

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Kitakyushu City Council's Anti-FFWPU Resolution Appealed

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Attorney Shinichi Tokunaga, here at Tokyo press conference on January 31, 2025



Kitakyushu City Council's resolution challenged in appeal case about blatant religious discrimination

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Appeal Trial for Kitakyushu City Council's "Severance of Ties" Concludes

Family Federation's Legal Representative Confident in Reversal of Court's Decision

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

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Speaking at the same event as Shinzo Abe: Donald Trump delivering his video message Sep. 12, 2021 at Rally of Hope held in Gapyeong, South Korea

The appeal trial for a lawsuit filed by the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) and its followers concluded on 17th March. The lawsuit challenges the Kitakyushu City Council's December 2022 resolution to sever ties with the [federation](#), arguing that it constitutes discrimination against a specific religion. In the first trial, the plaintiffs' claim was dismissed.

Attorney Shinichi Tokunaga (徳永信一), representing the plaintiffs, held a press conference, stating,

"The Kitakyushu City Council passed the resolution based on the premise, as reported by

the media, that the [Family Federation](#) is an 'anti-social organization'. However, last month, former U.S. President Donald Trump, who, like the late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三), sent a message to a Universal Peace Federation (UPF) event - a group affiliated with the [Family Federation](#) - was inaugurated as the U.S. president. Additionally, Vice President Vance also delivered a speech at a related organization's conference."

He further remarked,

"Paula White, who respects the [Family Federation](#)'s leader, President [Hak Ja Han](#), has been appointed to the newly established Office of Faith-Based Initiatives in the U.S. These figures recognize the [Family Federation](#) not as an anti-social group, but as a remarkable organization contributing to world peace."

Attorney Tokunaga expressed confidence in overturning the previous ruling, stating that the label of the former [Unification Church](#) as an "anti-social organization" is being dismantled. The court's decision is scheduled for 12th May.

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"I feel that I am partly responsible for causing a situation in which many of you suffered greatly. However, I believe that if a politician has made a mistake, he also has the responsibility to correct it. If I have the chance, I will do whatever it takes."

In December 2022, the Kitakyushu City Council unanimously passed a resolution confirming that it would not be involved with the anti-social [Unification Church](#). Shingo Inoue (井上真吾), an independent with progressive views, regrets having supported this resolution.



From the demo in Kitakyushu City 30th June 2024. Photo: Kennosuke Teraguchi (寺口賢之介) / *Sekai Nippo*

On 30th June, he took the stage at the "[Kitakyushu Conference to Protect Fundamental Human Rights and Freedom of Religion](#)" held in Kitakyushu City, expressing strong feelings of self-reproach.

The city council resolution, which labeled the [Family Federation](#) as anti-social, stated in strong terms that "we will have no relationship whatsoever with the [organization](#), such as participating in its events, sending messages, or receiving supporters' membership fees." [Editor's note: Most city councilors and members of parliament have support groups or patronage associations.]

Despite consistently opposing opinions and resolutions submitted by the *Communist Party*, every member, including those from the *Liberal Democratic Party* and *Komeito* [Editor's note: government coalition partner], supported this resolution. In an interview with this paper, **Inoue revealed that he felt pressured by multiple council members** who told him, "You are the only one opposing." He confessed,

"I thought it would be inappropriate to stubbornly disrupt the unity by being the only one to oppose, so I reluctantly marked approval."

Then, three months later, in February of last year, **a petition, which included a request for consideration of believers' rights** along with a statement, was delivered to all members of the *Kitakyushu City Council*. **The only one who responded to this petition was Shingo**

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Inoue. He said,

“Isn’t it a personal freedom to associate with whomever one wishes? Being told by others not to associate with someone is unacceptable. It is problematic for political parties or the council to interfere in matters related to the inner lives of individuals, people’s way of living, their way of thinking, and their ideological beliefs.”

Inoue added,

“It is unacceptable that believers and their children should be bullied at school and in the local community and excluded from social activities.”

After the resolution, Shingo Inoue felt uneasy, and the petition request was a much-welcomed opportunity.

“If things stayed as they were, it would have been a regrettable experience for me to have acted against my political will. I am grateful for being given the chance to correct my actions.”

Up until that point, Inoue had no connection with the [religious organization](#). The only encounter, if it can be called so, was shortly after he joined the Communist Party, when he received a flyer from a friendly-looking elderly couple in front of a station in Kitakyushu City. Later, he found out they were members of the [Family Federation](#). **The thought that the resolution might deprive this couple of their freedom of religion crossed his mind.**



Receiving a flyer from a friendly-looking elderly couple. Image generated by Microsoft Designer Image Creator 11th July 2024.

Inoue debated against the “Statement of Opinion Calling for an Order to Disband the Former [Unification Church](#)” submitted by the Communist Party (JCP) in the Diet last September. He pointed out that because of the “public opinion of hatred towards the former [Unification Church](#) fueled by media reports”, there have been cases of victims, such as persons being forced out of their jobs, being bullied at school, and not being able to rent venues for events. He then appealed,

“Isn’t it the duty of politics to listen to the painful stories of those who are still excluded and discriminated against because they have faith, and to make it possible for them to live peacefully as equal citizens?”

Before and after the resolution in December 2022, several statements and resolutions regarding the former [Unification Church](#) were submitted, but they were rejected due to opposition from both the [Liberal Democratic Party](#) (LDP) and [Komeito](#) [Editor’s note: government coalition partner]. Why was the resolution to sever ties the only one to be unanimously approved? Shingo Inoue speculated,

“The LDP, the largest faction, probably didn’t want to appear reluctant or pressured into agreement by the opposition, especially with the unified local elections coming up in the spring of the following year.”

He expressed his indignation, stating that it is outrageous for the basic human rights of citizens to be sacrificed for political gains.

The day after the resolution, both local and national media extensively reported on the decision to sever ties. This made Inoue “realize the magnitude of the matter”.

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Featured image above: Shingo Inoue, Kitakyushu City Councilor being interviewed 26th June 2024. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

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