

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: In Japan Media is the Ruler - Today's Witch Hunts

Knut Holdhus
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Masumi Fukuda, born in 1956 in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture. Graduate of Rikkyo University's Faculty of Sociology. After working with specialist magazines and editorial productions, she became a freelance writer. She covers themes such as crime and Russia. Her books include Fabrication: The Truth About the "Murderous Teacher" Case in Fukuoka (Shinchosha), Stalin: A Family Portrait (Bungeishunju), Assassination Nation Russia, and Monster Mother (both from Shinchosha)



Authorities and courts are swayed: Investigative journalist and award-winning author claims the media has now become the first power

Tokyo, 26th June 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

[Summary of Seiron Nippo Club Lecture by Nonfiction Writer Masumi Fukuda] The Grave Sins of the Mass Media and Today's Witch Hunts - In Conjunction with the Release of the Film Fabrication

The Media Has Become the First Power

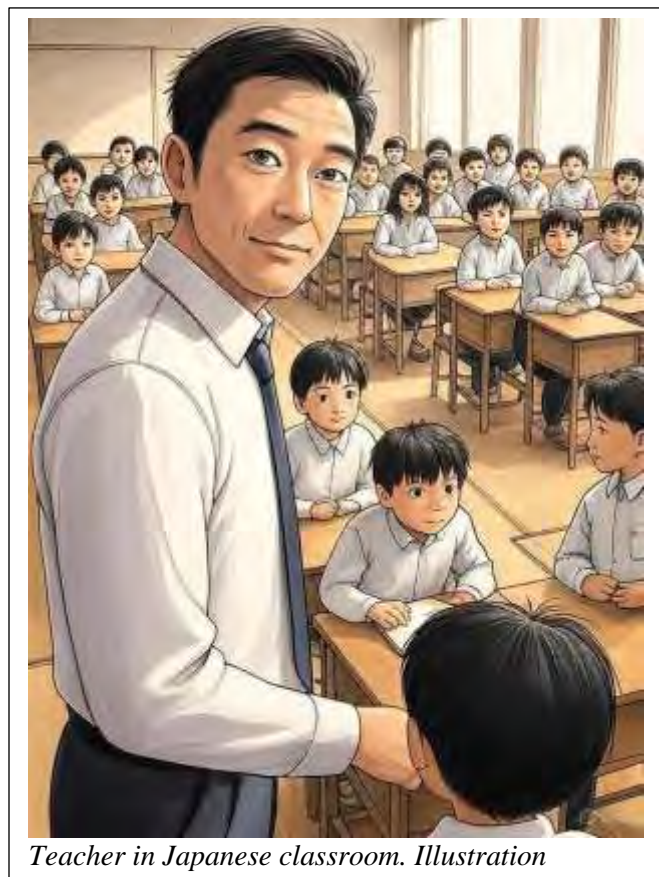
Distorted reporting of the truth worsens situations - If you have a counterargument, state it publicly!

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

The regular lecture meeting of the "Seiron Nippo Club" (a group of [Sekai Nippo](#) readers) was held online on 21st June. Nonfiction writer Masumi Fukuda gave a talk titled "The Grave Sins of the Mass Media and Today's Witch Hunts - In Conjunction with the Release of the Film Fabrication." She argued that a key reason a teacher in Fukuoka City was falsely branded a "murderous teacher" by the public, despite being innocent, was the media's early presumptive reporting. She also criticized coverage of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), likening it to this case, saying the media "demonized" the [federation](#) in a biased manner. She warned about the dangers of journalism, saying,

"The media has now become the first power." [See editor's note below]

Below is a summary of her talk:



Teacher in Japanese classroom. Illustration

"bad kid".

Perplexed, I visited the teacher's home. He agreed to talk. He had originally stayed silent at the principal's instruction to leave it to the administration. But that led to a one-sided media trial painting him as a villain. From his words and demeanor, he did not seem like someone telling lies.

I asked why he apologized despite being innocent. He said,

"Teachers and parents are not equals. The teacher must step back, or things won't go well."



A Board of Education meeting in Japan. Illustration

I am single and have no children, so I wasn't originally interested in school-related topics. The trigger was an article in Weekly Bunshun titled "Shall I Teach You How to Die?": The Worst 'Murderous Teacher' in History Threatened a Pupil.

I was shocked by the headline. The article published the teacher's real name, face photo, even photos of his home and school. It said the teacher committed abusive punishment due to racial prejudice and that the child had been diagnosed with PTSD.

An editor at Shinchosha asked me to follow up. I was reluctant but began investigating. While interviewing people near the school, one mother in a park said,

"That parent is just after money. They're exaggerating mild discipline."

A girl who had the accused teacher in third grade said, "He never physically punished us." A boy who knew the allegedly abused child through after-school care even called the child a

That left a strong impression. The principal and vice principal, confronted daily by the student's parent, accepted their claims without verifying with the class and told the teacher,

"There was corporal punishment, right? Apologize!"

