

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Masumi Fukuda on This Is About More Than One Religion

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The head table of speakers at the [press conference](#) at the Press Club in Brussels on June 29, 2026



Masumi Fukuda speaking at the [press conference](#) in Brussels on June 29, 2026

When investigative journalist looked behind the media narrative about one persecuted faith minority, she discovered a hidden sinister campaign that concerns much more than one religion

Part 4 (final) of a speech given by Japanese investigative journalist and prize-winning author Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ) at a [press conference](#) on the theme "Japan: The Hidden Story Behind the Eradication of a Religion", held at the Brussels Press Club in Brussels, Belgium on 29th June 2026, organized by [Human Rights Without Frontiers](#) (HRWF), an independent non-profit NGO. Translated from the transcription of the original Japanese, slightly edited.

See also part 1: [The Hidden Story Japan Doesn't Want You to Hear](#)

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Then everything changed on 8th July 2022. Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) was assassinated. The suspect claimed that his mother had made enormous donations to the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below], causing his family to fall into financial ruin, and that he therefore blamed Mr. Abe because of his perceived connection to the [church](#).

Immediately after the assassination, virtually every major television station and newspaper in Japan began reporting on the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below] day after day. From morning until night, viewers were presented with stories portraying the [church](#) as an exceptionally dangerous organization. The media repeatedly featured former members and lawyers critical of the [church](#) [See editor's note below], while giving almost no opportunity for the [church](#) itself or its members to explain their position.

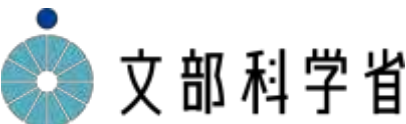
As a result, public opinion shifted dramatically. People came to believe that the [church](#) itself was responsible for the assassination, even though the [church](#) [See editor's note below] had not committed the crime. The man who carried out the assassination acted alone. Yet the public's anger was redirected toward the [church](#).

The media's reporting created an atmosphere in which criticizing the [church](#) [See editor's note below]

became not only acceptable but expected. Politicians, government agencies, and local authorities all came under pressure to distance themselves from the [religious organization](#).



Changed the law overnight and told his governing party, LDP, to cut all ties with the [Family Federation](#). Former prime minister Fumio Kishida, here delivering a speech at the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26) Nov. 2, 2021



Launched an investigation into the Family Federation and requested its dissolution to the Tokyo District Court: Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)

As criticism intensified, the government changed its own position. For many years, successive governments had maintained that the Religious Corporations Act allowed dissolution orders only when a religious organization had committed serious criminal acts. That had long been the accepted legal interpretation. However, after Abe's assassination, the government [reversed that interpretation](#).

It announced that repeated civil violations could also provide sufficient grounds for dissolving a religious corporation. This represented a fundamental change in legal policy.

In my opinion, the interpretation of the law was altered in order to make it possible to dissolve the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below].

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) then launched an investigation into the [church](#). Questionnaires were sent repeatedly, demanding vast amounts of documents and information. The investigation expanded further and further. Eventually, the ministry petitioned the court for a dissolution order.

Throughout this process, the media overwhelmingly portrayed these developments as both natural and necessary. Very few journalists questioned whether the legal standards themselves had changed. Even fewer asked whether freedom of religion might be endangered if a [religious organization](#) could be dissolved without having committed criminal offenses.

That, however, is precisely the question that should concern us. Today, it is the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below]. Tomorrow, it could be another religious organization. Once the government acquires the power to dissolve a religious body without criminal convictions, every religious community becomes vulnerable.

The issue is therefore much larger than one particular [church](#) [See editor's note below]. It concerns the future of religious liberty in Japan. Freedom of religion exists to protect unpopular religions as well as popular ones. If that principle is abandoned, then constitutional rights themselves begin to lose their meaning.

That is why I decided to investigate this issue.

When I began my research, I did not expect to reach these conclusions.



Masumi Fukuda promoting her latest book December 22, 2025

Like many ordinary Japanese people, I had accepted what the media had reported about the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below]. But as I examined court records, official documents, and the historical evidence, I discovered that many of the commonly accepted narratives were either incomplete or misleading. The more I investigated, the more convinced I became that something was fundamentally wrong.

As a journalist, I believe my responsibility is not to defend any particular religion. My responsibility is to uncover facts. Whether those facts are popular or unpopular should not matter. Journalism exists to pursue the truth. If the media reports only one side of a story while ignoring evidence that points in another

direction, then it is failing in its duty.

That is why I wrote The State's Sacrifice (国家の生贄 - Kokka no Ikenie). My hope is that readers will examine the evidence for themselves rather than simply accepting what television or newspapers tell them.

The question before us is not whether we agree with the beliefs of the [Unification Church](#) [See editor's note below]. People are free to approve of those beliefs or reject them. The real question is whether a democratic nation governed by the rule of law can take away a [religious organization's](#) legal status without demonstrating criminal wrongdoing.

That question should concern every citizen, regardless of religious belief.

Thank you very much.

See also part 1: [The Hidden Story Japan Doesn't Want You to Hear](#)

See also part 2: [Japanese Court Assumes the Role of Inquisitor](#)

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[Editor's note: Although Masumi Fukuda uses the name "[Unification Church](#)" and also the word "church", please be aware that the [Unification Church](#) in Japan in 2015 changed its name to [Family Federation for World peace and Unification](#).]

