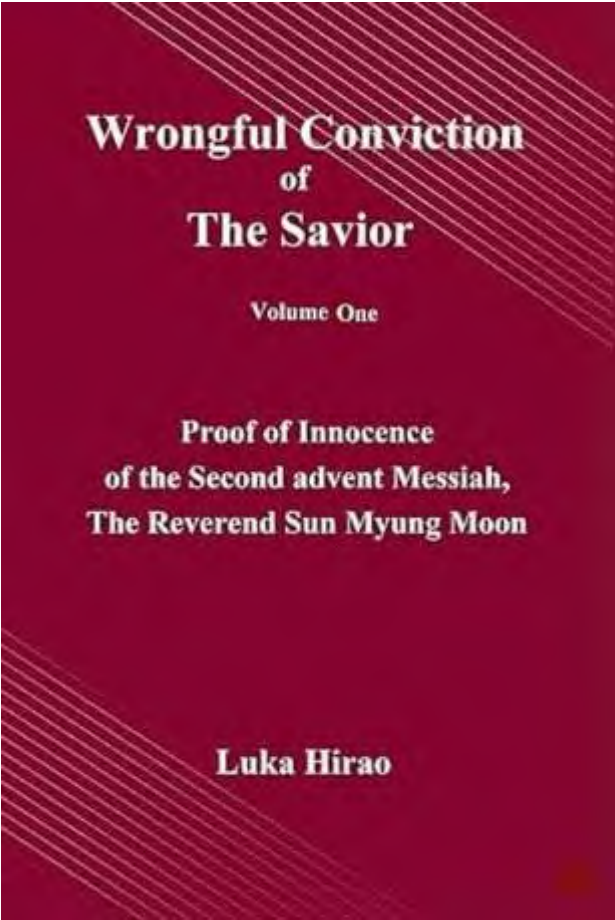


FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Truth Behind 1982 Trial of Sun Myung Moon

Knut Holdhus
April 7, 2026



Cover of Luka Hirao's [Wrongful Conviction of The Savior - Volume One - Proof of Innocence of the Second Advent Messiah, The Reverend Sun Myung Moon](#) (253 pages, published 23rd February 2026).

New book uncovering a miscarriage of justice: The wrongful 1982 conviction of Sun Myung Moon as seen by eyewitness who followed the whole case



Luka Hirao

Luka Hirao's [Wrongful Conviction of The Savior - Volume One - Proof of Innocence of the Second Advent Messiah, The Reverend Sun Myung Moon](#) (253 pages, published 23rd February 2026) presents a detailed and deeply personal re-examination of a controversial legal case involving [Sun Myung Moon](#) - also called [Father Moon](#) - founder of what at the time was called the [Unification Church](#), now the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#).

Positioned at the intersection of legal critique, memoir, and theological reflection, the [book](#) argues forcefully that [Father Moon](#)'s 1982 U.S. federal conviction was a miscarriage of justice.



[Father Moon](#) with Sang-in Kim who translated the court proceedings in 1982 for him. Illustration: News World drawing by Sue Tuttle.

At its core, the [book](#) advances a singular claim: that [Father Moon](#) was wrongfully convicted on charges related not to tax evasion - as commonly believed - but to filing inaccurate income tax returns, and even those charges, Hirao contends, lacked sufficient evidentiary grounding. This distinction is central to the author's broader project of reframing public understanding of the case.

Hirao's perspective is not that of a detached historian. As the interpreter for Takeru Kamiyama, [Father Moon](#)'s co-defendant, Hirao attended the entire trial, which ran from March to May 1982. This proximity allows him to

present the narrative as a form of primary testimony. He repeatedly emphasizes that his conviction in [Sun Myung Moon](#)'s innocence never wavered, even after the guilty verdict, and that the book represents the culmination of a 40-year effort to demonstrate that innocence.

The Introduction establishes both the motivation and scope of the work. Hirao situates his account alongside [Father Moon](#)'s own autobiography, *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen*, which recounts his imprisonment at Danbury Federal Correctional Institution but does not, in Hirao's view, sufficiently unpack the legal intricacies of the trial. He writes that the commonly held perception - that [Moon](#) was jailed for tax evasion - is an oversimplification that obscures the actual legal questions at stake.



[Sun Myung Moon](#) and Takeru Kamiyama in Danbury Federal Correctional Institution in 1984. It accommodates about 200 male prisoners "under minimum security"

Those questions, Hirao argues, were relatively narrow: whether approximately \$106,000 in interest income from a bank account in [Father Moon](#)'s name should have been reported between 1973 and 1975, and whether \$50,000 in stock should have been declared as income. Despite this limited scope, the trial became highly complex due to the volume of evidence and the dynamics of the U.S. jury system, where lay jurors must interpret technical, financial and legal arguments.



