



Heavenly Parent's Holy Community

Family Federation for World Peace and Unification

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our Response to the High Court Ruling in Japan

Many of you will already have heard the news that today the Tokyo High Court upheld the Japanese government's decision to dissolve the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification as a religious corporation in Japan. Although our communities in Europe and the Middle East are not legally affected by this ruling, we are all spiritually connected—and our thoughts and prayers naturally turn toward our precious brothers and sisters in Japan.

This unprecedented judgment, though not unexpected, has shocked many observers around the world. For the first time in Japan's postwar history, a major religious organization has been stripped of its legal standing **without any criminal conviction**, and on grounds that remain ambiguous and hotly debated. The consequences for our members in Japan—ordinary families, young people, volunteers, and believers—are profound. The loss of legal status may lead to the liquidation of church properties, the disruption of community life, and even greater social pressure on members who have already endured years of intense scrutiny and discrimination.

Yet amid this, we must not react with anger or despair. Instead, let us respond with **prayerful solidarity, measured words, and steadfast faith**. We must recognize the emotional impact of this moment. It is right to grieve with those who grieve, and to feel righteous concern when any community of faith is treated unjustly. Many of our Japanese members have lived through painful misunderstandings, media hostility, and, tragically, open discrimination. We hold them in our hearts, and we pray that Heavenly Parent's comfort and protection surround every family, especially the children who may feel this burden most acutely.

At the same time, our response must also be grounded in **clarity, dignity, and truth**. This issue touches on principles that extend far beyond our movement: the universal right to freedom of religion, the rule of law, and the protection of minority beliefs in democratic societies. When a government can dismantle a religious institution not on the basis of proven criminal conduct, but on contested allegations and shifting social norms, a precedent is set that should concern all people of conscience—regardless of their faith tradition.

As members of the Family Federation in Europe, we have an important role to play. Not through confrontation, nor through emotional rhetoric, but through **responsible public witness**:

- We will **inform the public**, our friends and key stakeholders about the facts of the case.
- We will **defend the principle of religious freedom**, not only for ourselves but for all faiths.
- We will **promote respectful dialogue** and call for fairness, due process, and the protection of civil liberties.
- And above all, we will **stand with our Japanese community**—spiritually, morally, and publicly—until justice and truth are restored.

Our movement was founded by True Parents on the belief that peace begins in the heart, grows in the family, and expands outward into society. That mission does not change because we face challenges. In fact, moments like this call us to embody our values even more fully. Let us unite in prayer for our Japanese brothers and sisters; for the legal teams and advocates working on their behalf; for journalists, scholars, and public figures who courageously speak the truth; and for the leaders of Japan, that they may be guided by wisdom, fairness, and a commitment to human dignity.

We encourage each of you to remain calm, compassionate, and confident in God's providence. **No earthly ruling can dissolve a community of faith** whose roots are spiritual and whose foundation is love. The Family Federation in Japan will continue, as its leaders have affirmed, to keep the faith, to live peacefully, and to uphold the ideals that have guided them for generations.

Attached to this letter you will find a copy of our **Press Release** which has already been circulated to our National Leaders with the request to translate and distribute it as widely as possible. If the story of the dissolution order appears in your local media, you can use the feedback tools provided by all media outlets to communicate and respond. You can also draw on this release in sharing with your own friends and family as well. In the coming days we will provide further guidance on how our European community can contribute constructively during this period.

For now, let us lift our hearts together and offer this prayer:

"Our loving Heavenly Parent, bring comfort to those who are distressed, courage to those who are uncertain, and unity to our worldwide family. We pray for our brothers and sisters in Japan, and we pray for our True Mother, our Holy Mother Han, who has now been imprisoned for almost six months in Korea. And we pray for peace at a time when the world and indeed our continent seems to be on fire. May justice prevail, may truth be revealed, and may peace reign in the hearts of all people."

Sincerely

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature on the left is more stylized and appears to be 'MWB'. The second signature on the right is more fluid and appears to be 'F. Balcomb'.

