

# FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan's New Law Manufactures Victims, Dividing Families

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February 10, 2025



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**Expert on international human rights shocked by outrageous new anti-religious Japanese law that manufactures "victims" entitled to go to court to obtain large compensation for donations made years, even decades earlier**

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[Series] Request for Dissolution Order of the Family Federation - Suspicions of Fabricated Statements by the Ministry of Education

**Part 1 of interview with an expert: New Law Instead Leads to Family Division**

**International Human Rights Lawyer Patricia Duval**



The [report in Sekai Nippo](#) 21st January 2025 on alleged fabrications in controversial statements submitted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to Tokyo District Court. The report contains an interview with Miyuki Kawaguchi (pseudonym)

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

Duval also directly met with Miyuki Kawaguchi (pseudonym), who was previously [interviewed by our newspaper](#) on 21st January. Kawaguchi had spoken with her elderly mother, who had signed the MEXT statement, and the mother denied ever having said what was written in the document.

Question: What was your impression after meeting face-to-face with Miyuki Kawaguchi, who also spoke to our newspaper and Kyodo News?

I heard her testimony directly. As reported, it was the mother who introduced her daughter to the [church](#), and the two had lived a life of faith together for over 30 years.



However, the MEXT statement, which the mother supposedly signed, claimed that she had been coerced by her daughter into making donations long ago, and that she wished for the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#).

Originally, Kawaguchi's brother did not entirely share the faith of his mother and sister, but he also never actively opposed it. However, following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the media became flooded with one-sided criticism of the [Family Federation](#). This drastically changed his stance.

Following MEXT's request for a dissolution order, a new law called the Special Act on Relief for Victims of Certain Unlawful Acts was enacted at the end of the previous year. This law, effectively targeting the [Family Federation](#), allows individuals to more easily participate in collective negotiations for donation-related damages with government support.



It seems that the brother consulted Houterasu (Japan Legal Support Center), and MEXT later contacted their mother. After a lengthy interview, a statement was prepared.

What a shocking development! This new law has instead caused division within this family. The donations that the mother once made out of her faith were reframed - through MEXT's intervention - as coerced contributions made under her daughter's influence.



Furthermore, the suspicion that MEXT fabricated the testimony surfaced when a Kyodo News report was published by Sankei Shimbun. After this, the woman's sons reportedly visited her and said, "At least read the first page of the statement." They emphasized that it contained her handwritten signature, seemingly hoping for a selective interpretation of the facts. However, doubts deepened that the statement had been submitted without the mother fully verifying its contents.

As a result, the daughter was forced to submit a "counter-statement" to the Tokyo District Court through the [Family Federation](#), testifying to the true facts. The judge must now compare the two statements and consider the new family conflict caused by the new law.

In reality, the mother, who is over 90 years old, is caught in the middle of a conflict between her sons and her daughter. Should she be forced to abandon her faith? No, the government should remain neutral, respecting both the rights of believers and non-believers. In fact, the mother's freedom of religion should be protected.

The government likely intended to help victims when it enacted the new law, but in practice, it has become an authority that rewrites the past lives of elderly individuals. Instead of protecting the mother, it has brought her new suffering in her final years.



*Anti-religious legislation allows relatives of donors to claim refund decades later! Here, a Japanese woman offering a donation at a meeting*

### The New Law Manufactures "Victims"

Question: Isn't it ironic that the new law, rather than providing relief, is instead creating tragedies in believers' families?

As seen in the Kawaguchi case, the media's relentless focus on criticizing the [Family Federation](#) has caused significant harm to society. In an environment where there is little tolerance for new religious movements, believers' past donations - made as religious acts - have now been reframed as cases of "financial fraud", fostering resentment among their relatives.

With the enactment of the Special Act on Relief for Victims of Certain Unlawful Acts, which covers litigation costs for claimants, Ms. Kawaguchi's brother decided to pursue a refund claim. This government system has incited families into legal action, transforming

past events into "victimization" retroactively. Shockingly, donations made on average 20 years ago - and

in some cases up to 60 years ago - are now being reported as "damages".

During my visit to Japan, I was able to directly confirm how this new law is being applied alongside the Tokyo District Court's hearings on MEXT's dissolution order request.

