

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japan's Government Sued for Religious Abuse

Knut Holdhus
April 21, 2026



Japan sued by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Illustration: ChatGPT



As the Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan has sued the state, rushed policy on religion and child abuse faces backlash being accused of bias

Tokyo, 21st April 2026 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

[Editorial] "Religious Abuse" Lawsuit

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare's Q and A Should Be Withdrawn

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

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare's Q and A guidelines on "child abuse related to religious beliefs" (so-called "religious abuse") have faced strong criticism since their publication for allegedly promoting prejudice and discrimination against religion. A lawsuit has now been filed against these guidelines. At this point, the government should withdraw them.



Jehovah's Witnesses Seek Declaration of Invalidity

See also [Religious Minorities: UN Experts Caution Japan](#)

See also [Religious Freedom in Jeopardy After Dissolution](#)

The plaintiffs seeking confirmation of invalidity of the guidelines and compensation from the state are the religious organization Jehovah's Witnesses and 20 of its members. This is because the guidelines include items related to the organization's teachings.

For example, the guidelines state that if a child falls asleep during a doctrinal lecture and a parent responds by hitting or whipping the child, this constitutes "physical abuse". They also classify refusal of a blood transfusion deemed necessary by a physician as "neglect". However, the Bible - highly valued by believers - contains teachings such as "do not withhold discipline from a child" [Proverbs 23:13] and "abstain from blood" [Acts 15:29].

From the standpoint of current social norms, it may seem reasonable to interpret corporal punishment and refusal of medical treatment as child abuse. In particular, refusal of blood transfusions is a difficult issue

because it can be life-threatening and lies at the boundary of religious freedom. However, if cases involving individuals aged 15 or older who possess decision-making capacity and voluntarily refuse transfusions are mechanically deemed "child abuse", does this not amount to denying the child's personhood? Would it not run counter to the growing emphasis on respecting children's right to self-determination? These issues require discussion from multiple perspectives.



The Jehovah's Witnesses, another persecuted religious minority in Japan. Here, a female believer at a street display for Jehovah's Witnesses in Naha City, Okinawa, Japan January 13, 2025



Although Japanese media have largely not reported on it, attention should be paid to the fact that not only Japanese education experts but also the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has issued warnings regarding these guidelines. The guidelines include provisions that classify religious instruction using phrases such as "you will go to hell if you do/do not do this" as "psychological abuse", potentially rejecting religious education itself and fostering prejudice and discrimination against religion.

There is no evidence that religious households have higher rates of child abuse than non-religious ones, yet these guidelines risk establishing a new category of "religious abuse". This cannot be accepted. Rather, it

should be recognized as problematic that religious education for children has been neglected and that materialistic ways of thinking are spreading in society - factors that may be contributing to the rapid increase in child abuse.

However, even if an act is religious in nature, causing harm to another person's body constitutes a violation of the freedom of religion, as established by Supreme Court precedent. At the same time, the guidelines raise a fundamental question: to what extent can public authorities intervene when guardians, who hold the right to educate their children, provide religious instruction privately as part of passing on their faith? The failure to engage in this discussion is what constitutes a flaw in the guidelines.

Following the July 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the media focused on so-called "second-generation religious adherents" who claim to have been abused by parents with religious beliefs. Amid this surge of attention, the guidelines were hastily created. The religious organization's claim that the guidelines were drafted without seeking input from independent experts or the general public, and thus lack transparency, accurately points to a failing on the part of the government.

Discussion from Multiple Perspectives Is Needed

In drafting such guidelines, it is essential to hear from religious organizations and to engage in discussion from multiple perspectives, including the religious freedom of both parents and children, improvements in parenting difficulties, and the protection of children from abusive conduct. Only then should it be determined whether such guidelines are necessary.

