

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Malicious Japanese Lawyers Manipulate Fake Damages

Knut Holdhus
March 1, 2026



Statistical manipulation by hostile activist lawyers in Japan. Illustration: Chat GPT



[Sekai Nippo](#)

The statistical expansion of "damage": How categories reshaped spiritual sales figures aggressively used by hostile lawyers against Family Federation in dissolution case

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Part 2 of Special Report

National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales "Fabricated" Damage

Inflating Case Numbers by Using Apostates Who Had been Kidnapped

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



3 leading activist leftwing lawyers from the anti-[UC](#) lawyers' network called National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales - from left: Masaki Kito, Hiroshi Watanabe, Hiroshi Yamaguchi

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Since 1989, National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (Zenkoku Benren) began compiling "damage" statistics that included not only items typically associated with so-called "spiritual sales", but also donations, loans, video lecture fees, and other unspecified categories - items that can hardly be described as products of spiritual sales.

This raises questions. At a time when the media were abuzz with seals, vases, pagodas, and other items as products of spiritual sales, were there really "victims" who individually reported to Zenkoku Benren - an organization claiming to combat spiritual sales - saying, for example, "I took video lectures without knowing it was the [Unification Church](#) (then known as the [Unification Church](#), now the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#))," or "I was made to donate (or take out loans) by the church"?

Donations are offerings made by believers to [God](#) based on their own faith. Even if someone later loses that faith for some reason, they would not normally recognize such donations as "damage". While some former members might individually consult Zenkoku Benren lawyers about seeking the return of donations or similar payments, that does not constitute damage from spiritual sales.

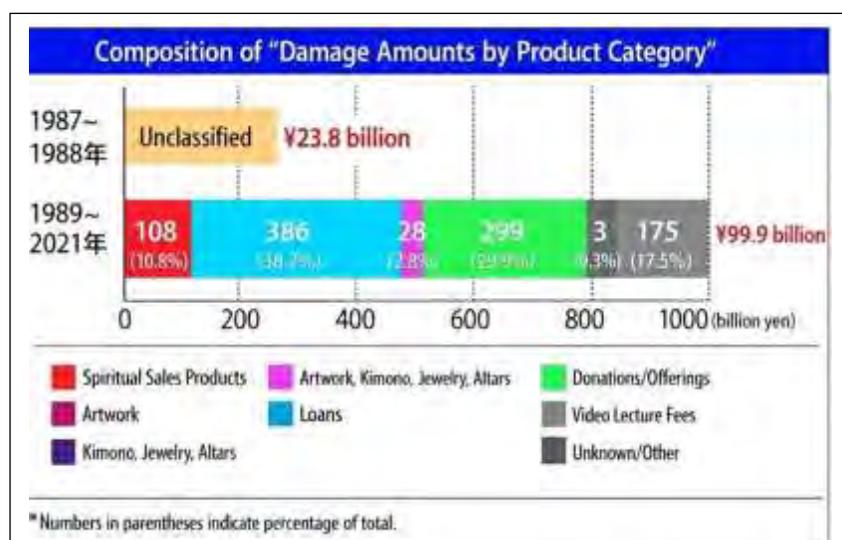


Professional faith-breaker Takashi Miyamura, responsible for hundreds of deprogrammings based on abduction and forcible detention. He is said to have been advisor to the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP)

Although it is conceivable that some lawyers incorporated the number and amounts of such cases into spiritual sales "damage" statistics, the scale - 135 cases (approximately ¥300 million total) in 1989, 248 cases (approximately ¥700 million) in 1990, and 207 cases (approximately ¥400 million) in 1991 - and the fact that this continued annually through 2021, compels the conclusion that this was an extremely malicious, organized, and ongoing act of fabrication by Zenkoku Benren.

Certainly, following the 1992 international [mass wedding](#) ceremony, the media resumed critical campaigns against the [Unification Church](#) and spiritual sales, so it cannot be denied that "damage" reports increased from that year onward. However, it remains to be clarified why, in the three years prior - 1989, 1990, and 1991 - more than 100 apostates [See editor's note 1 below] each year, allegedly suffering donation-related "damage", visited Zenkoku Benren lawyers, who were reportedly troubled by a sharp decline in spiritual sales "damage" cases.

