

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: UN Report - Japan Violates Human Rights

Knut Holdhus
December 25, 2024



Patricia Duval presenting her report in Geneva, Switzerland September 25, 2024

International human rights expert exposes in report to UN how Japan violates rights of 600,000 members of religious minority Family Federation

Tokyo, 23rd December 2024 - Published as the 55th 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 7: Religion in Japan in a Global Context

Dissolution Proceedings Violate International Standards

French Human Rights Lawyer Reports to the UN

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



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See part 1 of the series: The Kishida Administration's Reckless Actions: [1st article](#), [2nd article](#), [3rd article](#), [4th article](#), [5th article](#), [6th article](#)

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See part 3: Believers Suffering Discrimination and Human Rights Violations: [16th article](#), [17th article](#), [18th article](#), [19th article](#), [20th article](#), [21st article](#), [22nd article](#)

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See part 6: Voices of Religious Leaders: [39th article](#), [40th article](#), [41st article](#), [42nd article](#), [43rd article](#), [44th article](#), [45th article](#), [46th article](#)

See part 7: Religion in Japan in a Global Context: [47th article](#), [48th article](#), [49th article](#), [50th article](#), [51st article](#), [52nd article](#), [53rd article](#), [54th article](#)



Sign at the entrance of the headquarters of the [Family Federation](#) of Japan in Shibuya, Tokyo

Patricia Duval, a French international lawyer specializing in human rights issues, submitted a [report to the United Nations](#) in September, calling for reforms. She stated that the Japanese government's request for a dissolution order against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU, formerly the [Unification Church](#)) "violates international human rights law in many respects and infringes upon treaties Japan has ratified to guarantee fundamental rights and freedoms."

At a presentation in Geneva, Switzerland, Duval highlighted that [civil lawsuits demanding the return of donations](#) from the [Family Federation](#) stem from former members who left the [church](#) after experiencing "[abduction and forcible faith-breaking](#) (deprogramming)". She emphasized that these lawsuits are being used by the Japanese government as grounds to initiate currently pending dissolution proceedings against the [church](#).

The Human Rights Committee, which oversees the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), has [called on the Japanese government](#) to make amends, claiming that it has "unlawfully restricted the right to freedom of religion or belief on the basis of the 'public welfare'." In its recommendations, the committee expressed concern that the "concept of 'public welfare' is vague and open-ended" and that it "may allow for restrictions that go beyond what is permissible."

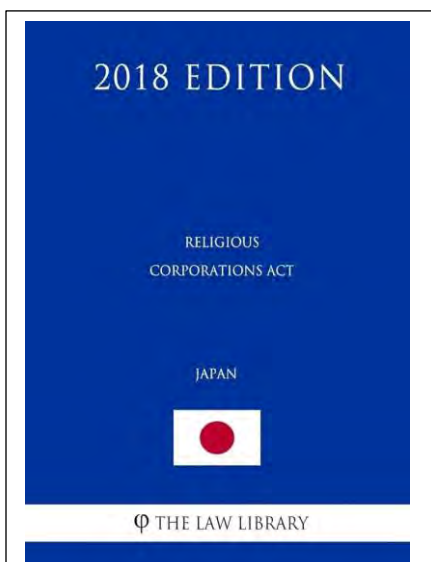


From header of the [webpage](#) of the Human Rights Committee, a subpage on the site of the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

However, according to Duval, the Japanese government has ignored these recommendations. She pointed out that Japan's Religious Corporations Act, which justifies dissolution orders based on "violations of public welfare", must be repealed to align with international human rights standards.

Furthermore, following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三), Patricia Duval pointed out that "a media onslaught against the former Unification Church, led by the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (Zenkoku-benren), began." This led to many cases of believers being discriminated against, subjected to domestic violence, and divorced have occurred.

