

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan Censors True But Negative Reports

Knut Holdhus  
January 10, 2025



Facsimile from the first page of Masumi Fukuda's report in Monthly Hanada September 2023

### Investigative journalist: Reporting contrary to government narrative is blocked on editorial level or censored by Japanese authorities

The Japanese magazine Monthly Hanada published in its September 2023 issue a report by award-winning Japanese author Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ), who is known for her investigative journalism. She exposes a blatant media bias as well as an aggressive censorship imposed by the authorities. She reveals how a government body - Agency for Cultural Affairs - reprimanded and threatened some media outlets that went against the grain and dared to publish viewpoints expressed by the [Family Federation](#) in the middle of the authorities' campaign against the [religious minority](#).

Her extensive report was headlined "Dissolution Request Push - Censorship of Speech by Tetsuo Goda, Deputy Director-General of the Agency for Cultural Affairs". We publish it now because of its high relevance in the ongoing witch hunt against the [Family Federation](#) in Japan. In addition, the content has never before been published outside the land of the rising sun.

### The Inability to Report Truth

The investigative journalist points out that since the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) in July 2022, the relentless criticism of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)) shows no sign of abating, even after more than a year. A troubling narrative persists in which the actual victim, Abe, along with the [Family Federation](#), is misrepresented as a perpetrator, while the perpetrator, Tetsuya Yamagami (山上哲也), is painted as a victim. This distortion of public perception continues to take hold in a manner that reflects deliberate manipulation.

An invisible barrier appears to dominate media coverage, prohibiting any reporting that might present the [Family Federation](#) in a positive or even neutral light. This phenomenon bears resemblance to a kind of modern "press code," where content favorable to the [federation](#) is suppressed outright.

### Historical Context of Media Control



*GHQ (General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) around 1950. After World War II, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), a role held by General Douglas MacArthur from 1945 to 1951, was responsible for overseeing the occupation and reconstruction of Japan. The SCAP had broad authority and was tasked with implementing the terms of Japan's surrender and facilitating its transition into a peaceful, democratic nation. Key responsibilities included demilitarization, democratization, economic reconstruction, war crime trials, social reforms, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The occupation formally ended in 1952 with the signing of the Treaty of San Francisco, which restored Japan's sovereignty*

Masumi Fukuda explains how the term "press code" originates from the post-World War II occupation of Japan by Allied forces. During this period, the General Headquarters (GHQ) imposed strict media guidelines to suppress criticism of the occupation forces and certain sensitive topics, such as the atomic bombings. While the 1946 Japanese Constitution enshrined freedom of expression, the GHQ's pre-publication censorship was a glaring contradiction to those ideals. This hypocrisy - espousing democratic values while restricting speech - was largely hidden from public awareness.

Today, a similar situation seems to exist, particularly regarding coverage of the [Family Federation](#). Major media outlets, including television networks, newspapers, and magazines, avoid providing balanced or fact-based commentary on the [organization](#). Only a few niche publications make an effort to present a different perspective.

### **The Breakdown of Media Neutrality**

A journalist from a prominent media outlet who has covered the [Family Federation](#) reveals a troubling reality. He confesses,

"I've spoken with members and found them to

be kind-hearted people. I've also realized that the Nationwide Lawyers' Network's claims lack credibility. Despite my desire to report the truth, any content even slightly favorable to the [Family Federation](#) is blocked at the editorial level."

The societal narrative of "Family Federation = evil" has effectively created a chilling effect on objective journalism.

This self-censorship among media professionals suggests the existence of an unwritten rule that restricts fair reporting on the [organization](#). But is the media's silence solely a matter of following societal expectations?

