

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan's Hasty Liquidation of Family Fed Implies Prearranged Verdict

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Three police cars parked in front of a [Family Federation](#) church in Japan.



Members' shock and composure when faced with extremely well-coordinated rapid liquidation nationwide, raising questions of prearranged verdict

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[Opinion Contribution]

[Part 1 of a Series] Nonfiction Writer Masumi Fukuda: Tokyo High Court Decision on the Family Federation

Liquidator Arrives Accompanied by Police Cars

by nonfiction writer Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ)

See part 1 in the series: [Japan: Verdict Predetermined, Evidence Silenced](#)



Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto, here at Tokyo press conference March 25, 2025

What happened to the [religious organization](#) after the dissolution order?

Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto (福本修也) explains:

"As soon as I returned to my office, I immediately received a call from the liquidator's lawyer. I was taken aback by how quickly things were moving. Shortly afterward, that lawyer came to my office, and we held discussions about the future with Chairman Masaichi Hori (堀正一) of the [religious organization](#)."

Request to submit smartphones

The liquidator asked Chairman Hori to sign a document pledging full cooperation with the [liquidation process](#). The document was extremely detailed, even including a clause requiring the submission of smartphones. Because this raised concerns about staff privacy, that point was challenged.

Chairman Hori also urged the liquidator to handle the membership registry with great care to prevent any leakage of personal information.

The liquidator then requested that the contents of the document be communicated nationwide to churches

and believers as an official notice. However, Chairman Hori responded that even if such a notice were issued, there was no guarantee all staff could respond immediately. Communicating it to all believers would take even longer - some only attend church once a month. Chairman Hori said,

"The liquidator seemed to view a religious corporation as if it were a company where a single mass email could unify all employees, and believers were seen merely as subordinate members at the bottom of such an organization. I was surprised by that perception."



In the end, the liquidator gave up waiting for the notice to reach all believers and appears to have entered churches and related facilities across the country almost simultaneously between around 12:00 and 14:00. Charman Hori added,

"At the Nagoya church, three police cars were dispatched, and a large number of media gathered, surrounding the church and flashing cameras at believers coming and going."

The day of the decision

That day, Ms. S, a female believer who had worked at the headquarters reception for many years, came to work at the headquarters a little after 11. She said,

"On the way, I kept listening through earphones to a livestream by a group of active second-generation believers. When the [result](#)

was announced at 11, the screen showed lawyer Fukumoto with a gloomy expression, surrounded by reporters, 'Ah... I see.'"

Arriving at headquarters in shock and disappointment, less than an hour later she heard, "We're lawyers," as the liquidator arrived. At first there were three people, but eventually around 20 gathered. Among them were 7-8 security guards dispatched from a security company, which gave an overly imposing impression.

Since she had never expected the liquidator to arrive on the very day of the decision, the thoroughness of the preparation made her feel that the dissolution must have been decided long in advance.

Believers maintained dignity



The state seized their places of worship. Must hold worship services in parks. Here, AI illustration

Although the chairman had instructed them to "maintain dignity as religious people", the staff did not need to be told. They remained calm in the face of the sudden arrival, offering guest slippers, serving tea, and brewing coffee.

The liquidators focused first on understanding the [organization's](#) financial condition. They called in accounting staff, the administrative department responsible for keys, IT personnel, and those in charge of real estate.

They then told staff in other departments:

"Please take your personal belongings and leave by 6:30 p.m. today."

However, this proved impossible in a single day, and the deadline was extended to the end of the following day, 5th March. Ms. S continued to come to work daily afterward to take care of her reception duties.

"You don't feel like something might happen, do you?"

On 5th March, one of the liquidators asked Ms. S:

"You don't feel like something might happen, do you?"

She replied calmly,

"You mean our people causing trouble? That's impossible. We are people of faith. Doing such things would go against our teachings."

On a rainy day, a security guard standing at the back entrance became soaked despite holding an umbrella. Ms. S and others searched for rain gear inside the building and lent him towels. The guard thanked them, saying, "That really helps," and "Thank you very much."

Ms. S described the situation,

"We simply acted naturally, thinking they must be having a hard time. I hope that by seeing our everyday behavior, their perception of us might change. We do not resist, fight, or argue. We are taught to forgive."