The National Network used "spiritual sales" as a pretext to criticize the [Family Federation](#), a narrative amplified by the media to sway public opinion. This media frenzy, in turn, pressured the Japanese government to sever all ties with the [church](#), culminating in the initiation of dissolution proceedings. Duval described how this cycle extended to the judiciary, which, under pressure from the media and public opinion, has repeatedly handed down rulings unfavorable to the [church](#).



Front page of 2018 English version of Religious Corporations Act of Japan

Concerning the 32 lawsuits cited as grounds for the dissolution request, Duval noted two major issues:

Courts relied on the discredited theory of "mental manipulation" (mind control).

The "social acceptability" standard used to determine the legality of donation solicitation was deemed "arbitrary and vague".

These ambiguous and discriminatory concepts, Duval argued, have been exploited to restrict the former [Unification Church](#)'s right to proselytize. Furthermore, judges displayed a "presumption of guilt" against believers, often ignoring their claims.

The report also criticized "anti-cult" counseling in schools, describing it as a new form of "state-led deprogramming" that doesn't involve physical abduction but still violates the rights of religious "second-generation" individuals. Such measures were condemned for infringing on parents' rights to educate their children based on their faith, as guaranteed under human rights covenants.



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Considering the series of actions taken by the government, one cannot shake the impression that this is a state-led project aimed at eradicating a [specific religious organization](#). Some media outlets have reported on the closed-door hearings at the Tokyo District Court regarding the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology's (MEXT) request for a dissolution order against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). During witness examinations involving former and current believers, current members reportedly argued that "the claims made by former members contain falsehoods."



Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan

On the other hand, regarding the Japanese government's justification for restricting "freedom to manifest religion or belief", it was pointed out that International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) does not include "public welfare" or "social acceptability" as valid grounds. The Japanese government was accused of "continuing to violate the UN covenants it has signed and ratified."

Could MEXT be leveraging former members to support its arbitrary assertions? Continuing to violate UN covenants risks Japan being perceived by the international community as a nation that suppresses religious freedom.

End of part 7: Religion in Japan in a Global Context

See part 1 of the series: The Kishida Administration's Reckless Actions: [1st article](#), [2nd article](#), [3rd article](#), [4th article](#), [5th article](#), [6th article](#)

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See part 3: Believers Suffering Discrimination and Human Rights Violations: [16th article](#), [17th article](#), [18th article](#), [19th article](#), [20th article](#), [21st article](#), [22nd article](#)

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See part 6: Voices of Religious Leaders: [39th article](#), [40th article](#), [41st article](#), [42nd article](#), [43rd article](#), [44th article](#), [45th article](#), [46th article](#)

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Politicians, Lawyers, And Criminal Faith-Breakers

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脱会支援者からヒアリング 党旧統一教会被害 対策本部会合

From the official website of the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) where it 19th August 2022, published news regarding a public hearing to which professional faith-breaker Takashi Miyamura was invited, the seventh meeting of the party's task force on alleged harm caused by the former Unification Church. Photo: Screenshot

Tokyo paper exposes how members of the Diet and network of lawyers have close ties to professional faith-breakers earning large amounts on abductions, forcible detentions, and coercive manipulation of members of the Family Federation in Japan

Tokyo, 21st December 2024 – Published as the **54th article** in a series in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

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The Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) invited to a public hearing



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In cases involving [abduction and confinement](#), members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) were subjected to daily "persuasion" by their parents, faith-breakers, pastors, former members, and others. Even when these individuals held captive had "realized what the 'errors' of the church and its doctrines were" and expressed a desire to leave, their freedom was not immediately restored. This was because numerous "tests of commitment" were imposed to confirm their intent to leave.

This process can be described as rewriting the lives of "former members" from an anti-[Family Federation](#) perspective. At this stage, the media and lawyers play crucial roles.

In the case of Dr. Hirohisa Koide (小出浩久), he was given specific instructions by pastor Yasutomu Matsunaga (松永堡智):

1. Organize and correct the errors of the Divine Principle (the church's doctrine).
2. Learn the correct interpretation of the Bible.
3. Restore trust in parent-child relationships.
4. Recover from harm.
5. Reintegrate into society.