The teacher did, hoping to calm things down. Just one day of reporting made it clear how different the media narrative was from reality.

But the parent's relentless accusations, the principal's vague stance, and the media frenzy led the Board of Education to suspend the teacher for six months without hearing his side. Before he knew it, he was branded a "murderous teacher."

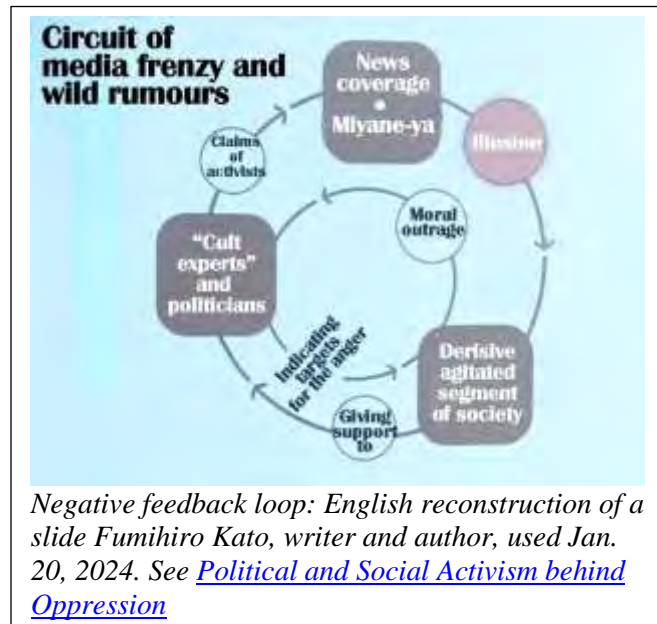
When many people later realized the whole thing was fabricated, I asked a Nishinippon Shimbun reporter why they had believed the teacher was guilty. They said it was because the Board of Education had disciplined him and a psychiatrist at Kurume University Hospital diagnosed the child with severe PTSD.

But both the Board and the psychiatrist were likely pressured by the media's excessive coverage. The

media distorted the truth.

The child's parent even filed a lawsuit. But what's strange is why they didn't report it to the police and make it a criminal case if it were truly abuse. They never did. In court, lie after lie from the parent was exposed. However, in the first trial and appeal, the fact that a public agency (the Board) had punished the teacher heavily influenced the ruling, and he lost.

Eventually, the teacher appealed to Fukuoka City. Ten years later, the city accepted the appeal, officially clearing him of wrongdoing. The film version dramatizes some parts, but for the teacher and his family, it must have been a living hell.



In cases of bullying at school, the media tends to demonize the school and teachers, jumping to conclusions in their reporting. When a child dies by suicide, the parents enter a kind of "invincible" status - if they speak publicly, including showing their face and name, the media takes it at face value. It becomes taboo to doubt them.

In truth, the causes of suicide are often complex. But the media simplifies it, portraying the situation as someone bullied the child, and the teacher failed to intervene. Schools are prevented from suggesting that home life may have played a role.

Magazine reporters routinely publish "jump articles" with little verification when writing about schools. That's because schools and

teachers rarely protest. The same pattern is seen in coverage of the [Family Federation](#). From the start, the media created a storyline and "demonized" the [organization](#).

When I asked newspaper and TV reporters why they don't cover the abductions and forced de-conversions of [Family Federation](#) believers, they said they fear backlash from readers or viewers if they report anything remotely favorable to the [Family Federation](#). But the public's negative image of the [religious organization](#) stems from the media itself - a negative feedback loop.



A reenactment of a member of the [Family Federation](#) being forced into a sleeping bag and abducted in a van by several men. Many such kidnapped and confined members were later forced to sue the [Family Federation](#) in order to be released. Image provided by the person involved, partially edited

At a press conference, an Asahi Shimbun reporter persistently demanded the [Family Federation](#)'s president apologize for the public uproar. But isn't part of the blame with the media for its non-neutral, unfair reporting?

The media has now become the "first power" in society, and everyone is afraid of it.

Of course, the [Family Federation](#) also bears responsibility. Even when unfairly attacked, they didn't respond or assert their side. This allowed unjust social stigma to stick.

Many of the anti-[Family Federation](#) books in bookstores are filled with inaccuracies. They should have protested each one. Instead of turning their backs on society in defeat, they should have made greater efforts to be understood.

What saddens me is that testimonies from ex-members who had been [abducted and confined](#) were used as grounds for the request for a court order to dissolve the [religious organization](#). Of course, I have heard that even when the [Family Federation](#) appealed to the police, nothing was done, and even when they appealed to the Ministry of Justice, it was no use - they were in a situation of shimensoka (四面楚歌 - being surrounded on all sides with no allies). However, they should have made their case to the wider society, asserted themselves and refuted accusations. Somewhere, the negative cycle had to be broken.

