

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Believers' Social Exclusion, Loss of Civil Rights

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April 9, 2026



Nozomi Kojima, representing the "Second-Generation Association to Protect the Human Rights of Believers", here speaking at a press conference on March 26, 2025 in Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan



Active believers report social exclusion and economic anxiety as impact of dissolution order extends to employment, welfare, and civil rights

Tokyo, 7th April 2026 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

[Part 3 of a Series] In Search of a Spiritual Anchor - One Month After the Dissolution of the Family Federation

87% in Shock After Losing Their Church

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

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"Immediately after the incident [the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on 8th July 2022], none of the voices of us active believers were heard at all. Only former believers were called to the Diet, met with the prime minister at the time, and were surrounded by reporters. The voices of tens of thousands of active believers have not been heard in the slightest."

Nozomi Kojima (小嶋希晶 - 30), representative of the "Second-Generation Association to Protect the Human Rights of Believers", became tearful and choked up during a [press conference](#) on 26th March.

In the wake of the shooting of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三), Kojima says active

believers have been cut off by politicians and [excluded from society](#), which led to a [sense of crisis](#). In response, Kojima founded the association and has been speaking out on behalf of active believers through symposiums and platforms such as YouTube. Although maintaining a smile until now, it seems that about three and a half years of suffering and grief finally overflowed.



Swayed by media campaign and refused to meet active members, severed all ties with Family Federation, and changed the law overnight by including civil cases: Fumio Kishida, prime minister of Japan 2021-2024. Here, at press conference August 14, 2024



Makoto Imanaka in February 2024

It is expected that 1,933 staff members of the [religious organization](#) and 2,441 of their dependents - a total of 4,374 people - will lose their means of livelihood due to the [dissolution order](#), raising concerns about their living conditions. At the [press conference](#), second-generation staff members reported on their current situations.

Makoto Imanaka (今中誠真 - 30), a staff member, said:

"I am considering changing jobs going forward, but I worry that simply writing the [organization](#)'s name on my CV (résumé) may limit my employment opportunities. I hope for a society where people are not [discriminated](#) against because of their faith but are seen fairly as individuals."

He added that, at present,

"Those supporting all of my emotional anxieties are knowledgeable individuals and members of the [church](#)."

A married couple of second-generation believers who both work for the [religious organization](#) also took the stage. The woman said:

"We were just about to register our marriage, but now we are in a situation where we are anxious about whether we can maintain our household and finances going forward, given issues like housing and employment."

She emphasized that the [dissolution](#) has affected their life plans.

The association conducted from 8th to 16th March a survey on the actual impact on believers after the [dissolution](#), collecting responses from a total of 2,240 people ranging in age from their teens to their 80s. The results highlighted not only fear of having an essential part of who they are being rejected by society but also experiences of [discriminatory treatment](#) in employment and [child-rearing](#).

Some respondents reported that delays in receiving paperwork for early retirement (before the [Tokyo High Court decision](#)) prevented them from completing procedures for health insurance and unemployment benefits, leaving them unable to go to the hospital or maintain their livelihood. There were also reports of people being dismissed from jobs due to being second-generation believers.

When asked about the impact of the start of liquidation procedures, all respondents answered that they could no longer attend worship services at their church. Of these, 87% said they were "shocked", and about 60% reported experiencing psychological distress due to the [loss of worship](#).

35 individuals reported that they had either considered [suicide](#) or attempted suicide due to psychological suffering.

In free-response comments, some described being driven to mental distress, saying:

"Having my [rights taken away](#) by state power made me feel as if I was being told I should not live. I lost hope in this country and in life and felt there was no point in continuing to live."

Although they had joined the faith seeking "salvation", they now find themselves in a situation where the state has taken away their spiritual foundation.

About 30% of respondents said they were either unable to carry out or were anxious about being able to conduct important [church](#) rituals such as Seonghwa ceremonies (funerals) and [Blessing ceremonies](#) (weddings).



The human dimension when members' fundamental identity is rejected by the state in league with hostile lawyers. Dissolution and liquidation mean the Japanese state steals properties members built with their own hands and years of investment to realize their dream. Here, the sanctuary of the [Family Federation's Koriyama Church](#)

One respondent reported:

"There was a person who passed away on 4th March, and just three hours after the ruling, a liquidator suddenly came and told us to leave immediately. We couldn't take any of the ritual items needed for the Seonghwa (funeral), so the ceremony could not be performed."

There were cases where, on the very day the dissolution was decided, funeral rites for deceased believers could not be held.

Kojima concluded the [press conference](#) with these remarks:

"We want to continue moving forward while gradually improving the areas where we are lacking. Even if the [buildings disappear](#), the believers themselves will not disappear, and [faith itself will not disappear](#). We want to keep searching for how we can be accepted by the people of Japan and be told, 'It's okay for you to be here in Japan.'"

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