See also [Religious Minorities: UN Experts Caution Japan](#)

See also [Religious Freedom in Jeopardy After Dissolution](#)

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

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

See also [State Grabs 260 Churches After Dissolution](#)

See also [UN Submission Protests Mass Closure of Churches](#)

Related to Japan sued: [Lawfare: State Uses Legal System in War on Faith](#)

Also related to Japan sued: [MEXT's Legal Spin and "Dissolution at All Costs"](#)

Also related to Japan sued: [UN Report: Japan's Lawfare Against Faith Minority](#)

And also related to Japan sued: [Protesting No Transparency in Closed-Door Trial](#)

More, related to Japan sued: [Dangerous Flaws in Dissolution Order Decried](#)

Also related to Japan sued: ["Lawyers Lying and Shaming Japan" for 50 Years](#)

And also related to Japan sued: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

And also related to Japan sued: [Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook](#)

More, related to Japan sued: [Media/Legal Expert: Communism Behind Persecution](#)

And more, related to Japan sued: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

More, related to Japan sued: [Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights](#)

And more, related to Japan sued: [State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"](#)

Still more, related to Japan sued: [Japan Copying China: State Seizure of Churches](#)

And still more, related to Japan sued: [12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan](#)

More, related to Japan sued: [4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions](#)

And more, related to Japan sued: [Japan: Families Fear for Graves of Loved Ones](#)

Yet more, related to Japan sued: [Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying](#)

Also related to Japan sued: [Kishida Follows Anti-Family Federation Minister](#)

Also related to Japan sued: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

Still more, related to Japan sued: [Malicious One-Sided Government Source Selection](#)

Yet more, related to Japan sued: [Kishida's Self-Defeating Populist Decisions](#)

And still more, related to Japan sued: [Japan Urged to Make U-Turn](#)

And yet more, related to Japan sued: [Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions](#)

Even more, related to Japan sued: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

Yet more, related to Japan taken to court: [Japanese Communists' Final War](#)

Still more, related to Japan taken to court: [Political and Social Activism behind Oppression](#)

Still more, related to Japan taken to court: [Dissolution Case: Rule of Law on Trial 4th March](#)



Cemetery Last Refuge For Displaced Worshippers

April 20, 2026 • Knut Holdhus



As final appeal against "unconstitutional" dissolution order has been filed to Supreme Court, loss of worship spaces deepens crisis for Family Federation believers as they gather at their last refuge – a cemetery

Tokyo, 17th April 2026 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article.*



Logo of the *Sekai Nippo*

[Part 9 (final) of a Series] In Search of a Spiritual Anchor – One Month After the Dissolution of the Family Federation

The Future of Believers Entrusted to a Special Appeal

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

See part 1 of the series: [Beyond the Ban Believers Sustain Community](#)

See part 2 of the series: [Transparency Concerns: Non-Disclosure of Records](#)

See part 3 of the series: [Believers' Social Exclusion, Loss of Civil Rights](#)

See part 4 of the series: [Media's Role: Frenzy, Silence, and Consequences](#)

See part 5 of the series: [Liquidation Without Transparency Sparks Anxiety](#)

See part 6 of the series: [Fear of Return of Coercive Faith-Breaking Abuse](#)

See part 7 of the series: [Manufactured Victimhood, Lawsuits, Faith-Breaking](#)

See part 8 of the series: [Mental Health Risks Emerge After Dissolution](#)

The *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (formerly the Unification Church), which has entered liquidation proceedings, filed a special appeal with the Supreme Court

Share:



More Posts



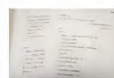
Religious Freedom In Jeopardy After Dissolution
April 23, 2026



Legal Offensive Enters Asset Distribution Phase
April 22, 2026



Japan Sued Over "Religious Abuse" Guidelines
April 21, 2026



Scholar: "Unconstitutional, Invalid" Dissolution
April 19, 2026



"Church Closure" Risks In South Korea's New Bill
April 18, 2026



Mental Health Risks Emerge After Dissolution
April 18, 2026



Manufactured Victimhood, Lawsuits, Faith-Breaking
April 17, 2026

Search...