In 1987, when spiritual sales became a social issue, abductions and confinements of members of the former [Unification Church](#) - along with forced renunciations of faith [See editor's note 2 below] - carried out by deprogrammer (faith-breaker) Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻) and certain Christian pastors, surged to 300 cases, approximately 1.5 times the previous year. The numbers were 224 in 1988, 192 in 1989, 264 in 1990, 302 in 1991, and 375 in 1992, marking the worst period.



Manipulation of figures by including unrelated categories: "Damage Statistics by Product Category" on the website of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, captured on 13th October 2022 (now deleted)

It is known that 70% of the victims renounced their faith, and that most of the legal representatives in damage compensation claims filed against the [religious organization](#) - claims said to function as a "fumi-e" (踏み絵 - pledge of repudiation) [See editor's note 3 below] completely denying past faith - were lawyers affiliated with Zenkoku Benren.

Reviewing multiple notification letters sent to the [religious organization](#) and related parties at the time reveals detailed listings of video center enrollment fees, training session fees, various donations,

payments for goods purchased from [church](#) affiliates (including seals, jewelry, kimono, ginseng tea, etc.), loans, along with dates and amounts. When categorized, these items largely correspond to the "product-specific" damage categories that appeared in spiritual sales statistics beginning in 1989.

In other words, there is a very strong suspicion that Zenkoku Benren inflated a single compensation claim by one abducted and confined apostate [See footnote 1 below] into anywhere from several to over ten separate 'product-specific' damage claims.

Given the rapid expansion in reported damage after March 1988, it is the responsibility of Zenkoku Benren, as an organization of lawyers, to dispel these suspicions of exaggerated "damage". If the allegations are entirely unfounded, the solution is simple: rather than concealing the "product-specific" statistics, they should present the original source materials substantiating their figures.

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[Editor's note 1: Apostates here refer not just to someone who have left the religion, but who are now being used to undermine the group. The apostates in the text above are being used by hostile and cynical lawyers for malicious reasons to cause harm to the faith they were forced out of, when they had their faith broken coercively by so-called faith-breakers (deprogrammers), working in league with activist lawyers.]

[Editor's note 2: Coercive faith-breaking ("deprogramming") in Japan refers to the practice of coercively attempting to separate individuals from their religious affiliations or beliefs, typically through intervention by family members, professional faith-breakers (deprogrammers) or organizations hostile to new religious movements (NRMs). This phenomenon often targets members of such movements, e.g. relatively large faiths like the [Family Federation](#) or Jehovah's Witnesses, but also smaller groups like Happy Science (Kōfuku no Kagaku) and other newer religious movements.



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of Soka Gakkai. Here students belonging to the faith in 2001