Of these, particular attention is drawn to points 1, 4, and 5.

For "organizing errors," individuals were made to read critical works such as *The Fear of Mind Control* (published by Koyu Shuppan) by Sadao Asami (浅見定雄), a leading critic of the church, and other similar materials. They were then required to write reflective essays, summarize their personal experiences of faith (e.g., divine encounters, spiritual experiences), and state how they currently felt about these.



Faith-breaker: pastor **Yasutomu Matsunaga** (松永康智) of the Niitsu Evangelical Christian Church. Photo: FFWPU



Hirohisa Koide telling his story 10th Sep. 2023 in Tokyo. Photo: Screenshot from YouTube video by 'Japanese Victims'

For "recovery from harm", individuals had to first write a "resignation statement" and list the names, affiliated churches, and addresses of church members they knew. They were also required to list the names of people who introduced them to products from companies related to the Unification Movement and the amounts they spent on such items. These lists were used to manipulate other believers into leaving and to sue the [Family Federation](#) for compensation.

Through this process, after confirming the intent to leave the church, individuals

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would gradually gain their freedom, such as being allowed to go out accompanied by their parents. At the same time, full-fledged efforts toward "recovery from harm" and "social reintegration" (rehabilitation) would

begin.

At this stage, journalist Yoshifu Arita (有田芳生) – currently a member of the House of Representatives for the Constitutional Democratic Party) and a reporter for the Weekly Bunshun "interviewed" Dr. Koide by going through Takashi Miyamura. [Editor's note: Arita was born 1952, named Yoshifu after Joseph Stalin, and is journalist, writer, anti-religious activist and politician for Japanese Communist Party 1990-2007, elected to House of Councillors (Upper House) in the Diet 2010-2022 for Constitutional Democratic Party and to House of Representatives (Lower House) for the same party in 2024]



Yoshifu Arita (有田芳生) giving a speech on the street in front of Hachioji Station in Tokyo 14th October 2024. Photo: Noukei314 / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int. Cropped

Around July 1993, they conducted a 3 to 4-hour interview, after which, Koide recalls,

"Both of them (Arita and the Weekly Bunshun reporter) said, 'It's amazing that you endured being confined for a year.'"

They were aware that Koide had been abducted and confined. However, the article published in the 16th September 1993 issue of the magazine made no mention of the abduction or confinement.



Chinami Nishimura from the Constitutional Democracy Party (CDP), 11th Sept. 2023. Photo: 内閣府男女共同参画局ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int. Cropped

Arita described Miyamura as "pure like a child, unpretentious, [...]" suggesting a close relationship. Indeed, on 18th August 2022, Miyamura participated in the seventh meeting of the CDP's task force – (led by Representative Chinami Nishimura (西村智奈美) – on damages caused by the former **Unification Church**. According to the CDP's official website, Miyamura attended as "Takashi Miyamura, who has been supporting individuals in leaving the former **Unification Church**." Arita was also present.

After the mass media reported on a daily basis that the shooter of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) had spoken out about his hatred for the **Family Federation**, the CDP set up a task force and conducted hearings with various government agencies. Simultaneously,

starting with Miyamura on the same day, they began interviewing former members, their families, and second-generation individuals. Miyamura was the first to testify.

Miyamura was found liable in a civil suit brought by Toru Goto (後藤徹氏), who was confined for 12 years and five months starting in September 1995 and coerced to leave the church (Supreme Court ruling on 29th September 2015). The court recognized Miyamura's unlawful acts of "instigation" or "aiding and abetting" the abduction and confinement carried out by Goto's relatives and ordered Miyamura to pay compensation. The CDP must have been aware of this fact. Even if they had the backing of Arita, who also served as a member of the House of Councillors for the CDP, it is fair to say that the CDP's sense of human rights has fallen to new lows.



