

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japanese Media Defiles Sacred Events and Holy Places

Knut Holdhus
April 19, 2025



TBS Holdings HQ. TBS Television is a subsidiary of TBS Holdings

Family Federation protests one-sided and hostile reporting in BS-TBS, a Japanese media outlet that shows blatant disrespect for sacred site and ceremony in South Korea

Press Release 18th April 2025, by the Public Relations Department of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) of Japan, translated from Japanese. See Japanese [original version](#).

Letter of Protest Sent to BS-TBS "Hōdō 1930"



The [Family Federation](#) in Japan

Press Release 18th April 2025
[Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)
Public Relations Department

BS-TBS

On 16th April broadcast of the BS television program "Hōdō 1930," produced by BS-TBS [See editor's note below], a one-sided and

biased report was aired about [our organization](#) without any attempt to conduct interviews or seek comment from us. In response, we have sent a formal "Protest and Request for Apology and Retraction" to BS-TBS. The full text is below.

18th April 2025

To:

BS-TBS, Inc.
President and CEO, Mr. Hideki Isano (佐野英樹)
TBS Television, News Bureau, News Program Center, BS News Department
Chief Director of "Hōdō 1930," Mr. Mizuki Ishikawa (石川瑞樹)

From:

[Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)
1-1-2 Shoto, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-0046
Director of Public Relations and External Affairs, Takuya Sawada (澤田拓也)
Protest and Request for Apology and Retraction

On 16th April broadcast of your BS television program "Hōdō 1930," your company aired a one-sided and biased report regarding our organization, without conducting any interviews with us.

It is clear that the content of the program violates Article 4 of the Broadcasting Act, which states that "reporting must not distort facts" and that "for issues with conflicting opinions, points of view should be presented from as many angles as possible." Accordingly, we strongly protest and firmly demand an apology and a correction or removal of the broadcast content (including versions posted on YouTube and other social media).

The program in question focused on a sacred religious ceremony, the "Cheonwon Temple and Cheonil Sanctum Inauguration Ceremony", hosted by the international headquarters of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (hereafter referred to as "[Family Federation](#)") and held in South Korea on

13th April. The program slandered the event, claiming it was "a new method of fundraising through deceit" and accusing the organization of "gathering and controlling Japanese believers in Korea through workshops and liberation/blessing ceremonies."



The Cheonwon Temple, a holy site for members of the [Family Federation](#) and many others

In fact, the expenses related to the event were covered by donations from [Family Federation](#) members and supporters around the world. The claim that Japanese believers bore an excessive financial burden is simply false.

Furthermore, the "HJ Cheonju CheonBo Training Center", operated by the [Family Federation](#) in Korea, is a sacred site visited by members from around the world. The program insultingly portrayed those participating in the workshops and ancestor liberation/blessing ceremonies as if they were being "controlled and dominated", which we find completely unacceptable.



A holy ceremony for members of the [Family Federation](#). Here, from the exchange of wedding rings at the [Marriage Blessing](#) officiated by [Holy Mother Han](#) on 12th April 12, 2025

In addition, the program falsely characterized second- and third-generation members who took part in the international [mass blessing ceremony](#) held on 12th April as "victims of financial exploitation", stating that the gratitude donation from participating couples was 1,4 million yen. This is inaccurate.

For reference, the gratitude donation from second- and third-generation members participating in the blessing ceremony is 200,000 yen [ca. \$ 1,400].

There were numerous other factual inaccuracies in the program that are too numerous to list here. These

mistakes clearly stem from your failure to conduct any interviews with [our organization](#).

For all of the above reasons, we strongly protest and once again demand an apology and either correction or removal of the broadcast content.

We expect a sincere written response within one week of receiving this document.

End

[Editor's note: TBS = Tokyo Broadcasting System, a large private commercial broadcaster, is the flagship of Japan News Network (JNN) in Tokyo and the surrounding prefectures. BS-TBS is a satellite broadcasting station with headquarter in Tokyo.]

