

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: 2nd-Gen FFWPU Japan: *Respect Our Right To Belong*

Knut Holdhus
May 8, 2025



Second-generation believers campaigning in front of the National Diet Building 6th May 2025, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo



[Sekai Nippo](#)

2nd-gen believers rally for religious freedom outside National Parliament in Tokyo to protest dissolution order and being robbed of the places they love and truly feel at home

Tokyo, 7th May 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

"Please Don't Rob Us of the Places We Belong"

Second-Generation Members of the Family Federation Appeal in Front of the National Diet Building

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



Second-generation believers of the [Family Federation](#) campaigning in front of the National Diet Building May 6, 2025, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo

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On 6th May, second-generation members opposing the Tokyo District Court's ruling to issue a [dissolution order](#) for the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) held a public appeal in front of the National Diet Building in Nagatacho, Tokyo. They pleaded,

"Please don't rob us of the places we belong!"

On the final day of the three-day campaign, approximately 200 believers gathered despite the rainy weather.

If the [dissolution order](#) is executed, the [organization](#)'s assets will be confiscated. The believers expressed concern that without church facilities, worship and gatherings would

be restricted, and they called for the protection of their freedom of religion and the place where they belong.



In danger of being grabbed by the state along with hundreds of other places of worship throughout Japan: Tokyo headquarters of the [Family Federation](#) of Japan. 600,000 members will lose their places of worship

One speaker who took the microphone said,

"Thanks to my parents' faith, I learned gratitude and compassion."

He emphasized that the teachings of the [Family Federation](#) have been a guiding principle in his life. He asserted that he was raised supported by teachings that value family bonds.

A believer who took part in one of the [mass weddings](#) of the [religious organization](#) said,

"I got married with the determination to make someone happy for life. It wasn't forced - I chose it of my own will."

The members urged the audience,

"Please don't judge us with prejudice, but hear directly from us what we have to say!"

Among the second-generation participants listening under umbrellas, some were seen holding back tears.

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Warning Of Dangerous Precedent: "Like Inquisition"

• May 7, 2025
• Knut Holdhus



Baptist pastor warns of dangerous precedent and maintains dissolution order is due to Family Federation being "Korean-based religion" and "Japanese money being sent to Korea"



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

Tokyo, 6th May 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article.*

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Kurose of Tokyo West Baptist Church

by Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田 剛)

A religious organization must have self-awareness and reflect

The *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (formerly the *Unification Church*) appealed the *Tokyo District Court's dissolution order* issued on 25th March by filing an immediate *appeal* with the *Tokyo High Court* on 7th April. We spoke with Pastor Hiroshi Kurose (黒瀬博) of the *Tokyo West Baptist Church* about the validity of the *dissolution order*, the outlook of the trial, and the state of religious freedom in Japan.

Interviewed by Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田 剛)

– The Family Federation has received a dissolution order.



The Inquisition: Man being burned alive after Inquisition verdict. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. *Public domain image*

It is an unjust decision from the standpoint of the Japanese

Constitution, international law, and the *Religious Corporations Act*. If such a *ruling* is allowed to stand, it will go down in history as a stain on the record of Japanese jurisprudence. The lawyers who forced this *order* through must be prepared to face judgment by history. What they are doing is **no different from the inquisitors of the medieval era**.

As a pastor belonging to the Baptist denomination, I must say this: Baptist churches have historically been persecuted by other Christian denominations since their founding. They strongly oppose any government restriction on religious freedom.

– Why is religious freedom not respected in Japan?

One reason is the **mistranslation and misuse of the term “religious freedom”**. In Japanese legal terminology, the term used is *shinkyo no jiyū* (信教の自由 – freedom of faith/belief). In English, this would be translated simply as “freedom of religion”.

However, the Meiji government [Editor’s note: 1868-1912] disliked the expression “freedom of religion” (literally translated to Japanese as 宗教の自由 – *shūkyō no jiyū*) and invented the alternative term *shinkyo no jiyū* [See editor’s note below]. The continued use of this inaccurate translation even after the war shows that Japanese legal scholars have not seriously understood religious freedom. International law now translates this term as “freedom of religion”, and so domestic Japanese law should also speak in terms of *shūkyō no jiyū*, not *shinkyo no jiyū*.

That legal scholars have said nothing about this mistranslation is, in itself, evidence of their negligence. I believe this negligence is one of the underlying causes of the *dissolution order* against the *Family Federation*.



Mutsuhito (睦仁), Emperor Meiji, the 122nd emperor of Japan, reigning from he was 15 years old in 1867 until his death in 1912. The portrait was drawn in 1888 by Eduardo Chiossone (1833-1898) during his employment by the Imperial Printing Bureau. Chiossone was ordered to covertly sketch the emperor and create the final portrait from those sketches. The completed work was then photographed and distributed under the tacit approval of the emperor to foreign

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– Could this dissolution order set a precedent for dissolving other political or religious groups?

governments and Japanese schools. Photo: Maruki Riyo / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#)



The Japanese Communist Party (JCP) understands that logic behind dissolution order could be used to dissolve the communist party. Here, the Central Committee Building of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) in Shibuya, Tokyo May 2006. Photo: Lombroso / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#). Cropped

Although some online outlets and a few media reports have already pointed out the injustice of this [dissolution order](#), **even the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) is not praising the verdict – rather, they fear it.** Although *Shimbun Akahata* [Editor's note: the Communist party's newspaper] has repeatedly criticized the [Family Federation](#), it is cautious in how it discusses the [dissolution order](#). This is because they understand that **the logic used here could be directly applied to dissolve the Communist Party itself.**

Many religious groups are also hesitant to clearly oppose the [dissolution order](#), fearing backlash from society. But their careful wording reflects a concern that the same logic might one day be turned against them.

