious Corporations. There was a former president of the university where I used to work. He was a Protestant pastor I know well. There was also a General Secretary from the United Church of Christ in Japan, as well as representatives from Shintoism and Buddhism. It's **shocking and hard to believe that all of those individuals, without any dissent, unanimously supported it.** What exactly are their thoughts on freedom of religion?"

In addition, Nishioka cited an article in the Sankei Shimbun newspaper and raised serious concerns, saying,

"It seems that **officials from the Agency for Cultural Affairs secretly went to the homes of the members of Council of Religious Corporations, persuading them one by one.** Could that be why religious figures, especially Protestant pastors, hardly voiced any dissent? Hearing this, I get a strong feeling of fear and disbelief."

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**Featured image** above: The Council of Religious Corporations discussing the use of the questioning rights by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology against the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (previously known as the Unification Church) – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

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