[Sun Myung Moon](#) during a special interview by a Japanese journalist in Danbury Federal Correctional Institution in 1985

A significant portion of the Introduction is devoted to procedural context, particularly the Grand Jury system. Hirao describes how evidence was presented without defense participation and notes that early reviews by Department of Justice officials initially found insufficient grounds for indictment. Only after additional evidence was introduced did the prosecution proceed. Even then, he stresses that the final charges were not for tax evasion, highlighting what he sees as a critical misrepresentation perpetuated by media coverage.

Beyond legal analysis, the Introduction frames the trial in explicitly religious terms. [Father Moon](#) is described as the "Second Advent Messiah", and the trial is likened to the Passion of Jesus Christ. Hirao draws parallels between [Sun Myung Moon](#)'s legal ordeal and biblical narratives, suggesting that the case carries not only judicial but providential significance. This theological framing is reinforced by references to key events in the Unification

movement, such as the 1976 Washington Monument rally, which Hirao presents as a pivotal spiritual victory.

Chapter One shifts from analytical groundwork to narrative reconstruction, beginning with the indictment on 15th October 1981, and the subsequent court appearance. Hirao recounts [Sun Myung Moon](#)'s decision to voluntarily return to the United States from Korea to face charges, despite the absence of an extradition treaty. This decision is portrayed as both courageous and spiritually motivated, reinforcing the book's portrayal of [Father Moon](#) as a figure acting in alignment with a higher mission.

The courtroom scenes are rendered with vivid detail. Hirao describes [Father Moon](#)'s unexpected gesture of greeting the prosecutor with a handshake, an act that surprised observers and conveyed a sense of composure and dignity. Both [Moon](#) and Kamiyama entered pleas of not guilty, and bail arrangements were made. Outside the courthouse, a rally drew approximately a thousand supporters.

A substantial excerpt of [Father Moon](#)'s public statement is included, in which he proclaims his innocence, criticizes what he characterizes as religious discrimination, and frames the prosecution as part of a broader pattern of persecution. He invokes themes of racial and religious bias, arguing that his treatment was influenced by his identity as a Korean religious leader. This moment encapsulates the book's blending of legal defense with moral and spiritual rhetoric.

While [Volume One](#) focuses primarily on establishing the context and initial phases of the case, it also signals the direction of the broader work. Hirao indicates that subsequent sections will delve deeper into trial transcripts, evidentiary disputes, and procedural irregularities, aiming to systematically dismantle the prosecution's case. The project, as framed here, is both evidentiary and interpretive: a reconstruction of events and a challenge to dominant narratives.

Hirao's [book](#) is not merely a legal reassessment but a sustained argument that integrates firsthand observation, long-term research, and religious conviction. Whether one accepts its conclusions or not, it offers a comprehensive and deeply committed reinterpretation of a case that continues to provoke debate.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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– When did you first file a disclosure request?

I first submitted a request on 8th September 2023. I asked for the release of eight sets of minutes related to the exercise of the right to question (質問権行使) [See editor's note 1 below] and notifications of an administrative fine (過料通知) [See editor's note 2 below]. After the request for a dissolution order against the Family Federation was issued, and when the organization was specified as a "designated religious corporation" (指定宗教法人) [See editor's note 3 below], I also filed additional requests for disclosure of minutes, but all resulted in decisions of non-disclosure.

I also filed an administrative appeal against the decision not to disclose the minutes concerning the exercise of questioning authority [See editor's note 1 below] and the dissolution order request, but the Agency for Cultural Affairs rejected it. Subsequently, in April 2024, the agency referred the matter to the Information Disclosure and Personal Information Protection Review Board under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. On 18th March 2026, the board issued its recommendation that the non-disclosure decision was appropriate, effectively finalizing the decision. It is now difficult to expect open discussion in Japan's religious administration.

– What were the key points of your argument in the appeal?



The Religious Corporations Council discussing the use of the questioning rights by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology against the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (previously known as the Unification Church) – 14th December 2022, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Sekai Nippo

According to the internal rules regarding the minutes of the Religious Corporations Council, they are, in principle, to be disclosed. However, it also states: "When the chairperson deems it necessary, after consulting the council, all or part of the minutes may be withheld from disclosure for a necessary period."

However, this sentence was added on the very first day discussions were held on the exercise of questioning authority [See editor's note 1 below]. There were other changes as well, but the revised internal rules were not disclosed. If I had not filed a disclosure request, they might still remain undisclosed. Although my request for the minutes was rejected, some materials such as the list of committee members were partially disclosed, and the revised internal rules were included among them. The revision date was also specified.

This is the issue I consider most problematic. In my appeal, I argued that it was unjust to keep even the minutes related to the revision of the internal rules non-public. This raises concerns that not only this case but future matters may also be handled internally in ways convenient for the authorities. Given that this is an important council concerning the nature of religious corporations, the lack of transparency fails to adequately consider its impact on other religious organizations.

– What is the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's position?