Photo used at the panel exhibition: **Toru Goto** in 2008, barely able to move after being held in forcible detention by his own family in league with professional faith-breakers for more than 12 years. Photo: Kazuhiro Yanemoto / Japanese Victims'





Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion

After the hearing, Michihiro Ishibashi (石橋通宏), a CDP member of the House of Councillors, told reporters, "We received valuable insights from Takashi Miyamura on how difficult it is to leave when completely under mind control."

Michihiro Ishibashi (石橋通宏) from the CDP 21st April 2024. Photo: 石垣のりこ事務所/Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp. Cropped

While the theory of mind control has long been dismissed in Western countries, in abduction and confinement cases, it becomes according to Toru Goto "a highly convenient theory for justifying forcible faith-breaking, as individuals are

considered incapable of thinking for themselves and thus unable to leave voluntarily." This claim entirely disregards the human rights of Family Federation members, but the biased nature of such hearings seems to prevent any acknowledgment of this reality.

Miyamura also set a condition for Koide's attendance at his younger brother's wedding, scheduled for September 1993:

"You must appear on an upcoming TBS [Tokyo Broadcasting System] special report and clearly demonstrate a confrontational stance against the church and the hospital."

Koide agreed, and a recording session took place on the banks of the Shinano River on 5th September. The program was aired on 13th September.

During this process, the TBS director remarked,

"Miyamura has been guiding us on various matters related to the Unification Church."

After the filming, staff members commented,

"We've had a long relationship with Miyamura. [...] we'd love to create a special feature program about him someday."



The logo of TBS

Given this mutually beneficial relationship with Miyamura, it would be highly unlikely for TBS to address the issue of abduction and confinement.

Collaboration between lawyers' network and faith-breakers: A double standard on human rights



Professional faith-breaker **Takashi Miyamura** (宮村峻), responsible for hundreds of deprogrammings based on abduction and forcible detention. He is said to have been advisor to the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP). Photo: FFWPU

A similar mutually beneficial relationship with Takashi Miyamura can also be observed among the lawyers of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS). These lawyers often relied on Miyamura and others to introduce them to "victims", former church members seeking "recovery from damages".

Around late September of that year, Koide was finally allowed to attend services accompanied by his father



One of the architects of new law and advisor to the Japanese authorities: **Masaki Kito** (紀藤正樹), one of the hostile lawyers of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (全国霊感商法被害対策弁連) and Nationwide Unification Church Damage Countermeasures Legal Team (全国統一教会被害対策弁護団). Photo: Screenshot / Bitter Winter

at pastor Yasutomo Matsunaga's church. Miyamura introduced him to two NNLASS lawyers, Hiroshi Yamaguchi (山口広) and Masaki Kito (紀藤正樹). Initially, they met at a lawyer's office in Niigata, as requested by Miyamura. Afterward, they



Hiroshi Yamaguchi, activist leftwing lawyer and founder and leading member of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales

met monthly in Tokyo. (NNLASS), *Photo: Screenshot / Bitter Winter*

At each meeting, the two lawyers would say,

"It should be okay to let him act freely by now. Well, it's best to check with Miyamura about that."

This indicated that they were well aware of Koide living under his parents' surveillance and understood Miyamura's role. Yamaguchi and Kito were not unaware at the time that Miyamura had incited and assisted in the abduction and confinement of [Family Federation](#) members.

Yoshiro Ito (伊藤芳朗), another lawyer who worked with Yamaguchi and Kito at NNLASS, addressed this in a testimony submitted for Toru Goto's trial. In an interview, Ito recounted that he told Yamaguchi,

"Miyamura's methods are problematic."

Then, Yamaguchi replied,

"Our role is to get involved after members leave. We should not involve ourselves in what happens before they leave."

When asked whether Yamaguchi knew about Miyamura's abduction and confinement tactics, Ito answered, "Of course!" He described Yamaguchi's response as "cunning".

