

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japan Creates Mental Health Risks After Church Abuse

Knut Holdhus
April 18, 2026



A church facility of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) in Tokyo stands empty due to government liquidation procedures - April 2, 2026, Shinjuku Ward, Tokyo, Japan



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Survey Shows Japanese Government Crackdown on Family Federation Linked to Rising Mental Health Risks Among Believers

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[Part 8 of a Series] In Search of a Spiritual Anchor - One Month After the Dissolution of the Family Federation

Psychiatrists Analyze Harm to Believers

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

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On 4th March, the Tokyo High Court decided to [uphold the order](#) to dissolve the religious corporation of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)). As a

result, [liquidation](#) procedures are now progressing at church facilities across the country.



Nozomi Kojima, representative of "[The Second-Generation Association for Protecting the Human Rights of Believers](#)", here speaking at a press conference on March 26, 2025 in Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan

Amid this, the "[Second Generation Association for Protecting the Human Rights of Believers](#)" - headed by Nozomi Kojima (小島希晶) - an organization formed by second-generation members of the [Family Federation](#), conducted an online survey targeting believers (8th-16th March; total responses: 2,240). The results have been published on their [website](#).

The published findings also include analyses by psychiatrists and other specialists, who have articulated the psychological suffering experienced by believers who have lost their "spiritual anchor", something often difficult for non-believers to understand.

According to a report by a psychiatrist titled "The Impact of the Dissolution of the [Unification Church](#) on Believers' Health," numerous adverse mental health effects were reported, including worsening depressive states and the onset of insomnia. Among respondents receiving treatment for mental illness - though a minority - there were also reports of worsening suicidal ideation and even suicide attempts.

Based on the health issues revealed by the survey, the report points to multiple contributing factors, including the loss of religious community, intense criticism on social media, and

severe conflicts within families. It proposes several support measures that should be considered:

Assistance in forming alternative social communities

Securing places to conduct religious activities

Promoting social understanding to reduce stigma (discrimination and prejudice)

Establishing counseling systems

Another psychiatrist's report, titled "Considerations on the Current Situation and Issues Facing Believers Following the Dissolution of the [Family Federation](#)", highlights two particularly common responses in the survey: "We no longer have a place to gather" and "We can no longer carry out the religious activities we used to."



The state took their places of worship. Must hold worship services in parks. AI illustration of [Family Federation](#) members gathering in a Japanese park for their Sunday meeting April 5, 2026.

To explain the role of communities formed around shared beliefs, the reporting physician uses the example of family support groups for dementia patients. For caregivers, the feeling that "no one understands how difficult this is" can be a major source of stress. However, sharing experiences within a group of people facing similar situations can make one feel "greatly relieved, even without external support".

Similarly, the report analyzes that for believers - who have long been socially criticized as belonging to a "cult" and often felt compelled to hide their faith - having a community where they could openly engage was likely a significant emotional support. In cases where entire families belonged to the [religious organization](#), losing that community could become a serious issue.

The report further explains the difficulties arising from being unable to continue religious practices. Even if religious rituals had provided a sense of emotional relief, losing the ability to engage in those activities can feel "like being unable to breathe", causing considerable distress. The more devout the believers, the more the rejection of their faith can be perceived as a rejection of their "life", "purpose", and "meaning of existence", raising concerns that many may lose their will to live.

Additionally, a physician affiliated with a society for spiritual care commented,

"The loss of a religious foundation due to a dissolution order can shake the very sense of self-worth of second-generation believers - those born as the embodiment of their parents' faith - and cause deep suffering that evokes thoughts of death."

Kojima, head of the [Second-Generation Association](#), expressed concern about the survey results:

"The situation that emerged was more tragic than we had imagined. We confirmed serious realities, including reports of physical violence, cases where individuals began seeking medical treatment due to mental health issues, instances of job loss, and experiences of discrimination in educational settings."

She added,

"For particularly severe cases that do exist, we plan to carefully document them to prevent further harm, engage in discussions grounded in actual conditions, and share these findings."

In the future, a prolonged [liquidation](#) process and similar developments may create situations where differences in perception between believers and non-believers lead to conflict. It is hoped that these reports will provide clues for bridging that divide.

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Manufactured Victimhood, Lawsuits, Faith-Breaking

April 17, 2026 • Knut Holdhus



Healing when entire families were harmed by faith-breakers – parents misled into funding abusive treatment of their adult children, who were coerced to claim victimhood to sue the Family Federation

Tokyo, 15th April 2026 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).



Logo of the *Sekai Nippo*

[Part 7 of a Series] In Search of a Spiritual Anchor – One Month After the Dissolution of the Family Federation

An Association Seeking to Repair Family Relationships

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

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"Without speaking about **abduction and confinement**, it is impossible to speak about the truth of the Family Federation."

