

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japanese Government's Flawed, Deceptive Evidence Gathering

Knut Holdhus
February 11, 2025



Yukie Sugiya (pseudonym) speaks in an interview with the [Sekai Nippo](#) in the northern city of Sapporo



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Tokyo paper: Serious flaws suggest pattern of careless or even deceptive evidence gathering by ministry spearheading state persecution of religious minority the Family Federation

Tokyo, 10th February 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

[Scoop 2] Evidence for Dissolution Included Without Consent

"No Confirmation," says Angry Current Member - Former Members of Different Religions Also Included

Allegations of Fabrications in Ministry of Education's Statements on Family Federation Dissolution Order Request

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

See also ["Poorly Compiled Evidence Including Falsehoods"](#)



Former entrance of the Tokyo government building housing MEXT, the Japan Sports Agency, and the Agency for Cultural Affairs - Chiyoda, Tokyo

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Concerns have arisen regarding the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and its submission of statements as evidence to the Tokyo District Court in support of a dissolution order for the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). Individuals whose names appear in the submitted evidence have reported to this newspaper that they were neither consulted nor did they provide statements aligning with what was submitted.

A new allegation has surfaced from a person claiming she was unknowingly included as part of the ministry's evidence for the dissolution order. Additionally, it has come to light that former members of religious groups unrelated to the [Family Federation](#) were included as "victims" in the statements. This

suggests a pattern of careless or even deceptive evidence gathering by MEXT.

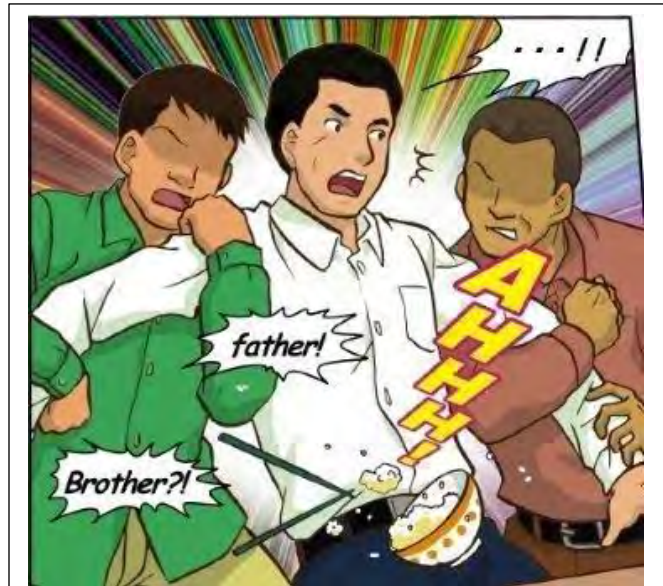


"My words were misused" - a devout member's anger

Yukie Sugiyu (pseudonym), a woman in her 70s living in Sapporo, Hokkaido, and a current member of the [Family Federation](#), says,

"I have never been so disrespected. My statements were twisted, and I feel deeply hurt."

Sugiyu, who regularly attends her local church, was shocked to learn last year that court documents she had been involved with were being used as evidence in MEXT's request for a dissolution order. The documents in question date back to 1988 when former [Family Federation](#) members sued the [organization](#) in the Sapporo District Court. Sugiyu had testified in that case as a witness supporting the [Family Federation](#).



Drawing depicting kidnapping of a member of the Family Federation in Japan

Sugiyu was once close to one of the plaintiffs, a former member who had left the [organization](#), claiming its teachings were flawed. However, in her testimony, Sugiyu stated that the woman had suddenly become unreachable for about a year, leading her to believe that the real reason for her departure was abduction and confinement by her relatives.

Sugiyu testified in court to defend her faith and to expose the reality of [coercive faith-breaking](#) through abduction and confinement. Despite this, her testimony has now been submitted as "victim evidence" supporting the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#) - without any prior consultation or confirmation from MEXT. She said angrily,

"The people trying to dissolve the [Family Federation](#) are twisting the narrative in their favor. This is beyond common sense!"