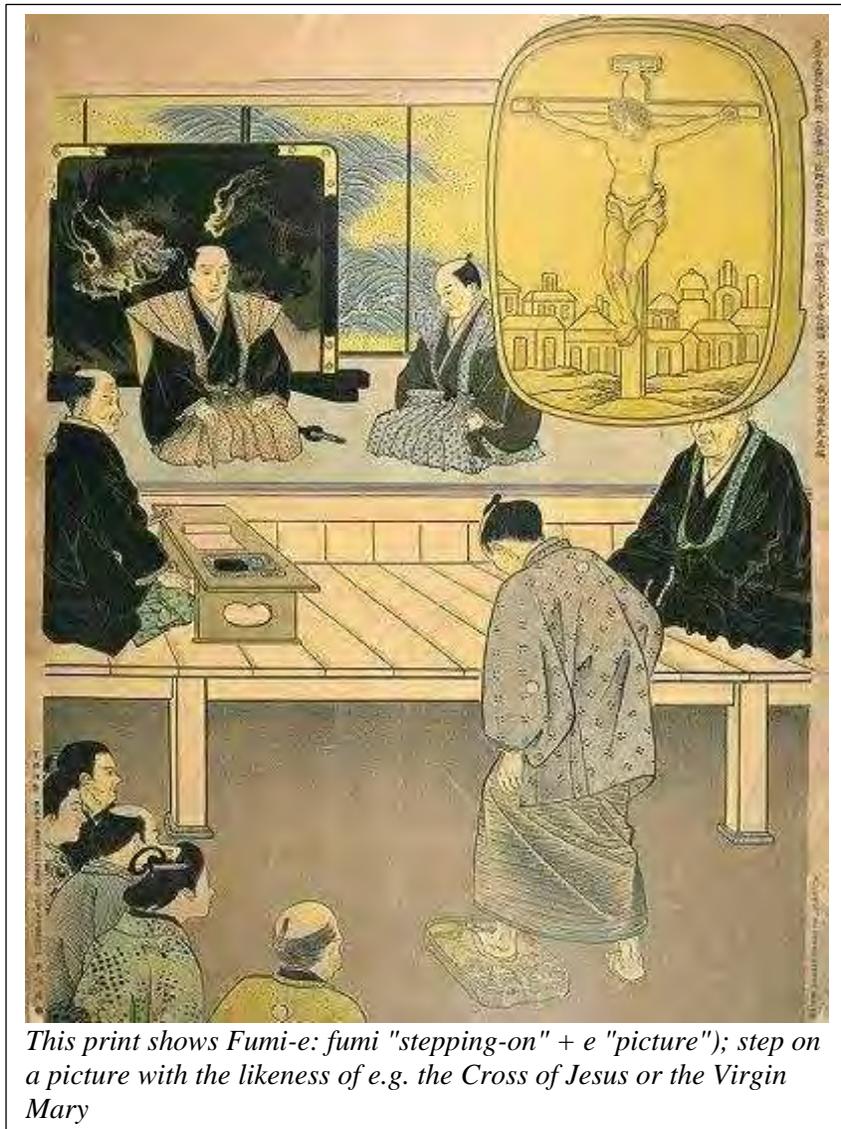
However, also Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist-based lay organization with more than 8 million Japanese members, and affiliated with Nichiren Buddhism, has occasionally been subject to faith-breaking attempts.

The practice gained attention in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Parents or concerned family members often hired faith-breakers who taught them how to abduct and forcibly detain believers. Almost all such cases involved confining the individual believer and cutting him or her off from the religious community. During the confinement, the believer was subjected to intense questioning or indoctrination designed to break his or her faith. The aim was to "rescue" the person from what the family often had been tricked by faith-breakers or lawyers to regard as harmful influence from the religious organization.

Critics of forced de-conversion argue that it violates fundamental human rights, including freedom of thought, religion, and association. Reports of psychological trauma and accusations of unlawful detention have sparked debates over its ethical and legal implications. In response, some religious groups, particularly NRMs, have lobbied for greater protections against such practices.

Japanese courts have been inconsistent in addressing cases of coercive faith-breaking. While some verdicts have condemned the practice as illegal detention, others have been more lenient, citing family

concerns about "mental health" or alleged "exploitation" as mitigating factors.]



This print shows Fumi-e: fumi "stepping-on" + e "picture"); step on a picture with the likeness of e.g. the Cross of Jesus or the Virgin Mary

[Editor's note 3: Fumi-e (踏み絵) literally means "stepping picture". A fumi-e was a physical image - usually of Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary - that suspected Christians in early modern Japan were required to step on in order to prove they were not Christian.

This happened primarily in the Edo period (17th-19th century). The purpose was to identify and suppress Christians after Christianity was banned in Japan. Officials placed an image on the ground and ordered suspects to step on it. Refusal to do so was interpreted as proof of Christian faith, often leading to imprisonment, torture, or execution.

The practice was particularly common in areas like Nagasaki, where Christianity had spread earlier.

Today, fumi-e is often used metaphorically in Japanese to describe a test of loyalty, a forced act meant to prove

ideological conformity, a symbolic gesture requiring someone to repudiate prior beliefs.

In the above article, the term is used metaphorically to describe lawsuits against a religious organization being portrayed as a kind of symbolic act of renouncing one's former faith - comparable to being forced to step on a sacred image.]

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Japan: When "Public Welfare" Is Used Politically

February 28, 2026 • Knut Holdhus



Public welfare and the Family Federation case: When religious freedom is obviously violated in the name of ambiguous concept that is easily exploited politically



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Freedom of Religion and “Public Welfare”

by Seisaku Morita (森田 清策)

Published 28th February at 23:24, updated
1st March at 06:52

In the recent *House of Representatives* election, the *Liberal Democratic Party* (LDP) secured the two-thirds majority necessary to initiate constitutional revision. Although the ruling coalition remains a minority in the *House of Councillors*, pro-revision forces – including opposition parties – reach the two-thirds threshold there as well. Recent public opinion polls show that more than half of the public express expectations for constitutional revision debates in the Diet.