The ministry explains that the minutes in general, including the revision of internal rules, fall under information exempt from disclosure under the Act on Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs. Specifically, they argue that the minutes contain confidential information about the religious organization, which must be protected, and that disclosure would hinder free and open discussion among committee members.

Frankly, my impression is that the law is being invoked to prevent the minutes from ever being disclosed. If the goal is to ensure free and open discussion, then disclosure should still be possible through measures such as anonymization or abstraction. I argued this in my appeal, but the ministry dismissed it, saying my point was "unclear in meaning".

Among the committee members were individuals from groups such as the United Church of Christ in Japan, which is openly critical of the Family Federation, indicating that not all members were neutral. For that very reason, it should be difficult to ensure neutrality without making the minutes public.

A Role in Preventing "Closed-Door" Oppression

– What do you expect would happen if the minutes were made public?

The original purpose of establishing the Religious Corporations Council was to serve as a supervisory body to prevent the government from suppressing freedom of religion when conducting religious administration.

It would be problematic if the council is not fulfilling that function. The principle of disclosing minutes can be seen as a safeguard for that purpose.

I hope to clarify whether discussions were guided by the ministry, whether committee members actively voiced opinions, and to what extent opposing views were expressed. The



The Kudan Church in Tokyo belonging to the United Church of Christ in Japan, which together with Japan Alliance Christ Church provided a strong foundation for anti-Family Federation groups. For decades, pastors and members from those two churches were actively involved in abducting, forcibly detaining, and coercively

deliberations on the dissolution order request have become a “closed-door trial” as a non-contentious case [\[See editor’s note 4 below\]](#), and I hope this situation will also be reformed.

breaking the faith of members of the *Family Federation*. Photo: Ethan Doyle White / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int](#)

I do not believe that the [Family Federation](#) has no points requiring reflection. However, in the series of discussions and media coverage regarding its dissolution, the perspective and opinions of the [religious organization](#) have been excluded. Some criticize it as having a “blame-others mentality”, but exclusion is never desirable, and it is important to clearly state one’s own position. Using such labels to dismiss all objections and protests amounts to silencing dissent.

After properly hearing opposing views, I hope each member of society will make their own informed judgment.

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Featured image above: Hiroshi Ogasawara (小笠原裕), born in 1963 in Hiroshima Prefecture, graduated from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Tokyo in 1988. While at university, he studied the doctrines of the Family Federation. After graduation, he joined a general trading company and worked both in Japan and overseas. In 2020, he left the company and started his own business in Chiba Prefecture as a small and medium enterprise management consultant. In January 2024, he founded the “Chiba Citizens’ Association for Protecting Freedom of Religion and Human Rights” and became its representative. In the summer of the same year, he established the political organization “Association for Protecting Japanese Families.” Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

[Editor’s note 1: The literal meaning of 質問権行使 (shitsumon-ken kōshi) is “**exercise of the right to question**”. This refers to the government formally using its legal authority to question an organization. In this context, it means authorities (such as the Agency for Cultural Affairs) requiring the religious organization to submit reports, answer specific questions, and provide documents or explanations.

It is not casual questioning – it is a statutory investigative power used when there are concerns about compliance with laws governing religious corporations.]

[Editor’s note 2: The literal meaning of 過料通知 (karyō tsūchi) is “**notification of a non-criminal fine**”. 過料 (karyō) is an administrative monetary penalty, not a criminal punishment (so it does not create a criminal record).

通知 (tsūchi) means “notification.” This term refers to official notice that such a penalty is being imposed or initiated, typically because the organization failed to comply with the questioning authority (e.g., didn’t respond properly or at all) . In the case of the Family Federation, the authorities claimed it did not respond properly. The Family federation claimed some questions were “impossible” to answer.

In simpler terms, the expression means “formal notice that an administrative fine is being imposed for non-compliance.”]

[Editor’s note 3: The literal meaning of 指定宗教法人 (shitei shūkyō hōjin) is “**designated religious corporation**”. This refers to a religious corporation that has been formally designated by the government for special oversight under Japan’s Religious Corporations framework. The designation is not neutral – it typically indicates that the authorities see potential legal or public-interest concerns, and the organization requires closer administrative monitoring than ordinary religious corporations.

There are legal or administrative implications. When a group is labeled a “designated religious corporation”, it may be subject to enhanced reporting obligations, more frequent or detailed inspections or inquiries, use of powers like 質問権行使 (exercise of questioning authority), and potential escalation toward measures such as administrative penalties or even dissolution proceedings.

Unlike a standard classification (e.g., simply being a registered religious corporation), this “designation” functions more like a regulatory flag. It does not automatically mean wrongdoing has been legally proven. But it signals that the government considers the entity problematic enough to justify intervention.

In the context of the above article, the term is used to describe a stage in the government’s handling of the organization. After concerns arise, it becomes a “designated religious corporation”. This enables stricter scrutiny, which can eventually feed into actions like a dissolution order request.]

[Editor’s note 4: 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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