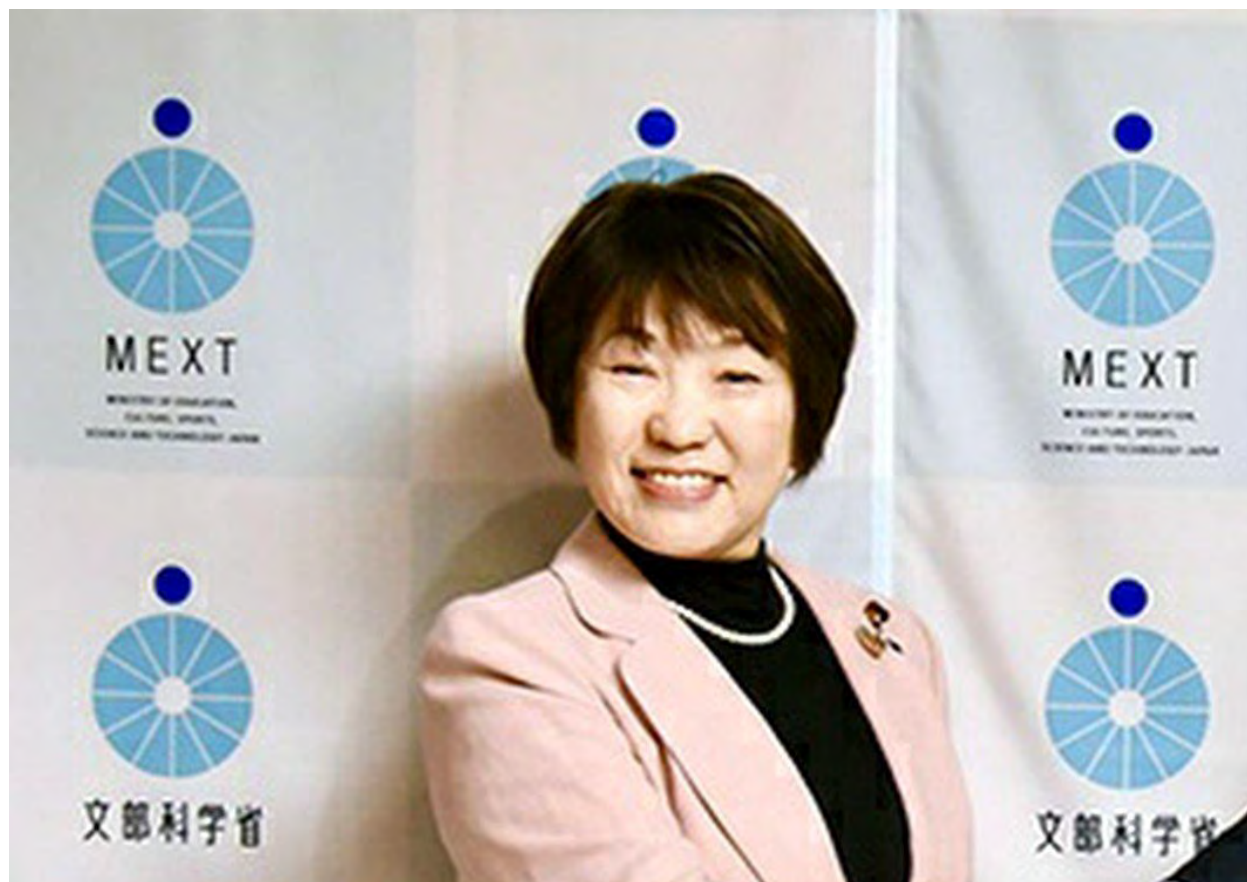


FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan Dismisses U.S. Religious Freedom Concerns

Knut Holdhus
February 28, 2025



Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Toshiko Abe Feb. 17, 2025

Japan rejects U.S. criticism and religious freedom concerns over request to dissolve large religious minority the Family Federation



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Tokyo, 27th February 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Government Claims Dissolution Order Against Family Federation Does Not Violate Religious Freedom

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

Response to opposition from U.S. religious adviser

The Japanese government has released a written response regarding the opposition expressed by Paula White, religious adviser to President Trump, against the Japanese government's request for a dissolution order against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)).



Rev. Paula White, 11th June 2021 in Grapevine, Texas

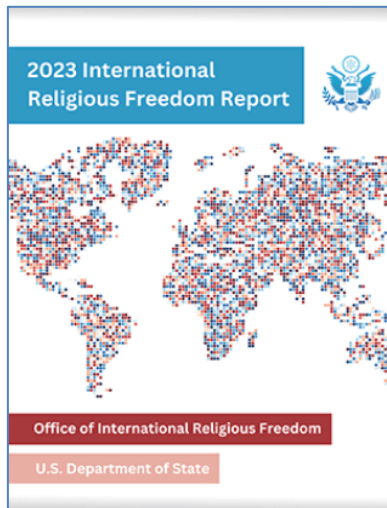
White had cited reports from the U.S. State Department and other sources criticizing a dissolution order. The government's response was made public in reply to a formal [inquiry submitted](#) on 7th February by Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡参), a member of the House of Councilors from the NHK Party.

In December of last year, White sent a [video message](#) to a [seminar](#) held by the Japanese Committee of the International Religious Freedom Coalition (ICRF). In her message, she stated that a UN Special Rapporteur on religious freedom had [officially requested](#) to visit Japan to investigate potential violations of religious freedom, but the request was denied by the Japanese government.

In [his inquiry](#), Hamada asked whether the government would accept an investigation by the UN rapporteur. The government's written response acknowledged that the video message existed but avoided commenting on its stance regarding the [request](#).