Michael & Fumiko Balcomb
Continental Director, FFWPU Heavenly Europe & the Middle East



PRESS RELEASE - Japan Delivers Historic Blow to Religious Freedom



For Immediate Release

London — 4 March 2026

Japan Delivers Historic Blow to Religious Freedom: Family Federation Dissolved Without a Single Criminal Conviction

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.

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 organisation has been effectively erased as a legal entity, without any criminal conviction against the organisation 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 this 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 and imposed a life sentence. No evidence linked the religious organisation 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.

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

"We Have Committed No Crime"

FFWPU 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
- 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 centres
- 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 organise, 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 organisation. 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?

For further information or interviews, contact:

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Further Reading

[Supplement to Press Release](#) – The following clarifications are provided in response to widespread public commentary and media reporting concerning FFWPU-Japan and related matters by FFWPU-UK

[The Unification Church Verdict: The New Martyrs of Japan](#) by Massimo Introvigne

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SUPPLEMENT TO PRESS RELEASE

The following clarifications are provided in response to widespread public commentary and media reporting concerning FFWPU-Japan and related matters:

Clarification Regarding Tetsuya Yamagami

Contrary to claims frequently repeated in media narratives, it has been asserted that Tetsuya Yamagami was not living in poverty at the time of the incident. It has further been noted that approximately 50% of his mother's donations were reportedly returned to her by FFWPU-Japan. During trial proceedings, the presiding judge is reported to have commented prior to sentencing that the negative impact of his mother's religious involvement was "minimal," challenging the characterisation that such involvement alone "ruined his life." These details warrant consideration in the interest of factual completeness.

Characterisation of FFWPU-Japan

FFWPU-Japan and related organisations have often been portrayed in media coverage as socially harmful or malign. However, supporters and affiliated bodies point to a longstanding record of philanthropic and humanitarian activity. These include disaster relief initiatives, educational programs, community development projects, and international aid efforts both within Japan and globally. Proponents argue that this humanitarian work has been largely overlooked in public discourse.

Allegations of Falsification and Evidence Destruction

Concerns have also been raised regarding what is described as a coordinated campaign of misrepresentation. Allegations include the destruction of physical evidence relating to overseas development projects—such as schools in parts of Africa, including Senegal and Mozambique—as well as claims that certain testimonies in Japan were altered by officials to include negative statements not originally written by former members. These allegations have been cited by critics as indicative of broader institutional bias.

Publication of "Sacrifice to the Nation"

Journalist Masumi Fukuda's bestselling book, *Sacrifice to the Nation* (now in its fourth edition), examines what the author characterises as a systematic effort to eradicate FFWPU-Japan. The book compiles documentary material, witness accounts, and investigative findings that, according to the author, challenge prevailing narratives and call for greater scrutiny of official and media representations. (Book Review by [Bitter Winter](#))

Conclusion

Given the seriousness of these matters, it is essential that public discussion be grounded in verifiable evidence, balanced analysis, and respect for due process. The issues involved are complex and deserve careful consideration beyond simplified or sensational characterisations.

You are here: [Home](#) » [From the World](#) » [News Global](#)

The Unification Church Verdict: The New Martyrs of Japan

by Massimo Introvigne | Mar 4, 2026 | News Global

A profoundly wrong court decision tries to assassinate a religious organization.

by Massimo Introvigne



Christians crucified in Japan, engraving by Wolfgang Kilian (1581-1663). Credits.

In 1829, three women and three men were paraded through Osaka and crucified. Placards at the execution ground announced their unforgivable crime: devotion to the “pernicious creed” of Christianity, a religion the authorities insisted no rational person would join voluntarily. The six were accused of recruiting followers and collecting donations through black magic. As a [2020 Columbia University Press study](#) documents, these were unorthodox Christians with syncretistic beliefs, hardly the stuff of Vatican conspiracies. Yet they were tortured and killed because the state was seized by a panic over Christianity’s supposed bewitching techniques.

