

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Dissolution of FFWPU - The Danger of Secret Proceedings

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Legal expert questions the legitimacy of the dissolution order, demands transparency, and points out the danger of secretive proceedings

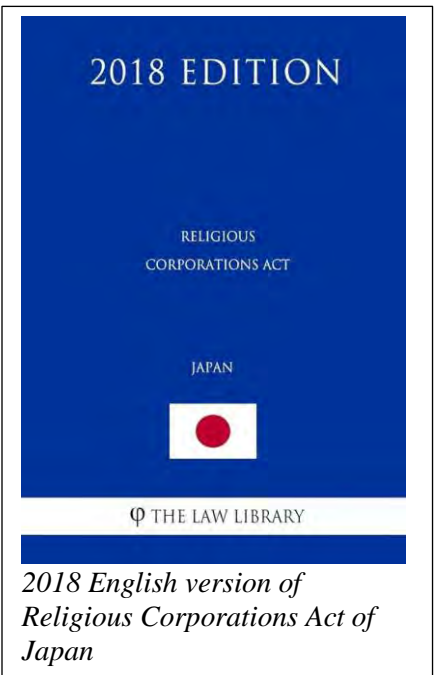
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Doubts Over Fabricated Evidence Cannot Be Dismissed in Closed-Door Ruling

Expert Commentary by Seishiro Sugihara, Professor Emeritus at Musashino Women's University, on the Dissolution Order Against the [Family Federation](#)

by Seishiro Sugihara, Professor Emeritus at Musashino Women's University

I find this deeply regrettable. It is the duty of judges to issue rulings that reflect the proper structure of society. They should have given more consideration to freedom of religion and the principle of separation of church and state.



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The Religious Corporations Act was established to guarantee the freedom of religious association under the principle of religious freedom. Its primary purpose is to maximize the protection of religious activities. A secondary objective of the law is to ensure that dissolution orders are not issued lightly. This intent can be clearly understood by tracing back the legislative process of this law. Therefore, the procedures leading to the dissolution order in this case do not align with the fundamental principles of the Religious Corporations Act.

Specifically, when it comes to supervising religious corporations, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) cannot act solely on the will of the Minister. Instead, it must go through deliberation by the Religious Corporations Council before requesting a dissolution order from the courts. This multi-step process is designed to make dissolution orders difficult to issue, aligning with the

secondary purpose of the law.



Historically, dissolution orders have only been issued when a religious corporation has committed criminal acts. While civil violations are not entirely outside the scope of dissolution orders, they must meet strict conditions: repeated losses in civil lawsuits, continued civil disputes despite guidance from the supervisory authority (MEXT), and approval from both the Religious Corporations Council and the courts. Only under such circumstances should a dissolution order be issued.

The court proceedings regarding dissolution orders fall under non-contentious cases [See editor's note below], meaning they are a form of administrative action by the court rather than a public trial. Consequently, non-contentious cases are not held in open court, and closed-door deliberations are standard. However, if a religious corporation can be dissolved solely through a non-public administrative procedure, the affected organization - in this case, the former [Unification Church](#) - would be deprived of its constitutional right to a public trial under Article 32 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to access the courts.

Thus, dissolving a religious organization through such a process must be deemed unconstitutional.



Sign outside Tokyo District Court

Given this, the Tokyo District Court, upon receiving the dissolution request, should have explicitly acknowledged the right to seek judicial review in a proper trial before issuing the [dissolution order](#). Likewise, the former [Unification Church](#), in response to the order, should immediately file a public lawsuit in the same court to challenge the decision.

Finally, regarding the [dissolution order](#) in this case, the statements submitted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) from individuals claiming to be victims

are poorly constructed, collected without a clear time frame, and severely [lacking in evidentiary value](#). Therefore, issuing a dissolution order based on these statements raises serious doubts from the perspective of evidentiary reliability. A public trial should be held where these statements submitted by MEXT must be disclosed, and the reasons for dissolution should be examined in a manner that allows the general public to be informed.

[Editor's note: 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.]

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Logo of the
Sekai Nippo

Interview with
an expert:
“Victim”
Reports
Directly Used as Evidence

Seishiro Sugihara,
professor of the former
Musashino Women’s
University: Dissolution
Request to Become a
Major Issue

by the editorial department of [Sekai
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Part 3 of the article

See [part 1](#), [part 2](#)

See also [Flawed, Deceptive Evidence Gathering by State](#)

See also [Civil Case Ruling Shows Partiality of Judiciary](#)

Interview (continued)

Q: What is your perspective on the dissolution order request for the Family Federation? How should the organization proceed in the future?

Ultimately, the current dissolution order process deviates from the original framework outlined in the *Religious Corporations Act*.

Specifically, regarding the [Family Federation](#), it has not committed any criminal offenses. When former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍 晋三, 1954–2022) was assassinated, and the [Unification Church](#) issue came under scrutiny, then-Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (岸田 文雄) made an erroneous decision. Abe’s assassination should have been recognized as an [act of terrorism](#), and the focus should have been on investigating the crime itself. However, when the suspect’s supposed grudge against the former [Unification Church](#) was sensationalized by the media, **Kishida, in response to media pressure, expanded the criteria for dissolution to include civil cases as grounds for dissolution.**



Grudge of terrorist sensationalized by media:
Tetsuya Yamagami, the man who killed Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister of Japan. Photo: Andrew2592009 / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int. Cropped

This is a **prime example of politically unacceptable populism.**



Front page of 2018
English version of
*Religious
Corporations Act of
Japan.*

Article 81 of the *Religious Corporations Act* originally established dissolution proceedings with the concern that allowing administrative agencies to unilaterally dissolve religious organizations would be dangerous. Therefore, court approval was made a requirement. Under this provision, when an administrative body deems dissolution necessary, it must submit a request to the court, which then determines whether dissolution is justified before issuing a dissolution order. The process also includes a review by the *Religious Affairs Council* for further scrutiny.