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Secured the two-thirds majority necessary in February 2026 election to initiate constitutional revision: **Sanae Takaichi**, Prime Minister of Japan since October 2025. Photo: 内閣広報室 | Cabinet Public Affairs Office. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int. Cropped

As constitutional revision becomes increasingly realistic, I reread the LDP's *Q&A Supplement to the Draft Amendment of the Constitution of Japan* (2013 edition) and took renewed interest in a particular keyword. When constitutional revision is discussed, topics such as explicitly recognizing the *Self-Defense Forces* or establishing emergency powers clauses are often highlighted. However, the draft also proposes amendments concerning citizens' rights and duties. In particular, it addresses the ambiguity of the concept of “public welfare” found in Article 13 of the current Constitution.

Last year in this column (26th September edition), I examined the constitutional draft proposed by the *Sanseito* party. That draft likewise argues for the need to revise the Constitution on the grounds that the concept of “public welfare”, used to justify restrictions on individual rights, is vague and could be conveniently interpreted by the government in power at any given time.

The LDP draft similarly asserts that “public welfare” is ambiguous and presents a proposed revision. In my previous article, I cited as an example of interpretation changing to suit the government's convenience the request for a dissolution order against the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (formerly known as the *Unification Church*). With the *Tokyo High Court* scheduled to rule on March 4 regarding whether dissolution is appropriate, I would like to reconsider this issue using the LDP draft as a reference.

The *Religious Corporations Act* stipulates that **a religious organization may be dissolved if it “violates laws and regulations and significantly harms public welfare”**. On the other hand, **freedom of religion is regarded as one of the most important human rights and is guaranteed under Article 20 of the current Constitution**. Because **dissolving a religious organization constitutes a restriction on that freedom, the prevailing view has been that such action should be limited to unavoidable cases**. Accordingly, **the requirement of a legal violation for dissolution had been limited to criminal offenses**, placing a check on expansive interpretation.



The decision to request a dissolution order **was made in October 2023** under the administration of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida ((岸田文雄)). However, until one year prior, the government had maintained that it could not file such a request against the *Family Federation*, as it had not committed criminal offenses. Then, **overnight, the interpretation was changed to include**

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Former Prime Minister Fumio Kishida swayed by hostile media campaign and [changed the law overnight](#). Here, 16th April 2023. Photo: [首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

[interpretation was changed to include civil violations](#) within the scope of “legal violations”, and the government proceeded with the [dissolution request](#).



Shinzo Abe in March 2022, few months before he was assassinated. Photo: United States Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

Following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三), the media criticized the LDP over its connections with organizations related to the [Family Federation](#), including electoral support. With the administration placed in a difficult position, **the government likely sought to preserve itself** by declaring a “break” with the group and [filing for a dissolution order](#).

This can be described as a **clear example of “public welfare” being politically interpreted in a manner convenient to the government of the day**. Given that the LDP itself recognizes the ambiguity of the concept and the need for revision, one cannot avoid pointing out the heavy political responsibility borne by Prime Minister Kishida for adopting **such an expansive interpretation**.

Article 13 of the current Constitution states that the people's rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness shall be respected “to the extent that they do not interfere with the public welfare.” The LDP’s draft amendment proposes replacing this with “to the extent that they do not interfere with the public interest and public order.” However, this too reveals the LDP’s insufficiency in its approach to human rights. The concept of “public interest” is likewise ambiguous, and there are concerns that it could in fact broaden the scope of permissible restrictions on human rights.



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Japan has ratified, does not use the term “public welfare” as grounds for restricting rights such as freedom of religion.

Instead, **it employs more explicit terms such as “public safety”, “public order”, and “public**

health”. The *Human Rights Committee* under the Covenant has requested that Japan clarify the definition of “public welfare” and demonstrate compatibility with the treaty. Although constitutional amendment provisions concerning human rights restrictions may not attract as much attention as other issues, they are of critical importance and deserve far greater scrutiny.

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Featured image above: *The Japanese constitutional debate.* Illustration: Chat GPT, 1st March 2026.

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