The liquidators and security personnel who interacted with believers like Ms. S must have felt something. Why, after all, must an [organization](#) of such sincere and earnest believers be dissolved?

To be continued. Part 3 coming soon.

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the [religious organization](#)’s legal representative, he felt deep anguish.

“In past cases involving the [Family Federation](#), we have already faced numerous unreasonable treatments by the courts, but this time I even felt fear at the court’s willingness to dissolve the [corporation](#) without hesitation. It felt as though state power, including the judiciary, had come together to crush the [Family Federation](#).”

The previous year’s [Tokyo District Court decision](#) had also been extremely unreasonable. Due to a lack of evidence, it retroactively treated settlements and mediated agreements as unlawful acts, piling [inference](#) upon inference to reach a [forced conclusion](#). Furthermore, during that [first trial](#), it was revealed that the Ministry of Education (MEXT) had [fabricated](#) and [altered](#) multiple written statements by former believers.

Meanwhile, the [appellate decision](#) – spanning 179 pages even without appendices – was even more astonishing. It interpreted everything the [Family Federation](#) did as malicious, recognized unlawful acts one after another without clear evidence, and rejected all of the [religious organization](#)’s counterarguments. In principle, to establish an unlawful act, one must prove specific facts: who did what, when, how, and what harm resulted. None of that was present. I, too, was terrified by the court’s apparent determination to dissolve the [organization](#) at any cost. **The conclusion of dissolution had been decided from the outset.**

The High Court’s Use of a “Magic Word”

Attorney Fukumoto explains the ruling:

“The [Tokyo District Court](#) in the [first instance](#) determined a large number of ‘unlawful acts’ through a crude framework that abstractly derived ‘illegality’ from legal settlements and out-of-court agreements; however, the content (substance) of those acts was unclear, and there was no concrete evidence, so this clearly violates the principle of trial by evidence. So, in the appeal, the [Family Federation](#) thoroughly refuted these speculative findings by presenting concrete evidence for each case. However, the High Court completely ignored our rebuttals. Instead, it introduced a coined term: ‘improper donation solicitation conduct’.”

This term refers, apparently, to donation solicitations deemed to exceed socially acceptable limits.

“They used this coined term as a kind of magic word. But it is merely an abstract concept and does not identify specific facts.”

Notably, since the 2009 compliance declaration [\[See editor’s note 1 below\]](#), there have been only two finalized court judgments involving unlawful acts (affecting three individuals), all from over a decade ago. Faced with the challenge of justifying dissolution on such a basis, the High Court devised this “magic word,” making it appear plausible by even classifying settlements and mediated agreements as unlawful acts. It then categorized cases into those where unlawfulness was “established”, “reasonably possible”, or “cannot be ruled out”, concluding that a total of 144 individuals fell into these categories.

“The decision uses hesitant language such as ‘it cannot be definitively established that improper solicitation occurred → the possibility cannot be denied,’ yet in its conclusion asserts that the facts have been established. Astonishingly, it also treated amounts merely claimed by former believers during settlements as actual damages.” (Fukumoto)

The [Family Federation](#), as noted, presented concrete evidence in each case to demonstrate that unlawful acts did not occur. For example, they submitted numerous materials such as contracts showing voluntary donations, written pledges made during activities, photographs, and audio recordings. However, the court rejected all of these.

The reasons given included statements such as: “These pieces of evidence are only fragmentary,” and “The appellant ([Family Federation](#)), in an effort to reduce civil litigation, adopted measures such as preserving documents, photographs, and contracts; since these were prepared in anticipation of disputes, their evidentiary value is limited.”

Ignoring Fabricated Statements and Forced Apostasy

In one settlement case, the plaintiffs claimed they had been recruited under false pretenses. However, the church they attended displayed a sign clearly reading “[Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) –Suginami Family Church”. By any reasonable standard, it was evident they were dealing with the [Family Federation](#). The [religious organization](#) argued that the plaintiff’s claim was false, but the court dismissed this, stating that it had considered all evidence submitted by both parties and that isolating this single piece of evidence was insufficient to deny unlawfulness.

The [religious organization](#) also argued that many plaintiffs had been forcibly made to renounce their faith through [abduction and confinement](#) and later sued the [religious organization](#) under the direction of de-conversion brokers (faith-breakers) [\[See editor’s note 2 below\]](#), presenting evidence that their claims were false. This too was ignored by the court.