The total amount of claims in the collective lawsuits coordinated by the National Lawyers Network against the [Unification Church](#) has now reached 5 billion yen (approximately \$33 million). In the future, additional claims could be created at any time. This systematic approach is effectively pushing the [Family Federation](#) toward [financial collapse](#).

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# “Poorly Compiled Evidence Including Falsehoods”

• February 10, 2025 • Knut Holdhus



*Experienced legal expert claims evidence containing falsehoods, and hearings behind closed doors infringe on rights of religious minority and are unconstitutional*

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Seishiro Sugihara, professor of the former Musashino Women's University

## Dissolution Request to Become a Major Issue

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

Part 1 of the article

This paper reported about fabrications in the statements submitted as evidence by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to the Tokyo District Court in its request for a dissolution order against the *Family Federation*

for *World Peace and Unification* (formerly the *Unification Church*). We spoke regarding the issue with professor Seishiro Sugihara (杉原誠四郎) of the former *Musashino Women's University*.



# 文部科学省

Symbol of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan. Photo: 文部科学省 (MEXT Japan) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int

**Q: As reported by this paper on 21st January, there are multiple pieces of information suggesting that the statements submitted as evidence by MEXT in its dissolution request were not actually written by the individuals identified as "victims", and that they contain falsehoods contrary to fact. What do you think about this?**

This was entirely predictable from the beginning.

Originally, when MEXT submitted the dissolution request to the *Tokyo District Court*, it announced the number of "victims" and the total "financial damage". However, this total was merely the sum of the amounts claimed by individuals who identified themselves as "victims".

To understand this, one can compare it to an ordinary criminal case. In criminal cases, prosecutors collect evidence to prove a crime, but not everything collected is immediately treated as evidence. Prosecutors assess the evidentiary value and credibility before determining which materials can serve as valid evidence.



Imbalanced scale of justice. Photo: 99joseph / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image

However, in this dissolution request by MEXT, the evidence submitted to the court was merely a **collection of "victim" reports, without any means of verifying their evidentiary validity. MEXT simply compiled the claimed damages and submitted them as they were.**

Given this, it is entirely foreseeable that statements could exist where the supposed "victims" themselves did not write them, or where falsehoods contradicting the facts were included. This is not surprising at all.

**Using such materials as grounds for dissolution and requesting a dissolution order is clearly an overreach as an administrative act.** If a dissolution request can be made based on such unfairly collected evidence, **then any "harm" reported by former believers who left their faith or by associates of believers could serve as grounds for dissolution.**



If that is the case, **how many existing religious corporations could be subjected to dissolution requests?** In short, the procedure used by MEXT to collect evidence for the dissolution request of the *Family Federation* is something that the *Religious Corporations Act* never originally intended.

Q: Senator Satoshi Hamada (浜田 聡) submitted a



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newspaper's report, but MEXT did not respond. What do you think about the fact that the proceedings are being conducted in a closed, non-public manner?

The Tokyo District Court is handling MEXT's dissolution request as a "non-contentious case" proceeding. Since this is not a trial in the usual sense, it is understandable that the process is not public. The secrecy of the proceedings is stipulated under the "Non-Contentious Case Procedures Act".

However, **if a religious organization is dissolved through such a non-public process, it means that its right to a public trial under Article 32 of the Constitution is not guaranteed, making this clearly unconstitutional.**

Regarding [Senator Hamada's inquiry](#), while MEXT did not respond, it is generally permissible for the deliberations of MEXT's *Religious Affairs Council* to be non-public due to the sensitive nature of the issues discussed. However, if the evidence that formed the basis of their conclusion includes falsehoods, this will inevitably become a major issue in the future.

What is particularly concerning is the **Religious Affairs Council** itself. Despite having multiple religious representatives as members, it **approved the dissolution request based on such poorly compiled materials** – this is a serious problem.

To be continued. Part 2 coming soon.

**Featured image above: Seishiro Sugihara**, born in 1941 in Hiroshima Prefecture. Completed a master's degree in education at the University of Tokyo Graduate School in 1967. Served as a professor at Josai University and Musashino Women's University (now Musashino University).

Notable publications include *The Ideal Separation of Religion and State and Constitutional Revision* (Jiyusha, 2015). Co-authored *The Disease Called Shigeru Yoshida* (Jiyusha, 2021). Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

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Senator Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡, House of Councillors, NHK Party) speaking on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2025, in Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan. Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

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