### **The Case of FNN's Report**



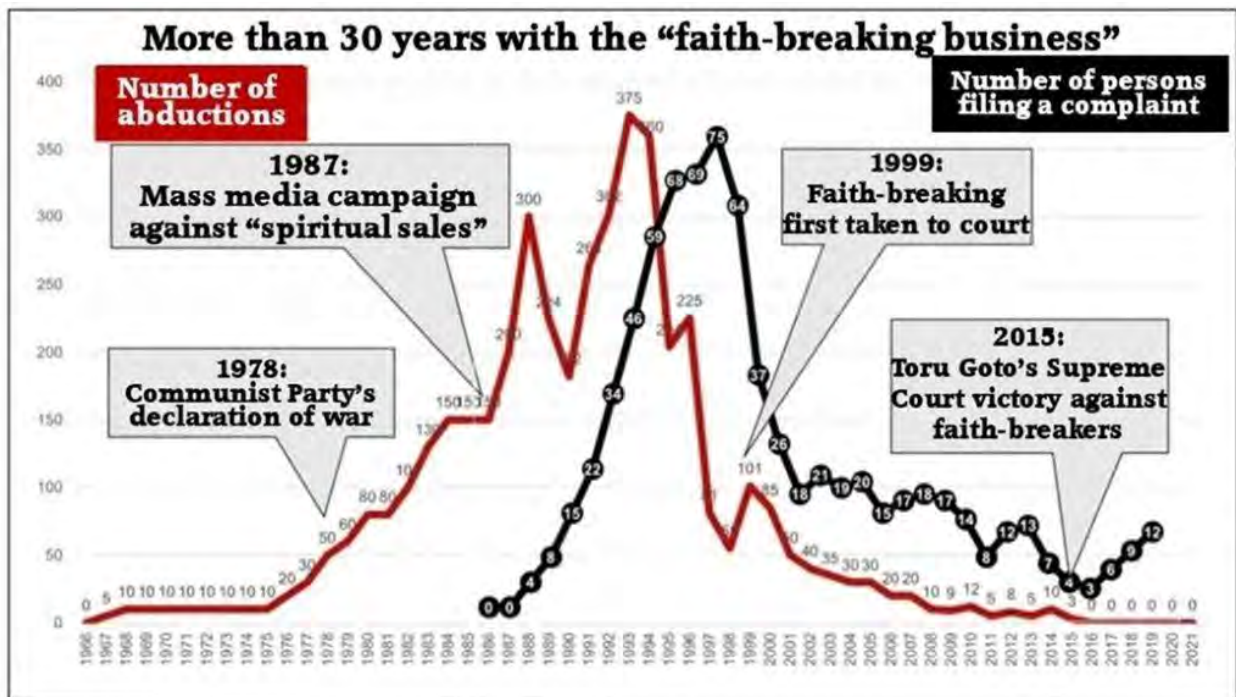
Fukuda writes that an illustrative example of the media's reluctance to report openly on the [Family Federation](#) comes from a news segment aired by Fuji News Network (FNN) on 6th January 2023. The broadcast reported on a response document submitted by the Family Federation to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). The

document addressed issues of abduction and confinement aimed at coercing members to leave the [organization](#).

### **The Graph and Its Implications**

The [Family Federation](#)'s graph showed a striking pattern: as abduction and confinement incidents increased, so did the number of plaintiffs in lawsuits against the [federation](#). Conversely, when such incidents decreased, the number of plaintiffs also declined. The [organization](#) attributed this correlation to incidents in which parents, influenced by professional faith-breakers or pastors, forcibly confined their own family members to pressure them into leaving the [religious organization](#). According to the [federation](#), over 4,700 such cases have occurred, with nearly 70% of victims renouncing their faith under duress.

Fukuda mentions that despite the critical insights provided by this data, FNN omitted necessary explanations, rendering the broadcast ineffective in conveying the gravity of the issue. This omission underscores the media's broader unwillingness to tackle the subject with the depth and clarity it deserves.



The segment attempted to highlight a graph included in the [federation's](#) submission. This graph demonstrated a correlation between the number of abduction and confinement cases and the number of plaintiffs involved in civil lawsuits against the [religious organization](#). However, the report's presentation was confusing and lacked critical context, making it difficult for viewers to grasp its significance. Without prior knowledge, phrases such as "abduction and confinement aimed at forcing individuals to leave the [church](#)" were likely incomprehensible to the average audience. Moreover, the lack of explanation for why abduction cases corresponded to lawsuits left the report's message unclear.

### Institutional Backlash



Following the broadcast, FNN faced immediate repercussions. Deputy Director-General Tetsuo Goda (合田哲雄) of the Agency for Cultural Affairs summoned FNN executives and explicitly instructed them to avoid airing "one-sided claims from the [church](#)." This intervention extended to banning a journalist who happened to be reporting at the Agency for Cultural Affairs at the time, further illustrating the institutional resistance to open discourse on the [Family Federation](#).

Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto (福本修也), a legal representative for the [Family Federation](#), shared this account with the author. Fukumoto confirmed that FNN's journalist who covered the story had fully understood the implications of the graph when preparing the report. However, editorial decisions diluted the content to the point of incoherence. Efforts to verify these claims directly with the journalist met with evasive responses, underscoring the pressures reporters face when navigating sensitive topics.



Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto at press conference Sep. 8, 2023

### Media Taboo

The phrase "abduction and confinement of [Family Federation](#) members" has become a taboo across media platforms. Even prominent figures like comedian Hikari Ota (太田光) have faced backlash for broaching the subject. When Ota mentioned it on the TBS program Sunday Japon, he was met with intense criticism, reflecting the pervasive stigma surrounding the issue.

FNN's January 2023 broadcast appears to have inadvertently crossed a line by using the term during a sensitive period when the Agency for Cultural Affairs was gathering evidence to potentially dissolve the [Family Federation](#). The agency's response to the broadcast suggests a coordinated effort to suppress discussions that could challenge the dominant narrative.

### The Broader Implications

The reluctance to openly discuss the [Family Federation's](#) issues points to a troubling erosion of journalistic principles. In theory, media outlets are tasked with providing balanced, factual reporting that

serves the public interest. Yet in practice, societal pressure and institutional intervention have created an environment where certain topics are effectively off-limits. This dynamic not only undermines freedom of expression but also deprives the public of the information needed to form nuanced opinions.



