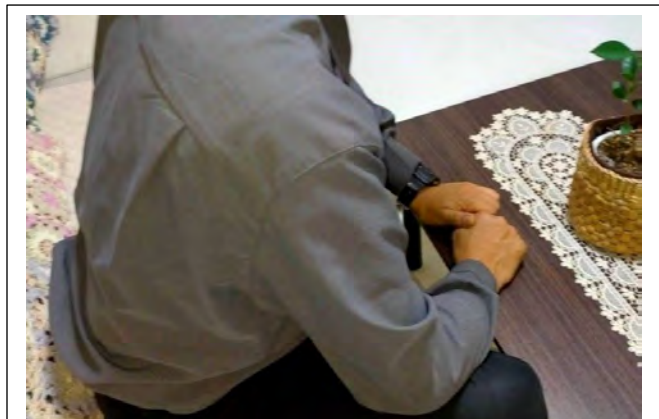


FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Anti-Religious Bigots Broke Up My Family

Knut Holdhus
August 10, 2024



Forced to forfeit his inheritance. Toshihiro Kimura (pseudonym), a man in his 50s from the Chugoku region

Japanese believer from minority religion tells the story how his own father was influenced so negatively by media coverage that he forced his son to forfeit inheritance.

Originally published by the [Family Federation of Japan](#) 9th August 2024 on their [website ffwpu.jp](#).

Interviewer: Hello, Mr. Kimura. Nice to meet you today. I heard that you dealt with some familial issues. What did your parents originally think about your faith in the [Family Federation](#)?

Kimura: I started working after I graduated from high school, and soon after that, I came across the [Unification Principle](#). I was moved by its well-reasoned arguments, as well as the philosophy and activities of the [Family Federation](#), which was based on living for the sake of others, for the country, and for the world, so I joined in the early 1980s. I told my parents that I was attending the [Unification Church \(Family Federation\)](#) after I joined, but they seemed to have a distrust of this new religion from the beginning. Sometime after that, I was almost kidnapped and confined in order to make me renounce my faith.



One day, I finished attending a lecture on the [Unification Principle](#) at [church](#), and on my way home, a group of about seven or eight men, including my father and uncle, surrounded me and suddenly forced me into a car. I resisted the best I could, but I couldn't get away. I think the car belonged to my uncle. I didn't know where we were going, but when they stopped for a short break, I jumped out of the car and ran away.

After that incident, my parents came to the [church](#) several times to try to bring me back to their home, which was in another prefecture. At the suggestion of one of the then staff members of the [church](#), I went back to my parents' house to talk things out with them. My parents made me read a book written by an anti-Unificationist who criticized the [church](#), but I told them that I would continue to attend the [church](#) because I had not changed my

mind, so we settled the matter as if we had made peace.

However, I can't say my relationship with my parents was normal after that, and they always seemed distrustful towards me. Therefore, I gradually tried to rebuild their trust by contacting them frequently, or taking my wife back home with me, and taking our children to them after they were born.

Until my mother's death in 2021, my wife and I took the most time, among my siblings, to visit my parents in order to take care of them and help them out. Therefore, my father came to trust us. Shortly before my mother passed away, my father repeatedly asked me if we would come back (home), and he even wrote a letter to my wife and I saying,

"This house will be passed down to Toshihiro Kimura (not his real name)."

Interviewer: How has your relationship with your parents deteriorated since the incident [Editor's note: assassination of Shinzo Abe] in July 2022?

Kimura: The mainstream media bashing the [Family Federation](#) only intensified, and my father's opinion of my wife and I deteriorated dramatically. Whenever I called my father, he would tell me that I did not have to come back or even return home.

My father also told me that he did not want me to come to the first anniversary of my mother's death, but I managed to get permission, and I attended. When I returned home, I found a postcard on my father's desk from a member of the Japanese Communist Party, which my father had never supported in any way. And my father wrote, "Quit the [church](#)! Even if I tell you to quit, you're brainwashed anyway, so there's nothing I can do about it!" He was so insistent that no matter what I said to him, it was useless, and he revealed his disbelief in me.

The situation got worse at the time of the third anniversary of my mother's death in 2023. Up until then, my father told us not to attend the memorial services, but this time, he contacted us and told us to be sure and come to the service together. Because of that, I felt a little uneasy, but we went anyway.



After the memorial service finished, and the priest had left, my wife and I were surrounded by about seven relatives, including my father, two of my brothers, my aunt, and my aunt's husband. They all pressed us and said,

"We don't know what you're going to do because you are part of an anti-social group. If you aren't going to sever ties with us, sign this document pledging you will forfeit (your father's) inheritance!"

The document was handwritten by my father, and I had to fill out my name and address. My wife was also terrified, and we couldn't leave until we signed it, so we reluctantly signed the document.

Interviewer: So that's how it happened. How is your relationship with your father after that?

Kimura: I call my father from time to time to ask how he's doing, but the conversations always become one-sided where he criticizes our faith. It doesn't look like our relationship will improve anytime soon.

Earlier this year (2024), I visited my father, who lives alone, and asked him again about the document I signed on the third anniversary of my mother's death. We talked about it a lot, but it seemed unmistakable that my father made me sign the forfeiture because of my religious belief. My father's property was mainly his house and land, but he seemed to be concerned that if I inherited it, it would be used as a base for the [Unification Church](#).