Furthermore, Ito testified that Miyamura exclusively referred multi-billion-yen "high-value cases" involving lawsuits against the [church](#) to Masaki Kito, indicating a close relationship between the two.

Yoshiro Ito stated,

"Takashi Miyamura's activities for encouraging members to leave were nothing more than profit-driven schemes disguised as 'exit assistance'. In reality, they amounted to abduction, confinement, and forcible faith-breaking."

Backed by support from Yamaguchi and Kito, among others, Yoshiro Ito testified that he was able to exclude Miyamura from the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (NNLASS) from 1994 until 2005, when Ito himself resigned from the organization. However, he also noted that Masaki Kito maintained contact with Miyamura, and after Ito's resignation, Miyamura seemingly regained his connection with NNLASS.

NNLASS included lawyers such as Masaki Gouro (郷路征記), who led a defense team of 122 attorneys to oppose a habeas corpus petition [[See editor's note below](#)] filed on behalf of Tadashi Yoshimura (吉村正). Yoshimura, a Kyoto University graduate and member of the [Unification Church](#), was abducted in Kyoto in 1987 and confined in an iron-barred apartment belonging to Mitsuo Toda (戸田美津男), a professional faith-breaker, in Hokkaido.

Due to the defense team's delays, Yoshimura was forced to escape on his own and filed a criminal complaint. Toda admitted in a written apology dated 10th November 1988, that he had engaged in "abduction, confinement, and coercive faith-breaking", acknowledging that such actions violated criminal law. This admission spared him from criminal punishment. However, Gouro consistently denied any involvement in abduction or confinement.

The coercive methods used against thousands of [Family Federation](#) members to force them to renounce their faith serve as a stark indicator of Japan's human rights situation.

Since the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the mass media – including television and newspapers – has extensively reported on the [Family Federation](#), with the government and various political parties also addressing the issue. While the media has highlighted problems such as donation-related controversies and issues faced by "second-generation members", it has completely avoided reporting on the issue of abduction and confinement except for coverage in a few weekly magazines, and if the issue was raised by some Diet members. This demonstrates a clear double standard in addressing human rights issues.

Additionally, lawsuits and claims for damages filed by former members against the [church](#), following their renunciation of faith after abduction and confinement, have garnered significant attention from the government, political parties, and the media. However, these claims stem from a background of prolonged confinement and deprivation of freedom. Accepting such claims at face value raises questions about fairness and legitimacy. How is this different from the methods used in countries like China and North Korea to extract confessions through prolonged detention? It is difficult to view such practices as consistent with the values of a nation that prides itself on human rights and

with the values of a nation that prides itself on human rights and democracy.

[Editor's note: A ***habeas corpus petition*** is a legal request to a court, usually made by someone who is detained or imprisoned, asking the court to determine whether their detention or imprisonment is lawful. The main purpose of a habeas corpus petition is to protect individuals from unlawful or arbitrary detention.

The detainee, or someone acting on their behalf (such as a lawyer or family member), files the petition with a court. The court reviews the petition and may issue a writ of habeas corpus, compelling the custodian (such as a prison warden or government authority) to bring the detainee before the court. At the hearing, the custodian must provide legal justification for the detention. If the court finds the detention unlawful, it may order the detainee's release.

Habeas corpus is considered a cornerstone of individual liberty and rule of law. It is enshrined in many constitutions and international human rights frameworks, including the U.S. Constitution (Article I, Section 9).]

Featured image above: From the official website of the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) where it 18th August 2022, published news regarding a public hearing to which professional faith-breaker Takashi Miyamura was invited, the seventh meeting of the party's task force on alleged harm caused by the former *Unification Church*. Photo: Screenshot

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See **part 3: Believers Suffering Discrimination and Human Rights Violations**: [16th article](#), [17th article](#), [18th article](#), [19th article](#), [20th article](#), [21st article](#), [22nd article](#)

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