

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Communists And Other Faiths Next Japanese Target

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Shingo Inoue (left), at the forefront of a demonstration calling for freedom of religion, 30th June, Kokurakita Ward, Kitakyushu City, Japan

Japanese newspaper features politician warning that the next target of the current "mass lynching" could be communists and other religious groups.



Tokyo, 12th July 2024 - Published as the ninth article in a series in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

Series: Freedom of Religion Under Threat - Part 2: Ripples to local assemblies

Offered flowers for the late Shinzo Abe, expelled from the Social Democratic Party

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

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Shingo Inoue in June 2024

One-person faction member Shingo Inoue (井上真吾), a city councilor in Kitakyushu, had been affiliated with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) when former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was shot in July 2022. Although Abe and Inoue held opposing political views, Inoue admired Abe for his eloquent speeches and strong convictions. In a gesture of mourning, Inoue and a fellow independent councilor crossed the Kanmon Strait [Editor's note: between the two large islands Kyushu and Honshu] to offer flowers at Abe's office in Shimonoseki City, Yamaguchi Prefecture, on the opposite shore from Kitakyushu.

After leaving Abe's office, Inoue was surrounded by the media and questioned about his SDP affiliation. When asked why he visited despite the party's opposition to a state funeral for Abe, Inoue responded that he couldn't tolerate violating the right to freedom of thought and conscience protected by the constitution. Shortly afterward, the SDP Fukuoka Prefecture chapter's

leadership confronted him, resulting in a one-year suspension of his party membership. Later, in February of the previous year, after introducing a petition from followers of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)), Inoue submitted a resignation letter, but he was subsequently expelled.

Inoue, who often advocates for human rights, is deeply committed to the fundamental human rights enshrined in the constitution. Even though he was not an atheist, he joined the Communist Party at the age of 18. His encounter with a Communist-affiliated organization while volunteering in Kobe after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake influenced his decision. After completing evening courses at university, he joined the party, serving as a Communist Party member for two terms (eight years). During this time, he focused on local activities for the community but declined to work more for the party, leading to his departure and giving up a third term.

Subsequently, Inoue faced rejection in interviews with as many as 30 companies due to his Communist Party background. He experienced it as a hindrance. He persevered through odd jobs, including

construction work, and returned to politics eight years later with support from the Social Democratic Party (SDP).



From the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake (17th January 1995)



Koreans in Japan about to be stabbed by Japanese vigilantes with bamboo spears immediately after the 1923 Great Kanto earthquake. The Kanto Massacre was a mass killing that took place in the Kanto region of Japan following the earthquake there on 1st Sep. 1923. With the overt and covert approval of certain segments of the Japanese government, the Japanese military, police, and vigilantes murdered an estimated 6,000 individuals. The victims were primarily ethnic Koreans, but also included communists and socialists. In recent times, mainstream Japanese politicians and right-wing groups have continued to deny or downplay the massacre

Following the incident involving Abe, the [Family Federation](#) was labeled a group deserving dissolution, and it began to be publicly known that many members were reported to have been harmed in various parts of the country. However, during his eight years as a Communist Party member and after his political comeback in 2021, Inoue never received consultations related to the [Family Federation](#)'s substantial donations or spiritual sales.

Records from the Kanto Great Earthquake reveal atrocities where Koreans and Communist Party members were massacred. Inoue finds it puzzling that the Communist Party and SDP, which usually advocate for human rights, remain silent. He warns that if dissolution orders are granted, both the Communist and SDP, along with other religious groups, could become targets of repression. "Today it's them, tomorrow it could be us," he cautions.

In August last year, the [Family Federation](#) filed a lawsuit against Kitakyushu City in the Fukuoka District Court, claiming that its resolution to "have no relationship whatsoever" [with the [Family Federation](#)] was an unlawful act that incites discrimination against a specific religion, and is seeking 11 million yen in damages for defamation. The current bashing of the [Family Federation](#) by the government and the media appears to Shingo Inoue to be a "mass lynching". He emphasizes the importance of this significant trial to change the fabric of exclusion and bullying.

On 16th June, Inoue participated in a [rally](#) organized by [Family Federation](#) followers in Kumamoto City. Inoue marched with the believers in a demonstration, calling out, "The government must protect freedom of religion." He was concerned about potential trouble from onlookers, but his worries were unfounded. "There was no security presence, and the surrounding people watched supportively," he said. He also participated in another [demonstration](#) held in Kitakyushu City on 30th June.

Inoue believes that more people are now calmly assessing the issue of the [Family Federation](#), recognizing that the prevailing sentiment is no longer "[Family Federation](#) is evil." He strongly appealed, "Not only politicians but also the judiciary should uphold the dignity of the [religious organization](#)."