Two centuries later, the vocabulary has changed, but the logic has not. As [Wu Junqing](#) has shown for East Asia and [James T. Richardson](#) for the West, the moral panic that once conjured witches now conjures “brainwashing.” In the supposedly scientific 20th century, witchcraft was rebranded. “Brainwashing” became the imaginary crime of choice, deployed whenever a religious minority proved unpopular enough to make the accusation stick.

Most scholars of new religious movements regard [brainwashing theories as pseudoscience](#)—no more respectable than insisting the Earth is flat. Courts in the United States and Europe have agreed. Yet in Japan, belief in mysterious mind-control techniques remains stubbornly alive, a superstition with modern packaging.

And now, on March 4, the Tokyo High Court has confirmed a first-degree decision ordering the dissolution of the Unification Church (now the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification). The first-degree ruling, now confirmed, rests, substantially, on the charge of “brainwashing”—the 21st-century version of witchcraft.

The court’s reasoning is stark. In the past, the Unification Church allegedly persuaded some followers—through “brainwashing,” or whatever euphemism one prefers—to donate excessively large sums in exchange for artifacts priced far above their intrinsic value. Opponents labeled these transactions “spiritual sales.”

The judges acknowledge that such incidents have become rare over the last fifteen years and have almost disappeared in the present decade. The High Court verdict admits that, since the Church adopted measures to prevent abuses in 2009, “there are few cases in which it can be conclusively found—by final judgments or in-court settlements—that adherents engaged in solicitation conduct amounting to tortious acts.”

However, the High Court argued against the Church by stating that it still set donation targets and mostly met them. In reality, the amount of donations collected is irrelevant, since according to the verdict, only in a “few cases” were they collected illegally. This implies that, in most instances, donations were collected lawfully.

The Court also notes that the Church has not changed its theology, which inherently pushes members to make high donations. This is dangerously close to a secular judge’s attempt to dictate which theology a religious community should believe in.

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The High Court insists that because the church supposedly possesses brainwashing techniques, it could deploy them again at any moment. This is not legal reasoning; it is metaphysics. It is the logic of witch trials: once a witch, always a witch.

Traditionally, Japan's law on religious corporations has been interpreted to require criminal verdicts before dissolution. In this case, that principle has been inverted. Civil cases—some lost, some settled, some won—are deemed sufficient grounds for annihilating a religious corporation.

Before the assassination of Shinzo Abe, opponents had repeatedly demanded the dissolution of the Unification Church. They always failed. What had changed? Did the incidents in which the Church was accused of soliciting excessive donations increase? On the contrary, they decreased dramatically. What changed was the public emotion triggered by the statements of Abe's assassin, Tetsuya Yamagami, who claimed he had killed the former Prime Minister—whom he described as a friend of the Unification Church—because his youth had been ruined by his mother's donations to the religious organization.

Yet this narrative collapsed under scrutiny. Hitofumi Yanai, one of Japan's most respected fact-checkers, [examined Yamagami's story](#) and concluded that the family's problems predated the mother's joining the Unification Church and that the portrait of a family ruined by religion was false. The family did not live in poverty. Both Yamagami and his sister attended elite high schools. Yamagami passed the entrance exam to a private university but chose not to go—not because of poverty or maternal obstruction, but because he lacked the will and disliked college. In the decision sentencing him to life imprisonment, the court explained that “the defendant's upbringing did not greatly influence the commission of the offenses and there is not much room for leniency on that basis.”

The political and media storm that followed the assassination, not any new pattern of misconduct, created the emotional climate in which dissolution suddenly became thinkable.

European and American legal scholars are astonished. Japanese courts continue to invoke “harming public welfare” as a standard for dissolution, even though it [lies outside the permissible grounds](#) for limiting religious liberty under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Japan has signed and ratified. [Four United Nations Special Rapporteurs](#) on human rights warned Japan against proceeding to dissolve the Unification Church on such grounds.

