

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japan Appoints Known Bigot to Judge Those She Hates

Knut Holdhus
May 28, 2026



The Supreme Court of Japan (Saikōsaibansho)



AI-illustration of Justice Masami Okino - Image: Grok xAI

Shattered hope for judicial impartiality in decisive Supreme Court hearings as court rejects bid to remove justice with ties to hostile network of lawyers

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The dispute arises in the broader context of one of the most consequential religious freedom cases in postwar Japan. In March 2026, the Tokyo High Court upheld a court order dissolving the [Family Federation](#) as a religious corporation, citing allegations long advocated by a network of hostile activist lawyers. Several of those lawyers were appointed as advisors to the government, which built their dissolution case against the [Family Federation](#) on "harms" connected to large-scale donations and so-called "spiritual sales" practices.

As a last resort, the [religious organization](#) subsequently filed a special appeal with the Supreme Court, making the case a major test of the balance between state authority, and constitutional

guarantees of religious liberty.



The large Japanese news agency [Kyodo News](#) reported on 28th May 2026 on a new controversy that has emerged around the Supreme Court proceedings concerning the dissolution order against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), formerly known as the [Unification Church](#). The issue centers on Supreme Court Justice Masami Okino (沖野眞巳), whose prior public comments about the [religious organization](#) became the basis for a motion seeking her disqualification from the case. On 27th May, however, the First Petty Bench of the Supreme Court rejected that motion, stating that the circumstances cited by the [religious organization](#)

"cannot be regarded as impairing the fairness of the trial."

Concerns about judicial impartiality intensified after an article published on 22nd May by the Japanese online magazine BEST TIMES highlighted Justice Okino's participation in a July 2024 seminar organized by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations. The seminar focused on "spiritual sales" issues and included lawyers associated with the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, a group long critical of the [Family Federation](#).

According to the [religious organization's](#) petition, Okino made remarks utterly condemning the [Federation](#) during the seminar suggesting that the Federation's missionary activities themselves posed serious

problems. She reportedly stated that there were "similarities with multi-level marketing schemes". Critics of her involvement argue that such statements demonstrate a prejudgment of issues directly connected to the pending appeal.



Professor Masaki Nakamasa (Dec. 2025)



Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto, here speaking at a press conference in Tokyo September 8, 2023

The BEST T!MES article, written by political philosopher and commentator Masaki Nakamasa (仲正 昌樹), portrayed the situation as a profound threat to judicial neutrality and religious freedom in Japan. The article argued that Okino's comments appeared to go beyond criticism of fundraising practices and instead treated the mere propagation of the [Family Federation's](#) doctrine as inherently problematic. Nakamasa characterized this as incompatible with the principles of a state governed by the rule of law and questioned why the justice had not voluntarily withdrawn from the proceedings.

Against this backdrop, the Supreme Court's rejection of the recusal motion was brief and categorical. The First Petty Bench concluded that the circumstances raised by the [Family Federation](#) were insufficient to establish that Justice Okino's participation would compromise the fairness of the proceedings. The decision effectively allows her to remain involved in deliberations on the [organization's](#) special appeal.

The [Family Federation's](#) legal team reacted sharply. In a statement released on 28th May, Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto (福本修也) of [Fukumoto Law Office](#) stated:

"On 27th May 2026, the First Petty Bench of the Supreme Court rejected the motion to disqualify Justice Masami Okino (沖野眞巳). The stated reason for the rejection was that 'the circumstances cited in this motion cannot be regarded as impairing the fairness of the trial.' We cannot accept this decision at all."

For supporters of the [Family Federation](#), the issue has become symbolic of what they see as institutional prejudice against the [religious organization](#) in the aftermath of the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) in 2022, which triggered an intense wave of persecution of the [religious organization](#).

The organized opposition to what until 2015 In Japan was called the [Unification Church](#), can be traced back to the 1970's when members helped conservative candidates defeat leftwing politicians in local and national elections. After parties on the left of the political scale had suffered a series of such election losses, leftwing lawyers formed what became National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales in order to have the [Unification Church](#) - now the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) - dissolved by means of systematic lawfare.

Justice Okino herself is a prominent civil law scholar who served at the University of Tokyo and became the first female dean of its law faculty before being appointed to the Supreme Court by the former administration of Shigeru Ishiba (石破 茂) in July 2025. Her academic reputation and public comments have now placed her at the center of a legal and political battle with implications extending well beyond a single religious organization.

As the Supreme Court moves forward with the [Family Federation's](#) final appeal, the debate over judicial neutrality, freedom of religion, and the role of courts in politically charged cases is likely to intensify further.

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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Tokyo, 26th May 2026 – Published as an
article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai
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Translated from Japanese. *Original article*.

“We Want a Fair Hearing We Can Accept”

Second-Generation Followers of the Family Federation Hold Press Conference

by editorial staff of the *Sekai
Nippo*

Regarding the **dissolution
order** against the *Family
Federation for World Peace
and Unification* (formerly
known as the **Unification
Church**), following the filing on
21st May of a motion to
disqualify Justice **Masami
Okino** (沖野眞巳) – who is
handling the **special appeal** –
by attorneys advising the
religious organization, the
“Association of Second-
Generation Members
Protecting Believers’ Human Rights,” composed mainly of
second-generation believers, held a press conference in
Tokyo on 26th May.



AI-illustration of Justice
Masami Okino (沖野眞巳).
Image: Grok xAI, 22nd
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The group expressed concern over comments made by
Justice Okino in July 2024 at a seminar hosted by *National
Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (Zenkoku
Benren) on the topic of “spiritual-sales fraud”, where the
justice reportedly voiced negative views regarding
missionary activities and donations by believers. The group
stated that they were “shocked” by those remarks and
called for a fair trial.

Nozomi Kojima (小薦希晶 – 30), the group’s leader, said that
Justice Okino’s past views themselves were “a matter of
personal freedom”, but added,

“A person with those kinds of beliefs and ideology
should not be serving in a deliberative role that
requires neutrality and fairness.”

Showing deep frustration, Kojima further stated:

“If the decision were made through a fair trial, we
could accept it and come to terms with it, even if
it meant dissolution. That was our only ray of hope
amid the despair, but even that has been taken
away, and it’s painful to be subjected to
proceedings that anyone can see are unfair.”

Satoshi Komura (小村聡士 – 31),
a current second-generation
believer, described the
Supreme Court’s judgment as
“the last hope for believers,”



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and stressed that if [Justice Okino's](#) appointment was deliberate, “trust in the trial itself would be lost.”

International lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama (中山達樹) said that he did not know how the motion or the [special appeal](#) would ultimately be decided, but added:

“The deliberations on the [special appeal](#) will first be halted while the motion is considered. However, under the current structure, it does not seem likely that a decision people can genuinely accept will be reached.”



Satoshi Komura (小村 聡士). Screenshot from video by Association of Second-Generation Members Protecting Believers' Human Rights.

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Featured image above: Nozomi Kojima (小島希晶 – right), representative of the “Association of Second-Generation Members Protecting Believers' Human Rights,” and international lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama (中山達樹) at a press conference on the afternoon of 26th May 2026, in Shinjuku Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀).

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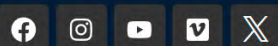
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