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# Politician Defends Socially Excluded Minority

July 12, 2024 • Knut Holdhus



*Japanese politician tells his story to Tokyo paper how he speaks up for discriminated, persecuted, and vilified socially excluded minority religion*

Tokyo, 10th July 2024 – Published as the **eighth article** in a series in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article*

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# responsibility to correct their mistakes



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

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"I feel that I am partly responsible for causing a situation in which many of you suffered greatly. However, I believe that if a politician has made a mistake, he also has the responsibility to correct it. If I have the chance, I will do whatever it takes."

In December 2022, the Kitakyushu City Council unanimously passed a resolution confirming that it would not be involved with the anti-social [Unification Church](#). Shingo Inoue (井上真吾), an independent with progressive views, regrets having supported this resolution.



From the demo in Kitakyushu City 30th June 2024. Photo: Kennosuke Teraguchi (寺口賢之介) / *Sekai Nippo*

On 30<sup>th</sup> June, he took the stage at the "[Kitakyushu Conference to Protect Fundamental Human Rights and Freedom of Religion](#)" held in Kitakyushu City, expressing strong feelings of self-reproach.

The city council resolution, which labeled the [Family Federation](#) as anti-social, stated in strong terms that "we will have no relationship whatsoever with the [organization](#), such as participating in its events, sending messages, or receiving supporters' membership fees." [Editor's note: Most city councilors and members of parliament have support groups or patronage associations.]

Despite consistently opposing opinions and resolutions submitted by the [Communist Party](#), every member, including those from the [Liberal Democratic Party](#) and [Komeito](#) [Editor's note: government coalition partner], supported this resolution. In an interview with this paper, **Inoue revealed that he felt pressured by multiple council members** who told him, "You are the only one opposing." He confessed,

"I thought it would be inappropriate to stubbornly disrupt the unity by being the only one to oppose, so I reluctantly marked approval."

Then, three months later, in February of last year, **a petition, which included a request for consideration of believers' rights** along with a statement, was delivered to all members of the [Kitakyushu City Council](#). **The only one who responded to this petition was Shingo Inoue**. He said,

**"Isn't it a personal freedom to associate with whomever one wishes? Being told by others not to associate with someone is unacceptable. It is problematic for political parties or the council to interfere in matters related to the inner lives of individuals, people's way of living, their way of thinking, and their ideological beliefs."**

Inoue added,

**"It is unacceptable that believers and their children should be bullied at school and in the local community and excluded from social activities."**

**After the resolution, Shingo Inoue felt uneasy**, and the petition request was a much-welcomed opportunity.

"If things stayed as they were, it would have been a regrettable experience for me to have acted against my political will. I am grateful for being given the chance to correct my actions."

Up until that point, Inoue had no connection with the



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religious organization. The only encounter, if it can be called so, was shortly after he joined the Communist Party, when he received a flyer from a friendly-looking elderly couple in front of a station in Kitakyushu City. Later, he found out they were members of the [Family Federation](#). **The thought that the resolution might deprive this couple of their freedom of religion crossed his mind.**



Receiving a flyer from a friendly-looking elderly couple. Image generated by Microsoft Designer Image Creator 11th July 2024.

Inoue debated against the "Statement of Opinion Calling for an Order to Disband the Former [Unification Church](#)" submitted by the Communist Party (JCP) in the Diet last September. He pointed out that because of the "public opinion of hatred towards the former [Unification Church](#) fueled by media reports", there have been cases of victims, such as persons being forced out of their jobs, being bullied at school, and not being able to rent venues for events. He then appealed,

**"Isn't it the duty of politics to listen to the painful stories of those who are still excluded and discriminated against because they have faith, and to make it possible for them to live peacefully as equal citizens?"**

Before and after the resolution in December 2022, several statements and resolutions regarding the former [Unification Church](#) were submitted, but they were rejected due to opposition from both the [Liberal Democratic Party](#) (LDP) and [Komeito](#) [Editor's note: government coalition partner]. Why was the resolution to sever ties the only one to be unanimously approved? Shingo Inoue speculated,

"The LDP, the largest faction, probably didn't want to appear reluctant or pressured into agreement by the opposition, especially with the unified local elections coming up in the spring of the following year."

He expressed his indignation, stating that it is outrageous for the basic human rights of citizens to be sacrificed for political gains.

The day after the resolution, both local and national media extensively reported on the decision to sever ties. This made Inoue "realize the magnitude of the matter".

**Featured image** above: [Shingo Inoue, Kitakyushu City Councilor](#) being interviewed 26th June 2024. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

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