

## FFWPU Europe Middle East: Ostracism for Japanese Unificationists After Legal Loss

Knut Holdhus  
March 4, 2026



*The flag of the [Family Federation](#) waving in Japan*

**Japan creating large-scale human suffering, escalating discrimination, social ostracism, and vicious bullying for members of large religious minority after deeply troubling verdict in violation of religious freedom**

**Japan Delivers Historic Blow to Religious Freedom**

**Family Federation Dissolved Without a Single Criminal Conviction**

Press release issued 4th March 2026 by the regional headquarters of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU) in Europe and the Middle East.



*The headquarters building of the Family Federation in Japan, located in Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan*

In a landmark - and deeply troubling - decision, the Tokyo High Court has today upheld the government's order to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU) in Japan, formerly known as the [Unification Church](#).

See also "[Loss of Appeal Part of Systemic Persecution](#)"

Effective immediately, the [religious corporation](#) loses its legal status under Japan's Religious Corporations Act. Compulsory liquidation of its assets can now proceed.

This marks an unprecedented milestone in Japan's postwar constitutional era: For the first time, a major religious organization has been effectively erased as a legal entity - without any

criminal conviction against the [organization](#) itself.

This is no routine administrative action. It is the harshest sanction available under Japanese law, stripping a faith community of its institutional existence. In rule-of-law democracies, such an extreme measure demands an extraordinarily high threshold of evidence and justification. Many legal scholars, human rights advocates, and international observers argue that threshold has not been met here.

## No Crime Proven - Yet Institutional Death Imposed

The court found no criminal guilt on the part of the [Family Federation](#). Dissolution rests instead on allegations of harm to an undefined "public welfare" and breaches of loosely defined "social norms" - standards far below those required for criminal liability.

This sets a dangerous precedent: a religious body can be dismantled administratively, based on civil claims spanning decades, without the rigorous proof a criminal trial demands.

## The Shadow of Tragedy and Political Pressure

The issue exploded into public view after the 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The perpetrator, Tetsuya Yamagami, cited personal grievances tied to his family's donations to the [church](#). The court rightly held Yamagami solely responsible, imposing a [life sentence](#). No evidence linked the [religious organization](#) to the murder.

Yet the ensuing media storm and political backlash created intense pressure. Within months, the government launched dissolution proceedings - a sequence critics describe as reactive rather than strictly legal.



*Masumi Fukuda – Japanese investigative journalist and award-winning nonfiction writer (2024)*

Investigative journalist Masumi Fukuda has produced [groundbreaking reporting](#) that challenges key elements of the dominant narrative, pointing to media bias, selective evidence, and the marginalization of dissenting voices. Her work raises serious questions about whether full due process could prevail in such a polarized climate.

### "We Have Committed No Crime"

[Family Federation](#) Japan President Masaichi Hori responded with resolve:

"We have not committed any crime as a religious corporation. Our members are sincere believers who practice their faith peacefully and strive to contribute positively to society. We deeply regret this extreme decision imposed without criminal conviction. We will continue to uphold our beliefs lawfully and peacefully, confident that truth and justice will ultimately prevail."

### Real People, Real Devastation

Beyond legal abstractions stand tens of thousands of ordinary Japanese citizens:

- Families who pray and build lives together
- Volunteers sustaining community service programs



*Masaichi Hori, President of the Family Federation in Japan*

- Children whose faith shapes their values and sense of belonging

### Dissolution threatens:

- Government confiscation and forced [liquidation](#) of religious assets - properties, buildings, bank accounts
- Closure of worship spaces, [churches](#), [church cemeteries](#) and centers
- Transfer of ownership to the government
- Disruption - or outright end - of church-funded charitable, educational, and humanitarian work
- Heightened financial hardship and social instability for members

Already, as a result of "trial by media", hotels and other public facilities are refusing to rent space to us

for our charitable activities.

Since 2022, believers have already endured escalating discrimination, [social ostracism](#), and - in some heartbreaking cases - vicious bullying of children. This ruling risks entrenching and amplifying that suffering, turning abstract legal loss into lived human hardship.

### **A Precedent That Should Alarm Every Democracy**

Japan stands as a model of stable constitutional democracy, with robust protections for freedom of religion under its Constitution and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). These guarantees protect not only personal belief but the collective right of communities to organize, worship, and maintain legal existence.

When a religious group can be dissolved without criminal conviction - on grounds of vague "[public welfare](#)" claims - the precedent reverberates far beyond one organization. It tests the resilience of minority rights in any democracy.

As Mahatma Gandhi powerfully reminded us, the true moral strength of a nation is revealed in how it treats its most vulnerable minorities.

The eyes of the world - and of history - are now on Japan's democratic institutions. Will they uphold the highest standards of religious freedom and due process, or will this ruling mark the beginning of a troubling erosion?

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# “Loss Of Appeal Part Of Systemic Persecution”

March 4, 2026 • Knut Holdhus

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*First case ever of civil-code grounds used to dissolve religious organization as its appeal is rejected in what many perceive as an orchestrated campaign undertaken by the state as a whole*



Tokyo, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

**Tokyo High Court**

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# Upholds Dissolution Order for Family Federation;

## Religious Corporation Status Revoked, Liquidation Proceedings to Begin

by editorial staff of *Sekai Nippo*



Sign by the entrance of the national headquarters of the *Family Federation* in Shibuya, Tokyo. Photo: *Sekai Nippo*

In the immediate appeal proceedings regarding the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's* request for a dissolution order against the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (formerly the *Unification Church*), the *Tokyo High Court* – Presiding Judge Motoko Miki (三木素子) – ruled on 4th March to uphold the **dissolution order** issued by the *Tokyo District Court* and dismissed the *Family Federation's* immediate **appeal**. This marks the first case in which a dissolution order has been based on unlawful acts under the Civil Code.