As a result, **dissolution proceedings are handled as a “non-contentious case”** [\[See editor’s note 1 below\]](#) rather than a regular

trial. This is because, in principle, a religious corporation should only be dissolved when it has committed criminal acts, undergone public trials, and received a final ruling confirming the grounds for dissolution. In such cases, the court’s role in a non-contentious case is merely to confirm the already-established fact of criminal conduct.

In the case of civil matters, if there are multiple final court rulings repeatedly determining certain acts as unlawful, and if the *Ministry of Education, Culture,*



文部科学省
Symbol of the Ministry of Education,
Culture, Sports, Science and



Seishiro Sugihara, served as a professor at Josai University and Musashino Women’s University (now Musashino University).
Photo: [Photo: Sekai Nippo](#)

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Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), which oversees religious corporations, has issued

multiple correctional recommendations but civil disputes continue and further rulings continue to find unlawful acts, only in such cases should MEXT be able to submit a petition to the court for a dissolution order.

Technology of Japan. Photo: 文部科学省 (MEXT Japan) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

Only in such cases should the court handle the matter as a non-contentious case, conduct a non-public hearing, and issue a dissolution order if deemed appropriate.

However, in the case of the [Family Federation](#), a compliance declaration was made in 2009, and since then, civil disputes have significantly decreased. Therefore, a dissolution request based on civil matters is, in effect, impossible.

That being said, if the [Tokyo District Court](#) were to issue a decision for dissolution, and a dissolution order is issued, it would be possible to appeal to the [Tokyo High Court](#). However, rather than doing so, it would be possible to file an administrative lawsuit with the [Tokyo District Court](#), arguing



Japanese judges issuing verdict. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, 6th January 2025

that MEXT's request for a dissolution order – the administrative action itself – is unlawful. Under the Constitution, both citizens and private organizations have the right to file an administrative lawsuit against unlawful administrative actions, so this should be a viable option.

Furthermore, in such a lawsuit, the [Family Federation](#) could demand the disclosure of the documents submitted by MEXT to the [Tokyo District Court](#) as the grounds for the dissolution order request. Otherwise, under the Japanese Constitution, the [Family Federation](#) would be issued a dissolution order while being deprived of its right to a fair trial. This is clearly unconstitutional.

The [Family Federation](#) should actively engage in public relations efforts to widely convey to society its respect for family values and work towards fostering a true understanding of its nature. Additionally, it should appeal to the United Nations and other international organizations that the dissolution order constitutes a violation of the principle of separation of church and state. Furthermore, just as in the case of [Soka Gakkai](#) [See editor's note 2 below], it should argue that religion, by its very nature, seeks the construction of an ideal state and society, and therefore, approaching politicians is a natural right of religious organizations.

See [part 1](#), [part 2](#) of the article

[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.]



The Soka Gakkai International flag. Photo: QueerMichael / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int](#)

[Editor's note 2: Soka Gakkai, a global lay Buddhist organization originating in Japan, aims to create an "ideal world" based on the principles of Nichiren Buddhism, which emphasizes individual empowerment, inner transformation, and societal harmony. Their vision is often framed as kosen-rufu, meaning the widespread propagation of Buddhist values to establish peace and happiness for all.

Soka Gakkai promotes peace, culture, and education through initiatives that focus on **personal transformation (human revolution)** – the belief that changing oneself positively impacts society; **peace activism** – anti-nuclear campaigns, human rights advocacy, and interfaith dialogue; **education** – institutions like Soka University emphasize value creation and global citizenship; **community engagement** – social welfare programs, disaster relief, and environmental sustainability efforts.

To actualize these ideals in governance, Soka Gakkai founded the **Komeito** party in 1964 (now known as **New Komeito** or simply **Komeito**).



Logo of the Komeito Party. Author: WeaponizingArchitecture. [Public domain](#) image

The party's purpose was to translate Buddhist-based humanistic values into public policy. While legally separate from Soka Gakkai, Komeito has long been backed by members of Soka Gakkai and focuses on **peace-oriented diplomacy** (e.g., supporting Japan's pacifist constitution); **social welfare policies** (benefiting education, healthcare, and the elderly); **grassroots democracy** (reflecting the voice of ordinary citizens)

Since 1999, Komeito has been a coalition partner with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), influencing policies while maintaining a centrist stance.

Despite its contributions, Soka Gakkai's political role has been controversial, with critics accusing it of blurring the lines between religion and politics. Some also argue that Komeito's alliance with the conservative LDP compromises its original pacifist ideals.

Soka Gakkai envisions an ideal world through personal empowerment, education, and political engagement. While its approach is rooted in Buddhist ethics, its political involvement remains a complex and debated issue.]

Featured image above: Japanese lawyer presenting a case with legal flaws in court. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, 22nd February 2025

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