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“Repressive State Rewriting Rules”: Japan Accused

• April 18, 2025
• Knut Holdhus



Repressive state violating international law as Tokyo court orders dissolution of large religious organization with 600,000 members

Tokyo, 18th April 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article.*

Religious Persecution by Judiciary: Dissolution Order Violates International Law

Commentary on Public Discourse
by Seisaku Morita (森田 清策)



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Government-Led “Faith-Breaking” Under the Guise of Helping Second-Generation Members?

The Tokyo District Court has issued a [verdict](#) ordering the dissolution of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification \(Family Federation\)](#), formerly the [Unification Church](#). Few experts have opposed this, and public opinion is overwhelmingly in favor. However, from the standpoint of international law, how should we view a [dissolution order](#) issued against a religious organization that has not committed any criminal offense? Even though it is a district court decision, this marks the first time dissolution has been ordered based on civil, not criminal, grounds. That’s why now more than ever, understanding the international standards regarding *freedom of religion* is crucial.



Facsimile from page 270 of the May 2025 issue of Monthly Hanada. Photo: Screenshot

magazine *Hanada* includes an interview with French international lawyer Patricia Duval (titled “The Request for Dissolution is a Violation of International Law and Religious Persecution”), conducted by non-fiction writer Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ). Although the interview occurred before the court’s decision, Duval – an authority on international law – firmly states that ordering dissolution based on “public welfare” constitutes a violation of international law.

One key point in the article is Duval’s assertion that “judging religious issues as unlawful based on social appropriateness or societal norms is unthinkable under European human rights standards.”

Religions – both traditional and new – often have beliefs and rituals that are incomprehensible by secular standards. Sometimes these are even seen as deviant. Of course, any behavior that constitutes a criminal act or harms others is unacceptable.

However, using civil law violations as grounds for dissolution, given the seriousness of restricting a fundamental human right like freedom of religion, contradicts international standards.

Article 81, Paragraph 1 of Japan’s *Religious Corporations Act* stipulates that a religious organization can be dissolved for acts that “violate laws and significantly harm public welfare.” The *Tokyo District Court* determined that the [Family Federation](#) had caused “unprecedented harm” based on past civil lawsuits.



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

inherently a violation of international law.

Although not mentioned in the article, Duval has stated in lectures that the *UN Human Rights Committee* has repeatedly advised the Japanese government to stop using “public welfare” as a reason to restrict religious freedom. The Japanese government has ignored this.

The May issue of the monthly



Patricia Duval – Member of the Paris Bar Association, specializing in international human rights law. Has defended the rights of religious and faith minorities both in France and internationally. Photo (2025): [Sekai Nippo](#)

Duval explains that the grounds for restricting freedom of religion or belief under Article 18(3) of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)* do not include “public welfare” or “social appropriateness”. Thus, she argues that the [dissolution order](#) request against the [Family Federation](#) is



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This raises a question for the author: Why haven't Japan's international law experts and scholars of religion sounded the alarm on this fact in public discourse?

of the Human Rights Committee, a subpage on the site of the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

Why doesn't international law include "public welfare" or "social norms" as reasons to limit religious freedom? Unlike criminal law, which has objective standards, these vague concepts can be used arbitrarily by state powers to target specific groups, leading to religious persecution. That's the danger.



Changing the law

overnight: former **Prime Minister Fumio Kishida**, here, 16th April 2023.

Photo: 首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

Since Japan is a signatory to the ICCPR, the government should be aware of this. In fact, three months after the 8th July 2022 shooting of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) by suspect Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也), the Cabinet formally concluded that there was no legal basis to request the dissolution of the **Family Federation**, with then-Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (岸田文雄) stating in the Diet that dissolution grounds were limited to criminal acts, not civil matters.

Yet Kishida suddenly reversed that stance overnight, saying civil matters could also qualify. At the time, many *Liberal Democratic Party* lawmakers were under intense media scrutiny for having received election support from the **Family Federation's** affiliated groups.