I never once mentioned that I wanted to inherit the house or land; I was going to leave it to my father. Nor did I ever think of using it as a base of operations for the [Family Federation](#).

My father's story came from his own imagination, and I was surprised at how far removed from reality it was. I had genuinely taken care of my mother and helped my father as a son, but now my father says to me, "You must have had some sort of ulterior motive!" I am really shocked that the parent-child relationship we had built up was destroyed so quickly; this is much more shocking than the inheritance issue. My wife is also saddened by this fact.

By the way, my father always watches the mainstream media, especially tabloid shows, and often believes the biased content of the programs. When I tell him about my experiences in the [church](#) or at home, he says, "No, that's not what the TV says," and he doesn't listen to me at all. For example, some of my children have inherited the faith and some have not, but as a parent, I treat every child the same. However, my father has no doubt in his mind that "all second-generation children are victims of their parents," and blamed my wife and me.

I would like the mainstream media to be fair in their reporting. I am not opposed to them featuring the voices of former believers in their TV programs, but I would like them to feature the voices of current believers who are living their lives of faith with gratitude just as much. I believe we must make an effort to continue to speak out and not give up.

Interviewer: We'll pray that the relationship between you and your father will be restored as soon as possible. Thank you for sharing your story with us.

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August 8, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Safety for believers seriously compromised by Kishida administration's campaign against religious minority

Tokyo, 8th August 2024 – Published as the **17th 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 3: **Believers Suffering Discrimination and Human Rights Violations**








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

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"I think many followers felt outraged when they heard that the perpetrator considered himself a hero fighting against evil."



The Meijo Family Church of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). Photo (May 2021): [円周率3パーセント / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int](#)

Those are the words of a male staff member of the [Meijo Family Church](#) (Meijo Church) of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture. Two years ago, on the night of 15th August 2022, the Meijo Church suffered vandalism, with graffiti spray-painted on its entrance doors, with words like "cult" and "danger". This was a month after the shooting incident of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, during a period when media's bashing of the [Family Federation](#) was intensifying.

The Meijo Church was not the only one affected by graffiti. On the night of 14th August 2022, the [Ichinomiya Family Church](#) (Ichinomiya Church) in Ichinomiya City, Aichi Prefecture, about a 20-minute drive from the Meijo Church, also suffered graffiti damage on its walls with spray-painted messages like "Cult, get out!", "Yamagami, Banzai!", and "Traitors". A male staff member of the Ichinomiya Church, who happened to arrive early to prepare for the meeting on the 15th, discovered the graffiti.

The Ichinomiya Police Station, which investigated the incident, arrested a man in his 40s who works for a company in Aichi Prefecture, based on footage from nearby security cameras. The man also admitted to the charges.

According to the man's statement, his motives for the graffiti were "anger towards the [Liberal Democratic Party's](#) connection with a quasi-criminal religious organization" and "to make people aware of the malicious nature of the former [Unification Church](#)." However, he also admitted that it was "a pastime during the Obon holiday" and that he thought "he might get attention by doing such things."

The man had researched the [religious organization](#) through online searches and magazine articles, concluding that it was "nothing but a group of traitors sending large donations to Korea." He felt a compulsion to take "action with a message".

He looked up the location of the nearby Ichinomiya Church and, using the spray paint he had, he hid his face with sunglasses and graffitied words like "cult" on the wall of the place of worship late at night on the 14th August 2022. He also painted over the nameplate of the church with black spray paint.



Location of Nagoya. Illustration: [Maximilian Dörrbecker \(Chumhwa\) / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp](#)

Feeling that he had managed to damage the [religious organization](#), he decided to graffiti another place of worship. Using a map app, he drove to the Meijo Church in Nagoya City. He painted over the mailbox with black spray paint and left similar graffiti.

During the interrogation, the man expressed satisfaction with his graffiti acts, saying, "I am very pleased because I

managed to challenge the corrupt relationship between politics and religion." Judging by the content of his statement, he showed no sign of remorse. In September of the same year, he was fined 200,000 yen by a summary order from the Ichinomiya Summary Court for property

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damage and insult.

In February 2023, the [Family Federation](#) filed a civil lawsuit in the Tokyo District Court seeking damages. On 25th January of this year, Judge Chieko Shimizu (清水知恵子) recognized defamation, stating that the expression "cult" lowered the social evaluation of the plaintiff, and ordered the man to pay approximately 590,000 yen, including repair costs for the two facilities.

The [religious organization](#) appreciates that the court recognized the expression "cult" as something that lowers social credibility. However, they are concerned that if a dissolution order is issued against the [corporation](#), the situation could spiral out of control, and even worse damage is expected to occur.

After the graffiti incident, the Meijo Church instructed its members,

"Graffiti can be fixed, but if you encounter the perpetrator, anything could happen. If you find the perpetrator, do not make contact under any circumstances."

Hatred towards the [religious organization](#) casts a dark shadow over the safety of its believers.

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Featured image above: Graffiti damage at Ichinomiya Family Church.
Photo: [Family Federation](#)

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