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enrollment case



Logo of News1

World Peace and Unification – commonly known in Korea as *Unificationism* (통일교) – are entering another significant phase. According to a *report* by reporters Kweon Jin-yeong (권진영) and Han Soo-hyeon (한수현), published by the South Korean news agency News1 (뉴스1) on 3rd July 2026, the *Seoul Central District Court* has scheduled the substantive trial over allegations of coordinated mass enrollment (집단 입당) of *Unificationism* members into the conservative *People Power Party* (PPP) to begin in mid-August, with judges aiming to conclude hearings before the end of this year.

The case is one of several criminal proceedings involving former First Lady Kim, whose legal difficulties have expanded considerably since leaving office. Over the past year she has faced multiple indictments covering allegations ranging from influence-peddling and corruption to election-related offences. On 26th June 2026, she received a first-instance conviction in a separate case involving brokerage bribery, violations of South Korea's *Improper Solicitation and Graft Act*, and destruction of evidence. That judgment, however, is subject to appeal and therefore has not yet become final.



Kweon Seong-dong (권성동), here portrait January 2025. Photo: 국민의힘TV / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp. Cropped

The newly scheduled proceedings concern allegations that Kim worked with Jeon Seong-bae (전성배), widely known by his religious title “Geonjin Beopsa” (건진법사), to influence the outcome of the *People Power Party's* internal leadership contest in late 2022. Prosecutors allege that they sought the organized enrollment of thousands of *Unificationism* members into the party in order to strengthen support for then-lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) in the party leadership race. According to the prosecution, approximately

3,100 members of the *religious organization* joined the PPP as part of the alleged operation.

Kim’s defense disputes both the legal characterization and practical significance of these actions. Her lawyers argue that the number of new party members was too small to have materially affected the outcome of the party convention and reject the prosecution’s assertion that any unlawful political intervention occurred.

The *News1 article* claims that the prosecution further alleges that the political support sought from *Unificationism* was linked to promises of favorable treatment. According to the indictment, Kim and Jeon allegedly agreed to assist *Unificationism's* policy objectives and discussed providing the religious organization with a proportional representation seat in the National Assembly.



Of Mother Han's Medical Release

June 29, 2026

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proportional representation seat in the National Assembly in exchange for its cooperation.

Also



Jeong Won-ju, here 19th January 2025. Screenshot from [FFWPU](#) video.



Yoon Yeong-ho, here 9th August 2020. Screenshot from video by [FFWPU](#)

standing trial are [Hak Ja Han](#) (한 학자), the spiritual leader of [Unificationism](#); its former official Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호); former secretary's office chief Jeong Won-ju (정원주); and Jeon Seong-bae (전성배). Prosecutors contend that Han and other senior officials from the [religious organization](#) accepted the alleged arrangement and directed [Unificationism](#) members to join the governing party in an organized manner, thereby violating South Korea's *Political Parties Act*.

The *Seoul Central District Court* held a preparatory hearing on 3rd July to organize the presentation of evidence and clarify the positions of both the prosecution and defense. Such hearings are procedural rather than evidentiary, and defendants are not required to attend. Kim and the other accused therefore did not appear in court.

Following the hearing, the court designated 14th August as the opening day of the full trial. The judges indicated an intention to hold hearings every Friday thereafter, stating that the proceedings should conclude no later than 11th December, although an earlier conclusion at the end of November remains possible if the trial progresses efficiently. Under that timetable, a first-instance judgment would likely be delivered in early 2027.

Critical voices regard the case as political revenge. The current left-leaning Lee Jae-myung (이재명) administration and the special prosecutors empowered to investigate political and religious figures believed to have supported former conservative President Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열) have also faced considerable criticism. Opponents argue that the investigations represent a politically motivated effort directed against ideological and political adversaries rather than a purely impartial exercise of criminal justice.



Kept long-term in tiny cell under inhuman conditions: [Hak Ja Han](#), the [True Mother](#), here on 27th March 2026 after more than 6 months in detention cell. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

The political-party enrollment case is unfolding alongside another major prosecution involving [Hak Ja Han](#). In separate proceedings, prosecutors have accused the longtime [Unificationism](#) leader of participating in an alleged bribery and influence-peddling scheme involving gifts, political access, and efforts to obtain favorable treatment from government officials during the administration of former President Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열). That

case has progressed independently of the *Political Parties Act* prosecution and has reached its final stage, with closing arguments and the final hearing scheduled for 10th July

2026. A first-instance verdict in that matter is expected after the conclusion of those proceedings.

Taken together, the various criminal cases represent one of the most consequential legal reckonings involving South Korea's recent political leadership and one of the country's most influential religious organizations. They also reflect prosecutors' broader efforts to investigate allegations that political influence, religious networks, and private intermediaries became intertwined in attempts to shape both public policy and internal party politics. While the charges remain contested and all defendants continue to deny wrongdoing to varying degrees, the succession of trials scheduled throughout the second half of 2026 is expected to provide one of the clearest judicial examinations yet of the alleged relationships between Kim Keon Hee (김건희), senior figures within [Unificationism](#), and prominent political actors in South Korea.

See also [South Korea's Slide Toward Authoritarianism](#)

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Seoul Central District Court. AI-illustration: ChatGPT, 5th July 2026

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