It seems likely that Kishida, in an effort to maintain his administration, changed the legal interpretation of religious law to deflect criticism by seeking the dissolution of the **religious organization**.

The fact that the court went along with this reveals how little the principle of religious freedom – a foundation of human dignity – has taken root in Japan compared to the international community.

The article also illustrates, through various examples, the significant gap between Japan's understanding of religious freedom and international standards.

In lawsuits involving the **Family Federation**, courts have ruled that deceptive proselytizing and soliciting donations based on ancestral karma were illegal. However, Duval argues that not revealing a group's religious identity at first and disclosing it later at a gathering is legally unproblematic. She also emphasizes that discussing ancestral karma and similar spiritual concepts is common in religious contexts and poses no legal issues.

She further points out that the so-called "mind control theory" used to claim that followers were coerced into donating, lacks scientific basis and is **rejected by international standards**.

As an example, Duval cites a **European Court of Human Rights ruling against a Russian court** that dissolved the Christian denomination Jehovah's Witnesses. The Russian court claimed the group used mind control, but the European court deemed this an "unsubstantiated speculation".



Courtroom of the **European Court of Human Rights** in Strasbourg. Photo (2014): Adrian Crycuk / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Pol](#). Cropped



Masumi Fukuda, here delivering a speech 23rd Sep

Fukuda draws a parallel, saying the Russian authorities' claims resemble arguments made by Japan's *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (Zenkoku Benren) in the **Family Federation** trials – and even by Japanese courts. She laments,

"Japan was supposed to be a democratic country where religious freedom is guaranteed. Now it has sunk to the level of Russia."

Zenkoku Benren is an organization of leftist

speech, 2018 Sep.
2024 in Chiba City,
Japan. Photo:
Tsuyoshi Toyoda (豊田
剛)

ZENKOKU DENREI is an organization of leftist
lawyers opposed to the [Family Federation](#)
and its strong anti-communist stance.

Now, the [Family Federation](#) has filed an
[immediate appeal](#), and the case has moved

to the *Tokyo High Court*. If dissolution proceeds, what will happen to
the human rights of the believers? (The [organization](#) has already
claimed human rights violations.)

Duval points to a government initiative adopted in January last year at
a Cabinet meeting focused on victim support regarding the former
[Unification Church](#). It involves "special counseling" for second-
generation believers.

These counselors include
former or disaffected
members of the [Family
Federation](#). In essence, the
government is [conducting](#)
"exit counseling" in schools
under the guise of rescuing
second-generation
members – isolating
children from their parents
and discouraging them
from continuing their
parents' faith. Fukuda calls
this "state-sponsored faith-
breaking", a form of
government-led
brainwashing.

Duval says this
deprogramming not only
violates the freedom of
religion under ICCPR

Article 18(1) but also violates Article 18(4), which guarantees the rights
of parents to educate their children according to their own beliefs.

Fukuda concludes angrily,

"Japan is no longer a democratic nation. It is increasingly
resembling Russia or China."

So, what should the [Family Federation](#) do? The legal battle is likely to
reach the Supreme Court. Duval advises:

"During that time, they must continue persistently
appealing to the United Nations and international
community about this unjust religious persecution. That's
the only option."

Fukuda also warns,

"If the dissolution order is actually carried out, Japan will be
seen internationally as a country where religious freedom
no longer exists. Will the judiciary be prepared for that?"

The lack of serious attention from Japanese intellectuals and citizens
to this issue may itself reflect how far Japan has diverged from
international standards on religious freedom.

Featured image above: Japan portrayed as repressive state.
Illustration: Grok xAI, 18th April 2025

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State-sponsored deprogramming:
Here, from the cover of a pamphlet
used in Japanese schools. It explains
that they may be abused by being
"forced to participate in religious
activities" and "threatened by words
like 'You will go to hell.'"
Photo: [Bitter
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