Senator Satoshi Hamada (浜田 聡, House of Councillors, NHK Party) here speaking in Yokohama City, Japan on 26th January 2025



U.S. Department of State's 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom, published June 26, 2024.

Additionally, in response to Hamada's question about the U.S. State Department's [annual report on religious freedom](#), the government stated that it was aware of the report but asserted that the request to dissolve the [Family Federation](#) does not violate Article 20 of Japan's Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion.

The [U.S. State Department's report](#), published in June last year, noted that the U.S. Embassy in Japan had closely monitored issues related to the [Family Federation](#) and Jehovah's Witnesses. The report stated that embassy officials had engaged with Japanese lawmakers, regulatory authorities, affected individuals, and religious representatives to emphasize the importance of religious freedom.

Concerns over religious freedom and fabricated testimonies

If a religious organization is dissolved, its clergy would lose their positions, and assets, including places of worship, could be lost, potentially depriving believers of their places of worship. According to official statements from the [Family Federation](#), the [organization](#) has approximately 560,000 followers, raising concerns about the impact on religious freedom.



Meanwhile, regarding the request for the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#), it has come to light - through [reports in this paper](#) - that some of the testimonies submitted as evidence by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to the Tokyo District Court were fabricated.

On 19th February 2025, the [religious organization](#) released a report from its legal representatives titled MEXT's Fabrication of False Evidence, which pointed out that some individuals listed in the statements either denied writing them or had no record of membership in the [organization](#).

Regarding this issue, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Toshiko Abe (阿部 俊子) stated at a press conference on 21st February that the dissolution order request had been appropriately carried out. She did not, however, address the accuracy of the submitted testimonies.

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“I Never Wrote This” – Fabricated Evidence In Court?

• February 27, 2025 • Knut Holdhus



Fabricated evidence? Woman denies signing government’s document presented in court in support of dissolution of religious minority the Family Federation



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

Tokyo, 27th February 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article.*

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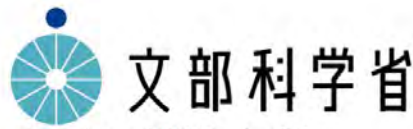
by the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

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The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) submitted a written statement as evidence in its request to the Tokyo District Court for the dissolution of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). However, our newspaper received information from the person who allegedly signed the document, stating, "I did not write this," and "It is not true." We conducted a direct interview with the named individual.



Allegations of MEXT submitting evidence without checking the facts. Here, the symbol of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan. Photo: [文部科学省 \(MEXT Japan\) / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

The interviewee was Haruyo Matsushima (pseudonym, in her 70s), the mother of Mayumi Adachi (pseudonym), a practicing member of the [Family Federation](#) residing in Nerima Ward, Tokyo. According to Matsushima, she was informed by her daughter Adachi that a written statement in her name had been submitted by MEXT. Matsushima firmly denied authoring it, stating,

"I did not write this."

While she acknowledged that the signature on the document appeared to be in her handwriting, she insisted,

"I have no memory of signing it."

Furthermore, she stated that she had "never read the document" and had "never been asked to verify it."

Matsushima's husband, at the invitation of their daughter Adachi, had participated in the activities of the [religious organization](#) and made financial donations. However, he later became distrustful of the [organization](#) and, with the assistance of attorney Hiroshi Yamaguchi (山口広) from the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (Zenkoku Benren), filed a claim for a refund of his donations. The settlement payment has already been completed.



Hiroshi Yamaguchi, activist leftwing lawyer and founder and leading member of *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (NNLASS). Photo: [Screenshot / Bitter Winter](#)

The written statement in Haruyo Matsushima's name was one of the attached documents sent to the [Family Federation](#) in October 2022 when her husband filed a request for a donation refund. It was presented as a formalized record of Matsushima's "testimony," implying that she had also requested the [religious organization](#) to refund the money to her husband.

However, when Matsushima reviewed the document for the first time through her daughter Adachi, she found several discrepancies with her own understanding.

Matsushima has long opposed her daughter Adachi's faith, questioning the [religious organization's](#) large financial donations and [mass wedding](#) ceremonies. She expressed skepticism, stating, "I have only a negative impression of the [Unification Church](#)." While she wants to respect her daughter's decisions, she revealed her emotional distress, saying, "I have felt deeply hurt, unable to discuss the issue with my family or anyone around me."

Despite her concerns about the [religious organization](#), Matsushima has maintained a neutral stance regarding her husband's demand for a refund, explaining,

"It doesn't make sense to ask for money back after having agreed to donate it in the first place."

She also expressed reluctance toward holding the [religious organization](#) accountable in such a manner.

Regarding the signature on the document, Matsushima stated that if she had signed it, it was likely done at home. However, she had no memory of being presented with a document with only the signature

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section left empty, nor did she recall being asked to sign anything by her husband. Additionally, she stated,

"I have never met Attorney Yamaguchi, nor have I ever visited his office."

Given these statements, there is a possibility that MEXT, having obtained the document from Zenkoku Benren, failed to conduct proper fact-checking or verification with the individuals involved before submitting it as a victim's testimony in support of dissolving the [religious organization](#). The procedural "darkness" surrounding this non-contentious case [\[See editor's note below\]](#) that is not a public trial appears to be deep.

[Editor's note: A non-contentious case refers to a legal matter where there is no dispute between parties. These cases typically involve administrative, procedural, or uncontested legal actions, such as **probate (handling a deceased person's estate), uncontested divorces, adoption, or registering a trademark**. Since there are no opposing parties or legal conflicts, these cases usually proceed smoothly through the legal system without litigation.]

Featured image above: Haruyo Matsushima (pseudonym, rear) and her daughter Mayumi Adachi (pseudonym) speaking in an interview in Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀).

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