

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: 1,600 Rally in Osaka in Big Japan-wide Pro FFWPU Protests

Knut Holdhus
July 2, 2025



Members of the [Family Federation](#) march in a demonstration under the blazing sun - June 29, 2025, Kita Ward, Osaka, Japan



Thousands march in Osaka and other cities to protest the Japanese government's oppressive dissolution order against the Family Federation

Tokyo, 30th June 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

"Listen to the Voices of Active Believers"

1,600 Rally in Osaka; Over 4,000 Nationwide Over Two Days Call for Withdrawal of Dissolution Order Against the Family Federation

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



Believers marching through Osaka City - June 29, 2025, Kita Ward, Osaka, Japan

To protest the dissolution order against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the Unification Church), believers from across the country held simultaneous rallies and protest marches on June 28 and 29, calling out,

"Protect freedom of religion and human rights!"

In Osaka City, about 1,100 people (according to organizers) marched through the bustling Umeda district, chanting slogans like

- "Listen to the voices of active believers!"
- "Religious oppression is a threat to democracy!"

They appealed to passersby. A rally preceding the march was attended by 1,600 people.

Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡), a member of the House of Councillors from the NHK Party and the first lawmaker to join such a rally, emphasized that freedom of religion is a key principle of his party. He warned,

"If the dissolution actually goes through, it would be playing right into the hands of terrorists. Is that what we want?"

A female believer in her 20s from Osaka City said she participated to show that she believes of her own free will as a "second-generation" member (born into the faith).

In Mitaka City, Tokyo, about 400 believers gathered in Inokashira Park and marched around the area near JR Kichijoji Station, stating,

"We want to protect our precious faith and [church](#)!"

In Matsuyama City, Ehime Prefecture, around 250 believers gathered and marched through the streets, appealing,

"If you have any questions, please ask us directly!"



Believers rallying in Osaka City - June 29, 2025, Kita Ward, Osaka, Japan

According to the [religious organization](#)'s public relations office, other protest marches took place in Nagoya City (about 600 people), Saitama City (about 150), Fukushima City, Fukushima Prefecture (about 300), and Mito City, Ibaraki Prefecture (about 230). Over the two days, more than 4,000 believers participated in the protest marches nationwide.

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Church Assets: Lawyers Move To “Seize Them All”

- July 1, 2025
- Knut Holdhus

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Accused of overstating victim claims, activist legal groups press for full liquidation of Family Federation’s assets as day of verdict in appeal hearings draw closer

Tokyo, 27th June 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

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

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Entrance to the Suginami Church of the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* – Suginami Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田剛)

The Suginami Church of the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (formerly the *Unification Church*) holds charity bazaars two to three times a year. Part of the church's parking lot, visible from the street, becomes part of the venue, and local residents regularly participate, making it a lively festival-like event.

Before each bazaar, church members visit about 200 homes in the surrounding area to distribute flyers asking for donations of goods. A female believer in her 60s, recounting her experience, said,

“In most cases, people accept the flyers kindly.”

She explained that ever since the church moved into its owned building 15 years ago, they’ve made an effort to foster good relationships with the community, aiming to be an “open church”.

However, in July 2022, after former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) was fatally shot during an election campaign speech, reports emerged that the suspect’s mother was a member of the *religious organization*. This caused a sense of alarm to arise within the *organization*. On 31st August of that year, right after the *Liberal Democratic Party* declared it was severing ties with the *organization*, nuisance phone calls began to come in. Loudspeaker vans from right-wing groups also blasted critical messages. These disturbances soon subsided.

But in March of this year – two years and eight months after the assassination – the *Tokyo District Court* issued a *dissolution order* for the *Family Federation*. The *organization* immediately *appealed*, and the case is currently under review at the *Tokyo High Court*.

