

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japanese MP to FFWPU - Fight for Religious Freedom

Knut Holdhus  
May 21, 2025



*MP Satoshi Hamada delivering his speech May 18, 2025, in Nagano City, Japan*



### **Japanese MP urges persecuted religious minority to step up fight for religious freedom with new technology and strategic political action**

Tokyo, 19th May 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

**"Hint for Communication Is Generative AI"**

### **MP Hamada Speaks at Symposium on Freedom of Religion**

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

Satoshi Hamada, a member of Japan's House of Councillors from the NHK Party [See editor's note 1 below], gave a speech on 18th May at a symposium on freedom of religion held at the Nagano Family Church of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Nagano City. He stated,



"To convey the value of freedom of religion, creative expression is essential, and generative AI - which can offer specific suggestions - may serve as a helpful tool."



From the symposium on freedom of religion held at the Nagano Family Church of the [Family Federation](#) 18th May 2025. Photo: FFWPU

As one method of enhancing communication, Mr. Hamada suggested using written parliamentary questions to "expose issues". He also mentioned that his political group, The Party to Protect the People from Jichirō and Jichirō-Ren [See editor's note 2 below], which he leads, plans to field candidates in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election in June.



Tetsuya Uchida, May 18, 2025

The symposium drew around 300 participants, mostly followers of the [Family Federation](#). Tetsuya Uchida (内田哲也), the church leader of the Nagano Family Church, emphasized,

"The Puritans won religious freedom through American independence," and declared, "Now is the time for us to advocate for our freedom of religion."

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**[Editor's note 1:** The Party to Protect the People from NHK (NHKから国民を守る党, NHK kara Kokumin wo Mamoru Tō, often abbreviated as N-Koku) is a minor political party in Japan. It was founded in 2013 by Takashi Tachibana, a former NHK employee, with the primary goal of opposing Japan's public broadcaster, NHK (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai). The party criticizes NHK's mandatory subscription fees and has campaigned to allow people to avoid

paying for NHK if they don't watch it.

Over time, the party has shifted its focus, rebranding multiple times and addressing broader issues, but its core stance remains opposition to NHK. It has gained attention for its unconventional campaigning methods and populist rhetoric but has had limited electoral success.]

**[Editor's note 2:** "The Party to Protect the People from Jichirō and Jichirō-Ren" (in Japanese: 自治労と自治労連から国民を守る党) is a small and newly formed Japanese political group led by Satoshi Hamada, a member of the House of Councillors affiliated with the NHK Party (now often involved in populist or protest-style politics).<(span>

Jichirō (自治労): Short for Zenkoku Jichitai Rōdō Kumiai (全国自治体労働組合), or the All-Japan Prefectural and Municipal Workers Union. It's a major public sector labor union representing local government employees.

Jichirō-Ren (自治労連): Short for Zenkoku Jichitai Rōdō Kumiai Rengōkai (全国自治体労働組合連合会), or the Japan Federation of Prefectural and Municipal Workers' Unions. It is another public-sector labor union, separate from but similar to Jichirō.

These unions are influential in local government and often aligned with progressive or center-left politics, including support for the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP) and other opposition parties.

The party's name, "The Party to Protect the People from Jichirō and Jichirō-Ren" signals opposition to the influence of public sector unions, particularly their alleged political bias, power within local bureaucracies, and potential misuse of resources. It follows the naming style of the NHK Party, which originally branded itself as "The Party to Protect the People from NHK" (Japan's public broadcaster), using exaggerated or provocative names to attract attention and highlight perceived grievances.

In essence, this new party appears to be a populist protest group criticizing the political entanglement and influence of public sector unions and aiming to mobilize voters who are skeptical of entrenched bureaucratic or union power, especially in local politics.]

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# Japan: Even Dead Souls Face State Persecution

- May 20, 2025
- Knut Holdhus



*Japanese state persecution reaching new extremes as it seems certain that even members' dead souls may not escape inhuman treatment brought about by dissolution order*










Logo of the Sekai Nippo

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## “Don’t Take Away the Place Where Our Daughter Sleeps”

*Bereaved Families Cry Out Over 3,200 Graves at 8 Sites*

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## The Request to Dissolve the Family Federation and the Cemetery Controversy (Part 1)

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

If



It looks like not only living members of the [Family Federation](#) will be persecuted mercilessly by the Japanese state, but also dead ones. Here, from a [Family Federation](#) seong-hwa (burial) ceremony in 2015. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's request for the dissolution of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) is approved, a major social issue could arise concerning the management of cemeteries operated by the [organization](#).

