

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Faiths Demand Japan to Respect Religious Freedom

Knut Holdhus  
October 17, 2024



Speakers discussing the importance of faith - October 14, 2024, Osaka Public Hall, Chuo Ward, Osaka City

### Interreligious conference in Osaka urges Japanese authorities to respect religious freedom



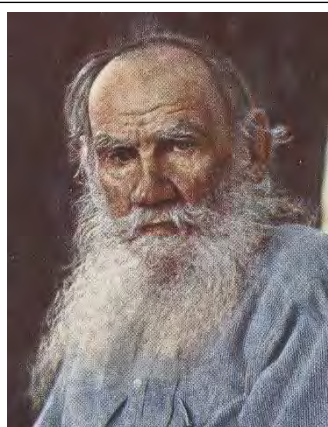
Tokyo, 15th October 2024 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

"Passing the Values of Faith on to the Future"

Interfaith Conference in Osaka

by the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

On 14th October 2024, a conference with the theme "Weaving the Values of Faith into the Future" was held at the Osaka Public Hall in Chūō-ku, Osaka City. This event was organized in light of the government's request a year ago for the dissolution of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). Over 1,000 people from various religious denominations gathered to reaffirm the importance of the values that faith and religion hold.



Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky's portrait of Leo Tolstoy

In his keynote speech, international lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama (中山達樹) emphasized that the issue is not that the [Family Federation](#) is misunderstood, but rather that it is not understood at all. He pointed out the lack of effort to foster understanding. Quoting the words of Russian literary giant Tolstoy, he urged,

"Before trying to change the world, let's change ourselves."

Humayun Mughal, a Muslim believer and religious commentator, expressed opposition to the government's request for the dissolution order, asserting that

"people are constantly trapped in fixed ideas and preconceived notions, but to break free, we must first make an effort to remove such ingrained

ideas from ourselves."



*Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama*

At the conference, representatives from different religions, such as Buddhism and Christianity, sent messages of support, suggesting that "rather than reacting negatively, avoiding each other, or having religions stare each other down just because they belong to different denominations, it is desirable that we recognize and help each other despite our differences, and strive for mutual improvement."

Additionally, a message signed by 108 Christian clergy and university professors from South Korea was presented, urging the Japanese government to respect religious freedom.

Shinichi Watanabe (渡部真一), the chair of the conference's organizing committee, suggested that behind the request for the dissolution order there might well be "negative feelings and ingrained information about religion." He emphasized the need to "make efforts to convey the preciousness of having faith."

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# Leaders From 18 Faiths Send Protest To Regime

• July 23, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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**Leaders from Family Federation and 17 other faiths gathered in city of Niigata sending protest to regime Of Kishida**



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

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## Conference Advocating for Religious Freedom, Without Prejudice Towards Religions

by the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

On 20<sup>th</sup> July 2024, a symposium was held in Chuo Ward, Niigata City organized by Niigata Prefecture's Citizens'



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Association to Protect Religious Freedom. The event was in response to the request by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to the Tokyo District Court for an order to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). The theme for the symposium was "Citizens' Meeting for Niigata Prefecture to Protect Religious Freedom and Human Rights".



Location of the cities mentioned. Illustration: Maximilian Dörrbecker (Chumhwa) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp

In addition to members of the [Family Federation](#), **religious leaders from 17 religious organizations participated**, including [Soka Gakkai](#) and [Rissho Kosei-kai](#). They **adopted a declaration** promoting the protection of "freedom of religion and democracy in Japan" and firmly **protesting "religious discrimination and persecution due to prejudice against any religion"**.

During the meeting, [Family Federation](#) staff member Kenryu Kageyama (影山権龍) (36) delivered a speech on behalf of second-generation believers. In response to the prevailing narrative that second-generation individuals are victims coerced into the faith, Kageyama countered that there are **many second-generation believers who are happy to inherit the faith**. He emphasized that his life of faith within the [Family Federation](#) has served as the underpinnings of his life and been the reason for his personal happiness. Additionally, he conveyed the pain felt by believers who have had their faith – an integral part of their identity – brushed aside due to religious persecution.

Guest speaker Norio Hosoya (細谷典男), a member of the [Toride City Council](#) in Ibaraki Prefecture, warned that **the request for the dissolution order was an "unjust act that violates religious freedom" and would lead to totalitarianism and the secularization of the state**.



Norio Hosoya (細谷典男), Japanese author and politician. Among his books is one titled "The Constitution and the Former [Unification Church](#)" (憲法と『旧統一教会』) (2023). Photo (May 2024): [Sekai Nippo](#)

The declaration will be submitted to the [Prime Minister's Office](#) and the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology](#).

**Featured image** above: Kenryu Kageyama speaking in Niigata 20th July 2024. Photo: Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田剛) / [Sekai Nippo](#)

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