Categories

Send us a message

First Name * Last Name

Email *

Email Address

Your Message *

Submit

which has entered [liquidation](#) proceedings, filed a [special appeal](#) with the Supreme Court of Japan on 9th March against the [dissolution order](#) issued by the *Tokyo High Court*. On 25th March, it submitted a statement of reasons for the appeal. The [religious organization](#) argues that including civil torts under the Civil Code as grounds for dissolution and handling the procedure as a non-public non-contentious case [\[See editor's note 1 below\]](#) are [unconstitutional](#).

The [religious organization](#) also pointed out that since its 2009 “compliance declaration” [\[See editor's note 2 below\]](#), no specific acts or facts constituting alleged “unlawful acts” by its followers have been identified or established. Despite this, the court recognized as fact that “inappropriate donation solicitations constituting acts wrongful according to civil law continued even after the declaration” [\[See editor's note 2 below\]](#) and issued the [dissolution order](#). The [religious organization](#) claims this represents “a serious departure from the fundamental structure of judicial proceedings” and violates the right to a fair trial.



Setsu Kobayashi (小林節), author, constitutional scholar and professor emeritus at Keio University, Japan. Photo (2015): OurPlanet-TV. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp

In response to the [High Court's decision](#), well-known figures who felt deep concern and a sense of crisis have also submitted opinion statements to the [Supreme Court](#). Constitutional scholar Setsu Kobayashi (小林節), Professor Emeritus at Keio University, emphasized that the case involves freedom of religion – considered a “preferred fundamental right”. He argued that restrictions should be allowed only when there is a “clear and present danger”, and that “less restrictive means” must be chosen. He criticized dismissing the impact of the [religious organization's](#) dissolution on believers as merely “indirect and de facto”, and called the justification for a closed trial “far-fetched”.

High Court's logic – asserting, based on assumptions and speculation, that measures under the *Act on Prevention of Improper Donation Solicitation* are ineffective and that a dissolution order is indispensable – is completely flawed.” He called on the [Supreme Court](#) to “avoid being swayed by public sentiment, calmly confront sound arguments head-on, and, after careful deliberation, render a wise judgment.”

Placing their last hopes in the [special appeal](#), believers are enduring difficult times during which they are unable to enter religious facilities now under the control of a court-appointed [liquidator](#). Meanwhile, on 11th April, more than 500 believers visited the Minegashiro Cemetery (Central Japan Cemetery) in Suzuka City, Mie Prefecture – where the graves of fellow believers are located – to pay their respects. This was a “joint graveside visit” event organized by the *Central Japan Bereaved Families Association*.

According to the association, an annual joint memorial service called the “Central Japan Seiwa Festival” had previously been held at this time of year. As an alternative event, and in accordance with policies set by the [liquidator](#), it was organized by the bereaved families' association rather than the [religious organization](#).

Initially, attendance was expected to be at most around 200 people, but in reality, more than 500 participated – far exceeding expectations. Jiro Nakabayashi (中林次郎), head of the association, said,

“Above all, we wanted people to feel glad they came. We made efforts to provide even better hospitality than at the Seiwa Festival, including boxed meals, pork soup, and ice cream.”

Possibly influenced by the *Tokyo High Court's* 4th [March decision](#) to uphold the dissolution order, he added,

“I feel that many people came not only to visit graves but also looking forward to reconnecting with others they haven't seen in a long time.”



The “Central Japan (Chu-Nihon) Cemetery” spreads across a mountain area in Suzuka City, Mie Prefecture. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀); image partially edited.

One participant, a woman in her 30s living in the Chubu region, said she joined the event partly due to concerns about the future of the cemetery. She felt relieved that she was able to visit the graves without issue this time, saying,

“Perhaps we've gotten past the concern that the cemetery itself might become subject to liquidation.”