Attorney Nobuya Fukumoto, here speaking at a press conference in Tokyo 8th September 2023. Screenshot from live transmission by [FFWPU](#)



Imbalanced scale of justice and predetermined verdict in dissolution case behind closed doors. Photo: 99joseph / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#)





Fabrications and alterations committed by a government department are as Masumi Fukuda puts it, "a crime committed by a nation". Still the court simply seemed to imply, "It's fine since we didn't use it as evidence." Illustration: Chat GPT, 14th February 2026, edited.

Regarding the written statements of former believers that had been fabricated and altered by the Ministry of Education (MEXT), the court merely stated that, in the four cases where fabrication is almost certainly evident, “they are not included in the list of settlements or out-of-court agreements.” Despite it being a crime committed by a nation, they seem to be implying, “It’s fine since we didn’t use it as evidence.”

A State-Led Inquisition

The ruling ultimately concludes that improper donation solicitation continued even after the compliance declaration [See editor's note 1 below] and could occur again in the future, making dissolution unavoidable. The reasoning: the religious organization did not reduce its budgeted donation income after the compliance declaration and continued to collect 80-90% of those targets – therefore, such improper conduct can be inferred to be ongoing.

Furthermore, the court went so far as to examine the organization's doctrine, citing statements by its founder Sun Myung Moon and asserting that excessive donation demands stem from such teachings. In other words, as long as believers adhere to these doctrines, and unless the organization takes effective countermeasures, unlawful acts may occur in the future – thus, dissolution is the only solution.

However, intervening in religious doctrine during a trial infringes upon freedom of religion and freedom of thought, and has been considered taboo in past case law.

Thus, the religious organization was forcibly dissolved based on “inference”, “possibility”, and the assertion that it adheres to “harmful doctrine”. This amounts to a state-led inquisition.

See part 2 of the series: [Rapid Liquidation Implies Prearranged Verdict](#)

See also [Believers' Social Exclusion, Loss of Civil Rights](#)

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Featured image above: Nonfiction writer Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ) speaking at a press conference by the “Second Generation Association for Protecting the Human Rights of Believers,” 26th March 2026, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田剛). **Masumi Fukuda** (福田ますみ) – Born in Yokohama in 1956. Graduated from the Faculty of Sociology at Rikkyo University. After working for specialized publications and editorial production companies, became a freelancer. Won the 6th Shincho Documentary Award for *Fabrication: The Truth Behind the Fukuoka “Murderous Teacher” Case* (Shinchosha). Other works include *The True Nature of Political Correctness* (Hajosha) and *Sacrificed by the State* (Asuka Shinsha).

[Editor's note 1: 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” (霊感商法) 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.]

[Editor's note 2: Coercive faith-breaking (“deprogramming”) in Japan refers to the practice of coercively attempting to separate individuals from their religious affiliations or beliefs, typically through intervention by family members, professional faith-breakers (deprogrammers) or organizations hostile to new religious movements (NRMs). This phenomenon often targets members of such movements, e.g. relatively large faiths like the Family Federation or Jehovah's Witnesses, but also smaller groups like Happy Science (Kōfuku no Kagaku) and other newer religious movements.

However, also Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist-based lay



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of Soka Gakkai. Here students belonging to the faith in 2001. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp. Cropped

organization with more than 8 million Japanese members, and affiliated with Nichiren Buddhism, has occasionally been subject to faith-breaking attempts.

The practice gained attention in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Parents or concerned family members often hired faith-breakers who taught them how to abduct and forcibly detain believers. Almost all such cases involved confining the individual believer and cutting him or her off from the religious community. During the confinement, the believer was subjected to intense questioning or indoctrination designed to break his or her faith. The aim was to "rescue" the person from what the family often had been tricked by faith-breakers or lawyers to regard as harmful influence from the religious organization.

Critics of forced de-conversion argue that it violates fundamental human rights, including freedom of thought, religion, and association. Reports of psychological trauma and accusations of unlawful detention have sparked debates over its ethical and legal implications. In response, some religious groups, particularly NRMs, have lobbied for greater protections against such practices.

Japanese courts have been inconsistent in addressing cases of coercive faith-breaking. While some verdicts have condemned the practice as illegal detention, others have been more lenient, citing family concerns about "mental health" or alleged "exploitation" as mitigating factors.]

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