There is no precedent in Japan of a religious corporation that owns cemeteries being ordered to dissolve by a court. With no prior example to follow, no one truly knows what will happen to these burial sites after dissolution. Could they lose not just the legal status as a religious corporation, but even the graves where their beloved family members rest? We spoke with bereaved family members who live with this fear.

In a mountain valley surrounded by rich nature in Suzuka City, Mie Prefecture, lies an orderly cemetery. This is the "Central Japan Cemetery", where followers of the [Family Federation](#) are buried.

During a joint memorial service held by the [religious organization](#) on 26<sup>th</sup> April, Mitsuo Ito (伊藤光夫) – 60 – and his wife Ryoko (伊藤良子) – 63 – placed their daughter's portrait on her gravestone and offered flowers and fruit.

"I can't possibly tell my daughter that we might have to leave this cemetery," said Mitsuo as they both looked distressed at the possibility that their daughter's grave could be lost due to the dissolution of the [religious organization](#).



Mitsuo Ito (伊藤光夫) during his 2020 attempt to climb Mount Ontake. Photo provided by himself.

Their eldest daughter, Kotomi, passed away at 18 while in her third year of high school. She was one of the 63 victims of the 2014 eruption of Mount Ontake on the border of Nagano and Gifu prefectures.

Mitsuo had been climbing Ontake with fellow followers of the [Family Federation](#) when the eruption occurred. Kotomi had reached the summit ahead of him and sent him a photo with the message, "I'm waiting for you." However, before Mitsuo could reach the top, the eruption occurred. Kotomi and several other members of the [religious organization](#) died.

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Still burdened by guilt, Mitsuo said, "I can't help but think that if she hadn't been waiting for me at the summit, she might have survived."

Stricken with grief, he couldn't part with her ashes for three years. After finally interring them at the *Central Japan Cemetery*, he has made monthly trips from their home in Aichi Prefecture, driving about an hour on the expressway.

Despite the deep emotional wounds, the annual memorial service and the chance to connect with fellow believers have been a source of healing for the couple. Many visitors offered flowers and prayers at Kotomi's grave. The cemetery provided a space and time where members came together like one big family, easing their pain.



Front page of 2018 English version of *Religious Corporations Act of Japan*.

According to the *Religious Corporations Act*, once the dissolution is finalized, all operations run by the **organization** must be forcibly terminated. There are eight cemeteries nationwide under the names of the **organization** or its affiliates, holding over 3,200 graves. The *Central Japan Cemetery* is located on land owned by a Buddhist temple, which the **church** has leased under its name and entrusted management to volunteer members.

It remains unclear whether cemetery management can be smoothly transferred to another organization or whether it could lead to closure or even forced reburials. Anxiety is growing among the bereaved families. During the joint memorial service, the bereaved families' association at *Central Japan Cemetery* issued a statement to the press expressing their concerns:

"If the **organization** is dissolved, the cemetery's management will be left without an operator, raising the possibility of it being irresponsibly abandoned. This would be unbearable for us and would severely damage the dignity of the souls of the deceased."

#### Fear of losing a place to mourn

In the beliefs of the **Family Federation**, the soul lives on eternally after death. Thus, the memorial gatherings have a warm, friendly atmosphere. Scenes could be seen of families enjoying meals picnic-style near the graves, and of bereaved families from across the country cheerfully saying, "It's been a while" and warmly reminiscing together.

But all of this could be lost if the **religious organization** is dissolved. Even if cemetery management is transferred to another religious or public-interest organization, religious services like the current memorials may be difficult to continue. If the transition is not smooth, there is a risk – just as the bereaved families fear – that the cemeteries may be neglected for long periods.



In the beliefs of the **Family Federation**, the soul lives on eternally after death. Here, a photographic reproduction of an oil painting from 1894 titled "Passage" by Finnish painter Anna Sahlsten (1859-1931). The painting presumably portrays the spirit of the person on the bed departing upon death. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#).

Mitsuo Ito, seeing the ongoing media coverage about the potential dissolution of the **religious organization**, expressed his feelings plainly:

"Will politicians – all for their own convenience – really take away even the resting place of our loved ones?"





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