However, she also expressed ongoing anxiety, noting,

“Given the strong voice of opponents of the [Family Federation](#) in the media, if something happens again, I think worries about the graves will resurface.”

The psychological suffering of believers who have lost places for worship and community is immeasurable. The prospect of also losing the cemetery would be an unbearable burden. At present, the cemetery is the only place connected to the [organization](#) where believers – who cannot even enter [church sanctuaries](#) – can gather.

Whether believers will be able to regain their “spiritual anchor” (信仰の寄る辺), and whether Japanese society can reconsider what “religious freedom” truly means, now stand at a critical turning point.

(End of series)



Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto (福本修也), here at Tokyo press conference 25th March 2025. Screenshot from video by FFWPU.

See part 1 of the series: [Beyond the Ban Believers Sustain Community](#)

See part 2 of the series: [Transparency Concerns: Non-Disclosure of Records](#)

See part 3 of the series: [Believers' Social Exclusion, Loss of Civil Rights](#)

See part 4 of the series: [Media's Role: Frenzy, Silence, and Consequences](#)

See part 5 of the series: [Liquidation Without Transparency Sparks Anxiety](#)

See part 6 of the series: [Fear of Return of Coercive Faith-Breaking Abuse](#)

See part 7 of the series: [Manufactured Victimhood, Lawsuits, Faith-Breaking](#)

See part 8 of the series: [Mental Health Risks Emerge After Dissolution](#)

Featured image above: *The Supreme Court in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo.* Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

Editor's note 1: 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.]

Editor's note 2: 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.]

Related to cemetery last refuge: [Lawfare: State Uses Legal System in War on Faith](#)

More, related to cemetery last refuge: [Scholar Questions Secrecy in Dissolution Case](#)

And more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Shocked Author: "Japan Ignores Basics of Justice"](#)

Still more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Legal Inconsistencies A Blow to Democracy](#)

Even more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Japan: Court Accused of Using Speculation](#)

Also related to cemetery last refuge: [MEXT's Legal Spin and "Dissolution at All Costs"](#)

Also related to cemetery last refuge: [UN Report: Japan's Lawfare Against Faith Minority](#)

And also related to cemetery last refuge: [Protesting No Transparency in Closed-Door Trial](#)

More, related to cemetery last refuge: [Dangerous Flaws in Dissolution Order Decried](#)

Also related to cemetery last refuge: ["Lawyers Lying and Shaming Japan" for 50 Years](#)

And also related to cemetery last refuge: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

And also related to cemetery last refuge: [Japan's Dissolution Case Echoes China's Playbook](#)

More, related to cemetery last refuge: [Media/Legal Expert: Communism Behind Persecution](#)

And more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

More, related to cemetery last refuge: [Collusion to Rob Minority of Its Rights](#)

And more, related to cemetery last refuge: [State and Media Creating "Today's Non-Citizens"](#)

Still more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Japan Copying China: State Seizure of Churches](#)

And still more, related to cemetery last refuge: [12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan](#)

More, related to cemetery last refuge: [4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions](#)

And more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Japan: Families Fear for Graves of Loved Ones](#)

Yet more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying](#)

Also related to cemetery last refuge: [Kishida Follows Anti-Family Federation Minister](#)

Also related to cemetery last refuge: [Militant Lawyers Dictate Government Policy](#)

Still more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Malicious One-Sided Government Source Selection](#)

And still more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Japan Urged to Make U-Turn](#)

And yet more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Dangerous Precedent to Crush Religions](#)

Even more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)

Yet more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Japanese Communists' Final War](#)

Still more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Political and Social Activism behind Oppression](#)

Still more, related to cemetery last refuge: [Dissolution Case: Rule of Law on Trial 4th March](#)

« Previous
Scholar: “Unconstitutional, Invalid” Diss... Japan Sued Over “Religious Abuse” Guid... Next »



GET STARTED

[Home](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

First Name

Last Name

Your Email Address

I consent to have this website store my submitted information so they can respond to my inquiry

Follow us