She is now working with the [Family Federation](#) to demand that MEXT remove her testimony from its evidence.

Unrelated religious group's former member also included as a "victim"



Anti-religious legislation allows relatives of donors to claim refund decades later! Here, a Japanese woman offering a donation at a meeting

Another case has emerged in western Japan, further exposing the flaws in MEXT's evidence gathering. An investigation into the membership records of a woman who contributed a statement to MEXT found no trace of her ever having been affiliated with the [Family Federation](#).

Upon further inquiry, it was discovered that nearly 20 years ago, the woman had been recruited into a completely different religious organization, Group A, and had made monetary donations there. She had attended a gathering of Group A in a city in western Japan, where she met the group's leader. Later, she encountered a member of yet another religious group, Group B, and gradually distanced herself from Group A due to the new acquaintance's influence.

Despite never being a [Family Federation](#) member or donating to it, the woman had

previously been a notary in a collective legal negotiation against the [Family Federation](#), represented by lawyers affiliated with the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales. It appears these lawyers introduced her to MEXT as a "victim" of the [Family Federation](#).

MEXT officials are expected to verify the backgrounds of those who contribute statements, either through direct interviews or phone calls. If they failed to distinguish between religious organizations, this suggests negligence. If they knowingly included a false victim, it raises serious ethical concerns.

Son's lawsuit for refund of donations already dismissed

On 21st January 2025, [this newspaper reported](#) on a separate case where a believer had voluntarily donated money, only for non-believing family members to later claim the donation was forced and demand a refund. The statement supporting the dissolution order falsely portrayed the believer as a victim.

A similar pattern appears in the case of Hanako Tanaka (pseudonym), a devout believer from the Kansai region. Tanaka actively practiced her faith and made donations until her passing a few years ago. She lived alone but cherished her friendships with fellow believers.

After her death, her estranged son discovered [Family Federation](#) books and memorabilia among her belongings. He then filed a lawsuit seeking to reclaim her donations, claiming his mother had been manipulated. However, the court dismissed his claim, ruling that there was no evidence of coercion.

Despite the court rejecting the son's claim, his statement still appears among the evidence collected by MEXT. This contradicts MEXT's stated approach of handling the dissolution order request "with caution" and raises concerns about its process, especially given the grave implications of dissolving a religious corporation through closed-door proceedings.

Conclusion

MEXT's handling of evidence for the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#) appears deeply flawed, involving misuse of statements, inclusion of false victims, and lack of verification. If the ministry is indeed fabricating or manipulating testimonies, it calls into question the legitimacy of the entire dissolution request.

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New Law Manufacturing "Victims", Dividing Families

• February 10, 2025 • Knut Holdhus

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Expert on international human rights shocked by outrageous new anti-religious Japanese law that manufactures "victims" entitled to go to court to obtain large compensation for donations made years, even decades earlier



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International Human Rights Lawyer Patricia Duval

by the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

It has been reported that the statement submitted by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to the Tokyo District Court as evidence in its request for a dissolution order against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) contained fabricated testimonies. Amid such reports, French international human rights lawyer Patricia Duval, who is currently visiting Japan, provided her insights.



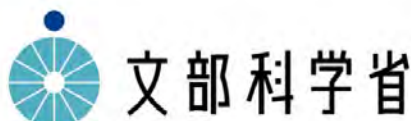
The report in *Sekai Nippo* 21st January 2025 on alleged fabrications in controversial statements submitted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to Tokyo District Court. The report contains an interview with Miyuki Kawaguchi (pseudonym).

Duval also directly met with Miyuki Kawaguchi (pseudonym), who was previously [interviewed by our newspaper](#) on 21st January. Kawaguchi had spoken with her elderly mother, who had signed the MEXT statement, and the mother denied ever having said what was written in the document.

Q: What was your impression after meeting face-to-face with Miyuki Kawaguchi, who also spoke to our newspaper and Kyodo News?

