

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Michael Balcomb on BBC Slams Japan's FFWPU Verdict as Xenophobic

Knut Holdhus
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Dr. Michael Balcomb 1st January 2025 and the BBC Radio 4 logo

Dr. Michael Balcomb defends Family Federation on BBC, condemns Japan's controversial legal crackdown as religious persecution

Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of the [Family Federation](#) for Europe and the Middle East and National Director of the [movement](#) in the UK, recently spoke out against Japan's legal actions targeting the [Family Federation](#).



Court issuing controversial verdict. Here, the sign outside Tokyo District Court

Appearing on BBC Radio 4's "Sunday" program, which explores religious and ethical news, Dr. Balcomb strongly condemned a Tokyo District Court [ruling](#) that threatens the legal and corporate status of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan. He described the [decision](#) as a case of religious persecution, attributing it to xenophobia, distortions of the [organization's](#) donation practices, and broader violations of human rights.

The [ruling](#), if upheld on appeal, could lead to the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#) as a legal entity in Japan. Such a consequence would potentially allow the government to seize a large number of

properties held by the [religious organization](#) and confiscate donations made by everyday members, raising deep concerns about the future of religious freedom in the country.



Demonstration against unjust and xenophobic [verdict](#) against the [Family Federation](#) in Japan. Here members in Karatsu City on the southern island of Kyushu protesting March 30, 2025

Dr. Balcomb used the BBC platform to voice the [organization's](#) concerns and to clarify the mission and

beliefs of the [Family Federation](#). He gave a concise overview of the [movement](#)'s founding principles, its spiritual orientation, and the important role it plays in the lives of its members around the world.

The controversial [court decision](#) has sparked considerable media attention both within Japan and internationally. As the case unfolds, many religious freedom advocates and observers are closely watching the implications it may have, not only for the [Family Federation](#) but for minority religious groups across Japan. Dr. Balcomb's BBC interview served as a critical opportunity to share the [federation](#)'s side of the story and challenge narratives that he argues misrepresent the [group](#)'s values and intentions.

Here is what Dr. Balcomb said,

"Of course, we think to appeal this [decision](#) because we think it's a serious mistake and that it's in contravention of the conventions on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion.

We think the real reason here is connected to lingering xenophobia and even racial prejudice among the Japanese people against Koreans, where our church originated.

The [Family Federation](#) was [founded in 1954](#) by the Reverend [Sun Myung Moon](#) in South Korea in answer to a [personal call from Jesus](#) Christ and now led by his widow, [Hak Ja Han](#).



Encouraging strong [marriages](#). Here, a [Family Federation](#) couple, with their distinct [Blessing](#) rings, holding hands

We call her '[Holy Mother Han](#)'. We're a biblical faith and perhaps unique in our [teachings](#), we teach that [God](#) is both Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. Our focus, frankly, is on encouraging strong [marriages](#) and families because we believe that it's in [marriage](#) that we come to resemble [God](#).

We do encourage our members to [donate](#). Of course, all religions do that. We don't accept the Ministry of Education's explanation in Japan that this is excessive, or it is forced. They quote about 200 cases, but we'd have to remember that we have several hundred thousand members in Japan so, at most, we're talking about one

tenth of 1%, over a period of about 25 years.

If I could put it in scriptural terms, Jesus said that [God](#) leaves 99 to save the one. Of course, as a pastor, I am sorry that any people who [donated](#) leave unhappy, but the [church](#) has never been accused of any crime, and I believe this is a case of religious persecution. The assassin of Shinzo Abe, [Tetsuya Yamagami](#), was never a member of our community and I think it's absurd that his crime should be laid at our feet."

Text: Knut Holdhus

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At a regular press conference on 31st March, Shintaro Maeda (前田晋太郎), Mayor of Shimonoseki, Yamaguchi Prefecture announced his intention not to approve the use of a city facility by the [Shimonoseki Family Church of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the Unification Church). This decision follows the [Tokyo District Court's](#) issuance of a [dissolution order](#) for the [religious organization](#) on 25th March. Mayor Maeda stated, "We will comply with the judicial decision."



Location of Shimonoseki, on the western tip of the main island of Honshu. From Shimonoseki there is a ferry to Busan, South Korea. Illustration: Maximilian Dörrbecker (Chumhwa) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp.](#)



Shimonoseki Lifelong Learning Plaza. Photo: Zilog80 / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp.](#) Cropped

According to a representative of the [Shimonoseki Family Church](#), they had planned to hold a large-scale event at the [Shimonoseki Lifelong Learning Plaza](#) in May. Although the application had already been accepted, on 1st April, a city official

contacted them to formally notify that the facility could not be used. The only reason given was "due to city policy."

From 2021 to 2024, the [religious organization](#) had held events at the same facility. In May of last year, Mayor Maeda commented,

"Refusing use of the facility before the court's decision on the [dissolution order](#) is finalized would only create confusion."

A [church](#) representative expressed concern, saying,

"If the [dissolution order](#) is upheld by the Tokyo High Court, it's clear that we'll no longer be able to rent facilities nationwide. While some say this won't affect religious beliefs, I question whether freedom of religion is truly being protected."

Featured image above: [Shintaro Maeda](#) (前田晋太郎), Mayor of Shimonoseki, Yamaguchi Prefecture, Japan. Photo: 内閣府 地方創生推進室 / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int.](#) Cropped.

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