Their warnings were ignored, although the High Court decision makes a weak attempt to claim that dissolution does not violate the ICCPR. Four UN Special Rapporteurs think otherwise, and the High Court continues to apply the standard of “what is socially acceptable,” which is precisely where the ICCPR violation lies.

The High Court claims that acts “harming the public welfare can be said to fall under acts that infringe upon ‘public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others,’ as stated in Article 18(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.” No, it cannot be said. Since 1980, the United Nations Human Rights Committee has repeatedly warned Japan that “public welfare” falls outside the list in Article 18(3).



Nazila Ghanea, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Credits.

The High Court insists that “a dissolution order merely has the effect of depriving a religious corporation of its legal personality and carries no legal effect whatsoever to prohibit or restrict the religious activities of the believers.” However, [the ICCPR protects](#) not only individual believers but also the corporate rights of religious organizations. A religion without institutions is a religion condemned to extinction.

In a narrow, literal sense, the fact that a dissolution order “does not prohibit or restrict the religious activities of believers” is true. Japan is a democracy; believers will not be crucified. Police will not raid homes at night to ensure that no prayers are being whispered, as happens to Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia or to dozens of banned groups in China. However, if it is not crucifying believers, Japan is crucifying a whole religious community.

The practical consequences of dissolution are devastating. Dissolution means that assets—bank accounts, real estate, everything—are immediately transferred to a liquidator, even before a Supreme Court decision is issued. This is a uniquely Japanese legal anomaly.

Since the first-degree ruling, local authorities and even private hotels have refused to rent premises to the Unification Church, claiming they cannot support activities “harming public welfare.” Religious organizations are not made of angels; they are made of human beings who need places to gather, pastors who receive salaries, books and magazines that need to be printed. Without premises and without funds, what “religious activities” are believers supposed to conduct?

The courts’ assurances will soon be tested. If their words are to be taken seriously, they must ensure that any new organization believers establish—fully permitted under Japanese law—is not harassed by opponents, and that discrimination against members and their families is investigated and punished. Otherwise, the promise that believers’ activities will not be “restricted” is nothing more than a polite fiction.

Japan once killed thousands of Christians over three centuries of persecution. Christianity survived. Roman emperors tried to crush the early Church; it became the world’s largest religion. Communist China—whose fingerprints are visible throughout the campaign against the Unification Church in both Japan and Korea—has jailed, tortured, and executed hundreds of thousands of Christians, yet their numbers continue to grow. Muhammad’s opponents believed that exiling him from Mecca would extinguish his movement; today, Islam has two billion followers. Even Adolf Hitler did not destroy Judaism.

Persecutors rarely win. They merely write the early chapters of stories that end with their own irrelevance.

I know many Unification Church believers in Japan—young and old, women and men. Their resilience in the face of this unjust persecution, a form of moral martyrdom, has been remarkable. They will still be there when their opponents are forgotten, consigned to the dustbin of history. Religions tend to outlast the forces that seek to destroy them. Those forces may believe they have “won” in Japan. History suggests otherwise. It is usually the persecuted who have the last laugh.

[Japan](#), [Religious Liberty](#), [Religious Persecution](#), [Unification Church](#)



Massimo Introvigne

Massimo Introvigne (born June 14, 1955 in Rome) is an Italian sociologist of religions. He is the founder and managing director of the Center for Studies on New Religions ([CESNUR](#)), an international network of scholars who study new religious movements. Introvigne is the author of some 70 books and more than 100 articles in the field of sociology of religion. He was the main author of the [Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia](#) (Encyclopedia of Religions in Italy). He is a member of the editorial board for the [Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion](#) and of the executive board of University of California Press’ [Nova Religio](#). From January 5 to December 31, 2011, he has served as the “Representative on combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, with a special focus on discrimination against Christians and members of other religions” of the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#) (OSCE). From 2012 to 2015 he served as chairperson of the Observatory of Religious Liberty, instituted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to monitor problems of religious liberty on a worldwide scale.

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