Nonfiction writer Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ) asserted this in a book she published last year (*Sacrificed by the State*, Asuka



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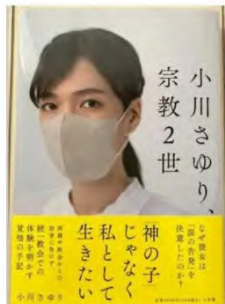
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The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's request for a dissolution order against the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification Church* (formerly the *Unification Church*), as well as the court's decision to dissolve it, rely heavily on testimonies from former believers who were **forcibly made to renounce their faith** by their own family members acting under the guidance of so-called "faith-breakers" (professional exit counselors) [See editor's note 1 below]. In her book, Fukuda points out that "as a final step, faith-breakers encourage former believers to file lawsuits against the religious organization they once belonged to." This contributed to inflating the number of alleged "victims".



Masumi Fukuda (福田 ますみ) – Japanese investigative journalist and award-winning nonfiction writer. Photo (2024): *Sekai Nippo*

See also *Paper Reveals Hidden Story Behind Dissolution*



Front page book cover of Sayuri Ogawa's book in Japanese.

Another issue that had a major impact on public opinion was the so-called "second-generation religious followers" problem. Following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, individuals claiming they had religion imposed on them by their parents began appearing in the media. Among them, *Sayuri Ogawa* (pseudonym), who says she was raised in a church leader's household within the *Family Federation*, drew particular attention.

What the issues of **coercive faith-breaking** [See editor's note 1 below] and second-generation believers have in common is the theme of "family". Precisely because of the closeness of family ties, conflicts over faith become especially difficult, and these issues continue to weigh heavily on the **religious organization**. Even if a religious corporation is "dissolved", many **believers remain believers**. However, if those who relied on the church as a refuge due to family problems lose that place through liquidation procedures, and at the same time face criticism over the "dissolution" that further worsens family relationships, their future becomes bleak.

A private organization called the "Ame-no-Yachimata Association" [See editor's note 2 below], which works toward reconciliation between families involved in **coercive faith-breaking** [See editor's note 1 below] and believers who were **abducted and confined**, has been addressing the repair of fractured parent-child relationships.

One of its co-representatives, Ame-no-Uzume (pseudonym), met her biological brother for the first time in 27 years last year and resumed contact. Reflecting on their reunion, she said, "By talking after so long, we were able to understand each other's misunderstandings." When Uzume began attending the **religious organization** and started living in a dormitory with fellow believers, her brother had thought she had "abandoned the family". For Uzume, however, the motivation was "to grow as a person through communal living". She later realized for the first time that although she had continued to visit her family home after moving into the dormitory, her brother – who had already left home – had not known this.

Regarding reconciliation with her family, Uzume said,

"While enduring the pain of being unable to interact with my family, I came to feel that it wasn't only I who was suffering – my family might have been suffering even more. That's why meeting in person allowed us to understand each other better."

This year, the Ame-no-Yachimata Association [See editor's note 2 below] launched a "Second-Generation Division" to address the conflicts between believers and their sons/daughters. Usagi (pseudonym), a second-generation believer from an international marriage, said, "Personally, I'm not particularly attached to religion or faith." However, after the incident involving [assassination of] former Prime Minister Abe, when she saw second-generation believers criticizing the *Family Federation*, she felt,

"I don't want to deny the voices claiming 'harm'. But conflicts that are not aimed at reconciliation and seem intended only to oppose or destroy didn't sit right with me."

Usagi once attempted to create an online community for second-generation believers that transcended differences in values, but ultimately "it ended without the members being able to reach agreement."

Later, after learning about the activities of the Ame-no-Yachimata Association [See editor's note 2 below], she decided – together with Yuki (pseudonym), the daughter of co-representative Sarutahiko (pseudonym) – to work as part of the "Second-Generation Division" to repair parent-child relationships between first- and second-generation believers.

Yuki said,

"I've watched my father's efforts for a long time, and I believe this is the culmination of his work. Drawing on that experience, I want first- and second-generation believers to work together to resolve parent-child issues."

As shared awareness of painful experiences resonated across generations of believers, there were those taking action in search of new connections.

See part 1 of the series: *Beyond the Ban Believers Sustain Community*

See part 2 of the series: *Transparency Concerns: Masumi's Dialogue of Dissolution*



A son being forcibly abducted by his family and taken away, locked up in order to undergo dehumanizing faith-breaking. Image: *National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion*

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Featured image above: Ame-no-Uzume (pseudonym, left), co-representative of the Ame-no-Yachimata Association, Yuki (pseudonym, center) from the second-generation division, and Usagi (pseudonym, right), being interviewed 30th March 2026, afternoon, Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

[Editor's note 1: 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.]

[Editor's note 2: The Japanese expression **Yachimata (八衢)** refers to a crossroads or intersection where multiple paths converge. It is often used in a metaphorical sense to symbolize choices, encounters, or the meeting of different fates.

In mythology and classical literature, 八衢 (Yachimata) can also evoke a mystical or sacred space where important decisions or transformations occur. It appears in the name of the deity *Ame no Yachihoko (天の八衢)*, associated with crossroads and divine encounters in Japanese folklore.

As for the above-mentioned association *Ame no Yachimata no Kai (天の八衢の会)*, the term symbolizes a place for reconciliation, dialogue, and resolution – a meeting point where estranged families can reconnect.]

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