See also [Social Ostracism for Believers After Legal Loss](#)

The **religious organization** plans to file a special appeal with the Supreme Court. However, as a result of the *Tokyo High Court's* decision, the organization will lose its status as a religious corporation and liquidation procedures will commence.

In response to the ruling, the **Family Federation** issued the following statement:

“We are deeply concerned and cannot help but feel profound shame that our believers may be labeled as members of an antisocial group and forced to live in fear of discrimination and prejudice in Japanese society, concealing themselves in order to survive. We will never accept this unjust judicial decision and will continue fighting – including by filing a special appeal – to defend freedom of religion.”



The building housing Tokyo High Court and Tokyo District Court. Photo (2012): Rs1421 / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp](#)

Regarding the request for a dissolution order, the *Tokyo District Court* **ruled in March of last year** that the **organization** had caused “damage on a massive scale” and ordered its dissolution. The **religious organization** filed an **immediate appeal**, objecting to the district court’s fact-finding based on presumptions – such as the assumption that “a considerable degree of hidden damage likely

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assumption that a considerable degree of hidden damage likely exists” – as well as alleging **fabrication of evidence** by the *Ministry of Education*.

During the appeal proceedings, the **Family Federation** argued that damages had sharply declined following its 2009 “Compliance Declaration” [See [editor’s note 1 below](#)] and maintained that there was no necessity for a dissolution order. The hearings were conducted behind closed doors and concluded in November of last year.

**The full statement released by the Family Federation of Japan is as follows:**

“Today, the *Tokyo High Court* issued a decision approving the dissolution order against **our religious corporation**. This can be said to fulfill, as an undertaking of the state as a whole [See [editor’s note 2 below](#)], the desire of the terrorist who assassinated former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三). The perpetrator is said to hold a grudge against the **Family Federation** and sought to inflict damage upon it. This judicial decision will not only incite new acts of political terrorism but will also undermine Japan’s credibility in the international community, leaving a stain on our nation’s history.

**Our corporation** strongly requested that the High Court conduct appropriate proceedings based on facts and evidence. However, this decision constitutes an unjust ruling reached with a predetermined conclusion, lacking factual and evidentiary support and contrary to the principle of adjudication based on evidence.

Furthermore, with the cooperation of independent attorneys, **our corporation** has been sincerely engaged in providing compensation to those claiming to have suffered ‘damage.’ Now that the **corporation** is to be dissolved, such compensation efforts can no longer continue, which we find extremely regrettable.

Above all, we are deeply concerned and filled with shame that, as a result of this decision, our believers may be branded as ‘members of an antisocial group’ and forced to live in fear of discrimination and prejudice within Japanese society, concealing themselves in order to survive. We will never accept this unjust judicial decision and will continue to fight – including by filing a special appeal – to defend freedom of religion.”

See also [Social Ostracism for Believers After Legal Loss](#)

**Featured image** above: Fukumoto, legal advisor to the Family Federation in Japan, responding to media inquiries following the Tokyo High Court decision on 4th March 2026. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

**[Editor’s note 1:** The **2009 compliance declaration** of the **Unification Church of Japan** (now the **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification**) was a formal commitment by the **organization** to reform its practices in response to longstanding public criticism and legal challenges.

The **Unification Church** in Japan had faced numerous allegations related to recruitment tactics and donation solicitation, termed “spiritual sales” (霊感商法) by a hostile network of activist lawyers who had declared the **religious organization** an enemy. These issues led to multiple lawsuits orchestrated by the activist lawyers and significant media backlash. This prompted the **organization** to take measures to restore its reputation and demonstrate compliance with legal and ethical standards.

The **religious organization** pledged to stop possibly unethical donation practices, including what the hostile network of lawyers claimed amounted to “pressuring members into making large financial contributions under spiritual pretexts.”

This was in response to accusations from the same activist lawyers that followers “were being manipulated into giving away substantial amounts of money or property.”

The **Unification Church** stated it would enhance internal oversight to ensure compliance with ethical and legal standards. Measures included better training for leaders and stricter guidelines for evangelization and solicitation of donations.

After this compliance declaration, there was a significant decrease

in the number of lawsuits against the Unification Church – since 2015 called the Family Federation. The religious organization has used this as evidence that it has improved its practices and should not be subject to dissolution.]

[**Editor's note 2:** In political discourse, the Japanese expression 国ぐるみ (kokka gurumi) is rarely neutral. It carries strong connotations of institutional coordination and suggests involvement beyond a single agency – implying courts, ministries, police, legislature, etc. The expression implies top-down orchestration and centralized direction or political intent rather than independent bureaucratic or judicial action.

The phrase is often used in accusations of state repression, political persecution, cover-ups, systemic corruption. It frames the act as not just mistaken, but as a *structural act of the state itself*.

In the above text, the writers are asserting that the Tokyo High Court verdict is not merely a judicial ruling. It represents the state acting collectively. The state is therefore portrayed as *fulfilling a terrorist's objective*.

This dramatically escalates the accusation. Instead of saying that the court made an unfair decision, it implies that the Japanese state apparatus as a whole is enabling terrorism's goals.

That framing politicizes the judiciary, undermines claims of judicial independence, and portrays the organization as a victim of systemic persecution.]

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