

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Interview of Unificationist Hiroshi Ogasawara on his run for Japanese Senate

Knut Holdhus
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Hiroshi Ogasawara, born in 1963 in Hiroshima Prefecture, graduated from the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Economics in 1988. While at university, he studied the teachings of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). After graduation, he joined a general trading company and worked both in Japan and overseas. He retired in 2020 and started working independently as a certified SME management consultant in Chiba Prefecture, Japan. In January 2024, he founded the "Association of Chiba Citizens to Protect Religious Freedom and Human Rights" and became its representative. In summer 2024, he established the political group "Association for Protecting Japanese Families". In June 2025, he announced his candidacy for the House of Councillors



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"Believers must speak": Consultant steps into politics, launching election bid for Upper House seat to give voice to the marginalized

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Bringing Believers' Voices to National Politics

by Takahide Ishii (石井 孝秀)

Hiroshi Ogasawara ((小笠原裕 - 62), a certified SME consultant living in Yachiyo City, Chiba Prefecture, is an active member of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). On 2nd June, he held a [press conference](#) in Chiba City, announcing his candidacy in the House of Councillors election from the Chiba constituency under the banner of the political group he founded - the "Association for Protecting Japanese Families". Ogasawara, who claims the government's request to dissolve the [religious organization](#) is unconstitutional and violates religious freedom, spoke to us.

Interview by Takahide Ishii (石井 孝秀)

- What led you to run for office?

Since last year, I've been expanding activities around the theme of religious freedom, including hosting symposiums in the prefecture. However, I became gravely concerned that national political parties were unilaterally cutting ties with the [religious organization](#), leaving believers with no voice in national politics.

I concluded that believers themselves must run for national office. I decided to run based solely on my personal judgment - without support or instructions from the [Family Federation](#). The "Association for Protecting Japanese Families" was founded last summer, and already has over 160 members, many of whom are not members of the [religious organization](#).



From Hiroshi Ogasawara's campaign July 2025

Campaign funds come from personal contributions and donations, with income and expenditures publicly disclosed online. Precisely because the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#) is now being contested, I believe running for office and voicing opposition is especially meaningful.

- What's your election strategy?

Honestly, the hurdles are high. I'm not well-known, so first I need to get my face out there. I'll focus on posters, street speeches, and especially sharing information on a YouTube channel.



From Hiroshi Ogasawara's campaign on YouTube July 2025

Among voters, there are likely religious figures who feel alarmed by the Tokyo District Court's March [decision to order the dissolution](#) of the [Family Federation](#). There are also growing voices saying dormant

religious organizations should be disbanded, or that "all religions are shady and should be destroyed." There's a real danger of escalating religious persecution. By running for office, I hope to raise awareness among religious communities and help spark broader public debate.

Additionally, our group believes that respecting family and local culture is essential to national strength. Specifically, we aim to amend the Constitution to add a clause on family protection, preserve traditional cultural practices like festivals that strengthen community ties, and correct excessive LGBT policies such as intrusions into women's spaces.

The Chiba race has many candidates, so votes will likely be scattered. Since we're the only group focused on [family values](#), I believe that will differentiate us.

- Across the country, more believers protest through rallies and street speeches the [court order](#) to dissolve the [religious organization](#).

There's a prevailing image of the [Family Federation](#) as an "anti-social organization", and people don't really see who its members are. In such a situation, it's hard for the public to empathize with how many members would be hurt if the [religious organization](#) disappears. That's why I think it's vital to show our faces in public and keep sharing our message.

However, "expressing" and "being understood" are two different things. It's not just about voicing your own opinion - you have to think about how your words will actually reach others. Gaining public understanding is very difficult, but I believe our passion will eventually get through, so we must keep speaking out.

- During the campaign, 8th July marks the third anniversary of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's assassination. What are your plans?



Shinzo Abe in March 2022, few months before he was assassinated

I'm planning to hold a street memorial speech for Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) and offer a silent prayer at 11:30 a.m., the time he was attacked. It's unbearable to see a man who did so much for Japan now being disparaged as "deeply entangled" (with the [religious organization](#)). Even LDP candidates likely won't hold memorials, but at the very least, our group will.

Frankly, parties like the LDP and the Constitutional Democratic Party have been using the [Family Federation](#) and Mr. Abe as scapegoats to boost their own popularity. But that hasn't improved their approval ratings - if anything, it shows none of them think 50 or 100 years into Japan's future.

The Abe incident was twisted into a problem with the [Family Federation](#). Worse, society has created an atmosphere that not only fails to condemn the violence, but even sympathizes with the perpetrator. A society that can't denounce violence - especially during an election campaign - is unacceptable. I'll continue to raise my voice against that as many times as needed.

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Believers marching through Osaka City – 29th June 2025, Kita Ward, Osaka City Photo: Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田剛)

Dissolution Order Against the Family Federation

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

To protest the dissolution order against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the Unification Church), believers from across the country held simultaneous rallies and protest marches on June 28 and 29, calling out,

“Protect freedom of religion and human rights!”

In Osaka City, about 1,100 people (according to organizers) marched through the bustling Umeda district, chanting slogans like

- “Listen to the voices of active believers!”
- “Religious oppression is a threat to democracy!”

They appealed to passersby. A rally preceding the march was attended by 1,600 people.

Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡), a member of the *House of Councillors* from the *NHK Party* and the first lawmaker to join such a rally, emphasized that freedom of religion is a key principle of his party. He warned,

“If the dissolution actually goes through, it would be playing right into the hands of terrorists. Is that what we want?”

A female believer in her 20s from Osaka City said she participated to show that she believes of her own free will as a “second-generation” member (born into the faith).

In Mitaka City, Tokyo, about 400 believers gathered in Inokashira Park and marched around the area near JR Kichijoji Station, stating,

“We want to protect our precious faith and [church](#)!”

In Matsuyama City, Ehime Prefecture, around 250 believers gathered and marched through the streets, appealing,

“If you have any questions, please ask us directly!”



Send us a message

First Name *

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Believers rallying in Osaka City – 29th June 2025, Kita Ward, Osaka City Photo: Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田剛)

According to the [religious organization's](#) public relations office, other protest marches took place in Nagoya City (about 600 people), Saitama City (about 150), Fukushima City, Fukushima Prefecture (about 300), and Mito City, Ibaraki Prefecture (about 230). Over the two days, more than 4,000 believers participated in the protest marches nationwide.

Featured image above: Members of the [Family Federation](#) march in a demonstration under the blazing sun – 29th June 2025, Kita Ward, Osaka City. Photo: Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田剛)

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Believers holding banners march near JR Kichijoji Station – 29th June 2025, Mitaka City, Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

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A believer appeals to the public about the situation of the [Family Federation](#) in a busy shopping district – 29th June 2025, Matsuyama City, Ehime Prefecture. Photo: Rei Miyazawa (宮沢玲衣)

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