– Isn't the basis of the dissolution order unclear?

Many people already recognize that there are serious legal and practical problems with this [dissolution order](#). That said, we must also acknowledge that the [Family Federation](#) itself bears some responsibility. Whether they are unaware of it or simply unwilling to recognize it, the [Federation](#) must understand that without self-awareness and reflection, the [dissolution order](#) may be inevitable.

As for the courts, although their rulings are officially based on law, in reality, they consider public sentiment when making decisions – even if they can't explicitly state this in their rulings. You can't see the judges' feelings just by reading the judgment, but the conclusions usually align with national sentiment.

Avoiding dissolution through settlement

– Public sentiment toward the [Family Federation](#) is quite negative.

In fact, it's extremely bad. Unlike other religions, the reason public sentiment is so hostile toward the [Family Federation](#) is **largely because it is a Korean-based religion, and it is believed that donations from Japanese members are being sent to Korea.**



German money being sent to the Vatican. Here, from the selling of indulgences. "A Question to a Mintmaker", circa 1530, woodcut by Jörg (Jeorg/Jan) Breu the Elder. Photo: Pvasiliadis / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#)

We should recall that the **Protestant Reformation was also**

triggered by resentment over German money being sent to the Vatican in Italy through the sale of indulgences. Money-related issues provoke strong public emotions. But just like in the Reformation, where indulgences were not the public focus, but the debate centered around Martin Luther's doctrine of justification by faith, the true root of the issue wasn't formally acknowledged.

Behind the dissolution order against the Family Federation is public resentment over Japanese money flowing to Korea – but this will not be mentioned in the court's ruling. It is essential to realize that past “spiritual sales” tactics or doctrines are not the core of the issue.

– The case seems to be unfolding like a “national policy”. Is there a way to prevent the dissolution order?

It will require compromise on both sides. A possible solution is for the court to refrain from issuing the dissolution order, while the Family Federation agrees to certain conditions. A mutual settlement could postpone or avert the order. This would both align with public sentiment and avoid issuing a legally problematic dissolution order.

Neither the Ministry of Education nor the judges actually want to issue such an order. If this approach is feasible, it could help the court and Japanese government avoid international criticism and soothe public opinion. I believe this is the most realistic way forward.

Featured image above: **Hiroshi Kurose (黒瀬博)**: Born in 1951 in Hiroshima Prefecture. Completed a master's in legal philosophy at Waseda University in 1975. Graduated from Tokyo Theological Seminary in 1978 and the Advanced Theology Program at Seinan Gakuin University in 1979. Completed studies at Zurich Baptist Seminary in 1984. Currently pastor of Tokyo West Baptist Church. Major works include *The Development of a New Christianity* (Good Time Publishing). Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

[Editor's note: The distinction between 信教の自由 (*shinkyo no jiyū*) and 宗教の自由 (*shūkyō no jiyū*) that Pastor Hiroshi Kurose raises is nuanced but revealing – both linguistically and politically.

Literally, 信教の自由 (*shinkyo no jiyū*) means “freedom of belief/faith”. It emphasizes the *individual's inner conviction* – the right to believe (or not believe) in a religion or faith of one's choosing. This is the term used in Japan's Constitution (Article 20) and legal codes.

宗教の自由 (*shūkyō no jiyū*) translates more directly to “freedom of religion”. It encompasses not just internal belief but *external practice* – including public and institutional rights like organizing religious groups, conducting rituals, proselytizing, and maintaining institutions.

Kurose claims that the Meiji government (1868-1912) deliberately avoided *shūkyō no jiyū* to limit the broader implications of religious liberty (especially concerning public practice or institutional autonomy). The Meiji government maintained strict control over religion, especially fearing Christianity and new religious movements. Religious freedom was nominally granted but heavily constrained by policies that aimed to preserve social order and loyalty to the emperor.



The Meiji Emperor among gods and emperors. This 1878 engraving by Toyohara Chikanobu (1838 – 1912) visually presents the **central tenet of State Shinto** (1871-1946). This Shinto variant asserted and promoted belief in the divinity of the Emperor, which arose from a genealogical family tree extending back to the first emperor and to the most important deities of Japanese mythology. Emperor Meiji in a Western chair with his wife, Empress Shōken, is seated in the foreground. Photographic reproduction: Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#)

The Meiji authorities also created State Shinto – a system where Shinto shrines were managed by the state and tied to nationalism, while Buddhism and Christianity were regulated or discouraged to varying degrees.

The continued use of *shinkyo no jiyū* reflects a narrow and possibly outdated understanding of religious freedom. Japan's legal culture

may be overly focused on private belief, while still viewing public religious expression or institutional activity with suspicion – especially when foreign-origin religions like the [Family Federation](#) are involved.

If freedom is defined only as *belief*, the state can more easily regulate *action* (e.g., missionary work, financial activities, gatherings), claiming it's not violating constitutional protections.

Japanese society, shaped by historical suspicion of “new religions” (新宗教), may tacitly accept restrictions on practice if “freedom of belief” remains untouched.



Globally, *freedom of religion* – as per international standards like *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) and *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) – includes belief *and* practice. Pastor Kurose is effectively arguing that Japan falls short of this international norm.

Pastor Kurose sees Japan's reliance on *shinkyo no jiyū* as a reflection of legal and cultural reluctance to fully embrace religious pluralism, especially when political sensitivities or foreign religious movements are involved.]

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