[Editor's note: The headline is a twist on the traditional idea of the "Fourth Estate" (media), implying that the media has now become the most powerful authority, surpassing even the three branches of government.]

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"Liquidation Is Like Being Robbed Of Our Assets."

- June 27, 2025
- Knut Holdhus



Dissolution and liquidation mean the Japanese state steals properties members built with their own hands and years of investment to realize their dream

Tokyo, 24th June 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article.*

[Series] Where Will the Believers Go? The Issue of the Family Federation's Dissolution and Its Corporate Facilities (Church Properties) (Part 1)



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“Liquidation Is Just Like Being Robbed of Our Assets.”

A Church Dedication That Finally Came True After 60 Years – in Koriyama

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

The legal proceedings regarding the dissolution of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the Unification Church) have moved to [Tokyo High Court](#). If the High Court upholds the [dissolution order](#), liquidation of the organization's [assets](#) will begin immediately, even before a ruling from the Supreme Court. If that happens, the church facilities where believers conduct worship and other religious activities may be lost, causing growing concern among the faithful that they will lose their spiritual home.



The [Family Federation's](#) Koriyama Church. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

On 24th November of last year, a new [Family Federation](#) facility was completed in Koriyama, a commercial city in the center of Fukushima Prefecture. About 10 minutes by car from Koriyama Station, the single-story “Koriyama Church” was built by repurposing a former hot spring facility. It has a large parking lot.

Jun'ya Hirokawa (廣川淳也) (54), a church staff member proudly guiding visitors through the facility, explained that it was designed so that elderly believers could enter without removing their shoes. Hirokawa said firmly,

“This new church was the dream of all the believers, a dream 60 years in the making. Please don't [rob us](#) of a church that's just been completed.”

On 25th March, the [Tokyo District Court](#) issued a [dissolution order](#) based on the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's](#) request. In the court's written decision, regarding freedom of religion, it states:

“Even if a religious corporation is dissolved by a dissolution order, believers are not prevented from continuing a religious group without legal status, or from forming a group or corporation anew in an appropriate manner. Nor are they hindered from conducting religious activities or preparing new facilities and items for religious purposes.”



Believers of the Koriyama Church speak about their feelings toward the church they built, amid the non-contentious lawsuit for the dissolution order of the [Family Federation](#). Photo: [FFWPU](#)

However, according to the [Religious Corporations Act](#), during the liquidation process following dissolution, religious activities generally

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renovation process remaining dissolution, religious activities generally cannot take place on properties owned by the corporation. Furthermore, if the repayment of debts requires the sale of real estate held under the corporate name, there is a possibility the church facilities will be **seized**. Although the court acknowledged that this may “interfere with” believers’ religious practices, is this “interference” not a matter deeply connected to the core of religious freedom?

Whether it’s Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples, Christian churches, or Islamic mosques, places of worship are essential for religious faith to function.

The Koriyama Church purchased the former hot spring facility in autumn 2023. Since the walls were damaged from years of hot spring use, they were all demolished, leaving only the steel framework. A full renovation was carried out over the course of a year, making it effectively a new building.

Situated on a large site of over 1,500 square meters including the parking area, the church facility occupies about a quarter of the property.



It

The café space at the Koriyama Church, used for fellowship.
Photo: FFWPU

features a sanctuary/auditorium capable of seating 200–300 people and a café space with a nice view where about 30 people may gather and chat.

After completion, the Koriyama Church distributed 1,000 flyers reading, “Want to take a peek at the infamous Unification Church?” in an effort to gain understanding from the local community. They also held an open house event. Young believers commented,

“I’m so happy that it’s become a church where I feel proud to bring people.”

The previous facility was half the size and had only one bathroom. Nearly all the Koriyama Church members had hoped for a new building, and staff had been searching for real estate for years. Yet few real estate agents were willing to sell to the **Family Federation**. When they finally secured the current property and moved in last November, Hirokawa recalled,

“All the believers were filled with joy.”



Believers of the **Family Federation’s** Koriyama Church tiling during construction of the new church facility. Photo: FFWPU

During the renovation, simple tasks like laying floor tiles were carried out by the believers themselves. They laid them one by one, working together, and there are even a few spots where the tiles are slightly misaligned. The believers unanimously say that they feel a sense of attachment to the building because of the manual labor involved.

Takashi Ijuin (伊集院孝) (72), a believer who donated for the dedication of the church, expressed his feelings:

*“Even if the building is in the name of the **corporation** and legally belongs to headquarters, for us on the ground, this is **our church**. Taking away a church we built with donations*

... different feeling and a different no doubt that decisions given through our hard work is no different than having our own **assets stolen**. It's heartbreaking."

The court decision may say, "There is no obstacle to preparing a new facility," but the burden of once again investing time, money, and labor is no easy matter for the believers.

Featured image above: The sanctuary of the Family Federation's Koriyama Church. Photo: Yasuhiko Nagano (長野康彦)

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