## Conclusion

The ongoing vilification of the [Family Federation](#) and the suppression of alternative narratives reflect a deeper malaise within Japan's media landscape. The parallels to the postwar "press code" are striking: just as the GHQ's censorship disguised itself as a champion of free speech, today's media restrictions operate under the guise of preserving societal harmony.

Addressing this issue requires a commitment to upholding journalistic integrity, even in the face of societal and institutional resistance. Only by fostering an open and honest discourse can the media fulfill its role as a watchdog for truth and accountability. For now, however, the truth remains an elusive commodity, buried beneath layers of silence and suppression.

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# Journalists Point Out Vicious Media Bias

• January 23, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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**Media bias and discrimination described by journalists / authors at Tokyo symposium.**

Tokyo, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

## Why Did Reporting Go Astray? Thorough Examination by Journalists on Reporting about the Former Unification Church

by the editorial department, Sekai Nippo

### Symposium in Tokyo

The symposium “Why Did Reporting Go Astray? Thorough Examination by Journalists on Reporting on the Former [Unification Church](#)” (organized by UPF-Japan) was held on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2024 in Tokyo to



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

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
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investigate the media's continued coverage bashing the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)). As panelists, non-fiction writer Masaki Kubota (窪田順生), non-fiction author Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ), and author Fumihiro Kato (加藤文宏) attended, expressing their respective views.



Masaki Kubota.  
Photo: Sekai Nippo

**Kubota** pointed out factors contributing to the media's "astray" reporting, such as **excessive reliance on sources** and a tendency to **unquestionably believe in reports from fellow journalists**. While respecting the media's role in rigorously investigating the [religious organisation](#), he emphasized the issue of **imbalance**, stating,

"It's a problem. This is not wartime, so **interviews with believers should be included**, and that is the role of the media."

**Fukuda** touched upon the issue of abduction and confinement of followers of the [religious group](#), highlighting that it was testimonies of ex-members that resulted in dissolution requests. She further stated,

"While spiritual sales practices have been extensively reported and even called an 'enormous evil,' the **issue of abduction and confinement has never been reported**.

Ordinary people are unaware of its maliciousness and reality. It is a major incident in Japanese society, and it is natural to continue to speak about it."



Masumi Fukuda.  
Photo: FOREF



Fumihiro Kato  
20th Jan. 2024.  
Photo:  
Screenshot from  
video recording  
by UPF-Japan.

**Kato** presented the fluctuation in the number of searches for "[Unification Church](#)" on Google, revealing a sharp increase in searches in July 2022, followed by a rapid decline. In 2023, the search volume was higher than before the shooting incident involving former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, but it remained low. From this, Kato concluded,

"The continuous discussion of the relationship between the [religious organisation](#) and politics in the media was limited to a **small segment of the population**. The chasing of the [religious group](#) has caused a **division in society between those who discriminate and those being discriminated**. This is harmful not only

to believers, but also to Japanese society as a whole."

**Featured image** above: From left, Fumihiro Kato (加藤文宏), Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ), Masaki Kubota (窪田順生), who attended the symposium as panelists at the Kyoto District Court (京都地裁) on afternoon of 20<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2024, Shinjuku (都新宿) ward, Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀) / Sekai Nippo. Published with permission.

"Journalists Point out Vicious Media Bias" – text: Editorial department, Sekai Nippo, Tokyo.

More about media bias: [Media-Created Public Opinion Is Boss](#)

Yet more about media bias: [Horrendous Persecution in Japan](#)

Still more about media bias: [Press Release about Media Attacks](#)

**Masaki Kubota** (窪田順生) is the author of "Infiltrating the Former [Unification Church](#) – the Complete Story of the Request for a Dissolution Order and the Deepest Secrets of the 'No Good Coverage'" (2023). He has also authored several other books and is a non-fiction writer who has contributed to weekly and monthly magazines. Kubota has also worked first as a producer, then as an advisor for TV-documentaries. He is journalist for a weekly magazine and a newspaper, and editor of a monthly magazine.

See a series of articles containing an interview with him and more about media bias:

[Author from Media World Exposes Its Huge Bias](#)

[A One-Sided, Prejudiced, Unfair Japanese Media](#)

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The front cover of 'Infiltrating the Former Unification Church' (潜入 旧統一教会 「解散命令請求」取材NG最深部の全貌 – Tankobon Softcover, Nov. 2023), by Masaki Kubota (窪田順生).

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*Media Consultant / Author on Media Relationship*

**Masumi Fukuda** (福田ますみ) is an award-winning Japanese author, also known for her investigative journalism. She has researched the **Unification Church** issue extensively and has written two series of articles about it in the monthly magazine *Hanada*. See

**Lawyers Manipulating, Coercing, Lying and**

**Illegalities of Activist Lawyers Exposed**

**Fumihiko Kato** (加藤文宏) has published several books as Fumi Kato. Launched the interview magazine *Monthly IJ* covering a wide range of people, from the general public to celebrities. Wrote an **analytic article** about the **Unification Church** issue and its media coverage in the February 2023 issue of the monthly magazine *Seiron*.

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