I heard her testimony directly. As reported, it was the mother who introduced her daughter to the [church](#), and the two had lived a life of faith together for over 30 years.

However, the MEXT statement, which the mother supposedly signed, claimed that she had been coerced by her daughter into making donations long ago, and that she wished for the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#).



Symbol of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan. Photo: [文部科学省 \(MEXT Japan\) / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

Originally, Kawaguchi's brother did not entirely share the faith of his mother and sister, but he also never actively opposed it. However, following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the media became flooded with one-sided criticism of the [Family Federation](#). This drastically changed his stance.

Following MEXT's request for a dissolution order, a new law called the *Special Act on Relief for Victims of Certain Unlawful Acts* was enacted at the end of the previous year. This law, effectively targeting the [Family Federation](#), allows individuals to more easily participate in collective negotiations for donation-related damages with government support.



Header of publication on operations of the Japan Legal Support Center, issued by Ministry of Justice

It seems that the brother consulted *Houterasu* (Japan Legal Support Center), and MEXT later contacted their mother. After a lengthy interview, a statement was prepared.

What a shocking development! This new law has instead caused division within this family. The donations that the mother once made out of her faith were reframed – through MEXT's intervention – as coerced contributions made under her daughter's influence.

Furthermore, the suspicion that MEXT fabricated the testimony surfaced when a *Kyodo News* report was published by *Sankei Shimbun*. After this, the woman's sons reportedly visited her and said, "At least read the first page of the statement." They emphasized that it contained her handwritten signature, seemingly hoping for a selective interpretation of the facts. However,



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doubts deepened that the statement had been submitted without the mother fully verifying its contents. *Agency*

As a result, the daughter was forced to submit a "counter-statement" to the *Tokyo District Court* through the [Family Federation](#), testifying to the true facts. The judge must now compare the two statements and consider the new family conflict caused by the new law.

In reality, the mother, who is over 90 years old, is caught in the middle of a conflict between her sons and her daughter. Should she be forced to abandon her faith? No, the government should remain neutral, respecting both the rights of believers and non-believers. In fact, the mother's freedom of religion should be protected.

The government likely intended to help victims when it enacted the new law, but in practice, it has become an authority that rewrites the past lives of elderly individuals. Instead of protecting the mother, it has brought her new suffering in her final years.

The New Law Manufactures "Victims"

Q: Isn't it ironic that the new law, rather than providing relief, is instead creating tragedies in believers' families?

As seen in the Kawaguchi case, the media's relentless focus on criticizing the [Family Federation](#) has caused significant harm to society. In an environment where there is little tolerance for new religious movements, believers' past donations – made as religious acts – have now been reframed as cases of "financial fraud", fostering resentment among their relatives.



Anti-religious legislation allows relatives of donors to claim refund decades later! Here, a Japanese woman offering a donation at a meeting. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, 18th November 2024.

With the enactment of the *Special Act on Relief for Victims of Certain Unlawful Acts*, which covers litigation costs for claimants, Ms. Kawaguchi's brother decided to pursue a refund claim. This government system has incited families into legal action, transforming past events into "victimization" retroactively. Shockingly, donations made on average 20 years ago – and in some cases up to 60 years ago – are now being reported as "damages".

During my visit to Japan, I was able to directly confirm how this new law is being applied alongside the *Tokyo District Court's* hearings on MEXT's dissolution order request.

The total amount of claims in the collective lawsuits coordinated by the *National Lawyers Network* against the [Unification Church](#) has now reached 5 billion yen (approximately \$33 million). In the future, additional claims could be created at any time. This systematic approach is effectively pushing the [Family Federation](#) toward [financial collapse](#).

Featured image above: Patricia Duval – Member of the Paris Bar Association, specializing in international human rights law. She obtained a degree in public law from the Sorbonne University in France. She has defended the rights of religious minorities and believers both in France and internationally, including in international organizations such as the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the Council of Europe (CoE), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations. She has also published numerous academic papers on religion and freedom of belief. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

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