Meanwhile, on 28th May, the *Agency for Cultural Affairs* held a meeting to consider procedures for asset liquidation after the dissolution. Topics under consideration include:

- 1. Investigating the *religious organization*’s financial status
- 2. Compensating victims of unlawful activities
- 3. Respecting the *religious organization*’s freedom of religion

Aiming to issue guidelines around the fall, *Deputy Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*, Akio Fujiwara (藤原章夫), reportedly stated,

“The liquidator must consider both victim relief and



Considering procedures for assets liquidation after dissolution of *Family Federation*: Agency for Cultural Affairs. *Public domain image*

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religious freedom. I urge careful and specific deliberation.

However, in the lead-up to the Ministry's request for dissolution, the [religious organization](#) claims its side was not heard, nor was there any sign that the petitions gathered from believers were taken into account. Observing what they view as a one-sided dissolution process, the *Japan Federation of Bar Associations* (JFBA) issued on 20th February an "Opinion Paper Calling for Legislative Measures for Liquidation after the Dissolution Order", calling for legislative measures to enhance the authority of liquidators. On 25th February, they also held a joint study session with the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (Zenkoku Benren) at the *House of Representatives' Second Office Building for Legislators*.

Regarding these legislative efforts, lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama (中山達樹), who opposes the government's move to dissolve the [Family Federation](#), commented:

"This is an attempt to seize all the assets of the [religious organization](#). It must not be allowed."



Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama, here in Tokyo in 2023. Photo: [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#)

The [Family Federation](#) has about 300 churches nationwide, and according to the [organization's](#) public relations department, "the number of corporate locations (churches and training facilities) is 108." Each of these corporate churches was actually built by grassroots believers who wanted to have their own church in the area where they live, rather than renting one, and who used donations to build it. For many, these churches embody their devotion.

The Ministry cited damages involving approximately 1,550 people and totaling 20.4 billion yen (including out-of-court settlements) as grounds for dissolution. The [religious organization](#) issued a compliance declaration [\[See editor's note below\]](#) in 2009, and a 42-year-old male staff member at the Suginami Church, who joined the [Family Federation](#) later, said:

"I believe the [religious organization](#) had shortcomings and caused harm in the past. But it's also true that the [organization](#) has changed and now values what society values. That gave me hope."



Demonstration by young members of the [Family Federation](#) together with a Member of Parliament on 29th June 2025 in Osaka, protesting the authorities' attempt to dissolve the [religious organization](#) and seize its assets. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

He also expressed the emotional significance of the [Family Federation's](#) facilities:

"To active believers, the church is more than just a building. It's a place that replenishes their spiritual energy. If churches disappear, believers will be left adrift. We want people to understand that we need these churches."

See part 1: ["Liquidation Is Like Being Robbed of Our Assets"](#)

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Featured image above: Scene from the Suginami Church Bazaar in November 2023. Photo: [FFWPU](#) / Provided by the church, partially edited.

[Editor's note: The **2009 compliance declaration** of the Unification Church of Japan (now the [Family Federation for World Peace and](#)

Unification) was a formal commitment by the organization to reform its practices in response to longstanding public criticism and legal challenges.

The Unification Church in Japan had faced numerous allegations related to recruitment tactics and donation solicitation, termed "spiritual sales" (靈感商法) by a hostile network of activist lawyers who had declared the religious organization an enemy. These issues led to multiple lawsuits orchestrated by the activist lawyers and significant media backlash. This prompted the organization to take measures to restore its reputation and demonstrate compliance with legal and ethical standards.

The religious organization pledged to stop possibly unethical donation practices, including what the hostile network of lawyers claimed amounted to "pressuring members into making large financial contributions under spiritual pretexts."

This was in response to accusations from the same activist lawyers that followers "were being manipulated into giving away substantial amounts of money or property."

The Unification Church stated it would enhance internal oversight to ensure compliance with ethical and legal standards. Measures included better training for leaders and stricter guidelines for evangelization and solicitation of donations.

After this compliance declaration, there was a significant decrease in the number of lawsuits against the Unification Church – since 2015 called the Family Federation. The religious organization has used this as evidence that it has improved its practices and should not be subject to dissolution.]

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