

Fabricating Victims: The Fraudulent Attack Against the Unification Church in Japan

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ABSTRACT: The article, published in the Japanese magazine *Hanada* by an award-winning journalist who has a degree in Sociology (Fukuda 2023), details the politically motivated actions carried out since 1987 by the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales to destroy the Unification Church, now called the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, up to the pressure exerted on the government after the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to persuade it to seek the liquidation of the Family Federation as a religious organization. The article evidences the fraudulent nature of the strategies used by the National Network, which include the fabrication of evidence and the alteration of documents. The parts between square brackets are explanatory and do not belong to Fukuda's original article.

KEYWORDS: Unification Church, Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, Spiritual Sales, Assassination of Shinzo Abe, Anti-Cult Movement in Japan.

Unusual Obsessions

Last October, bowing to pressure from the media and public opinion, Prime Minister Kishida reversed his previous cautious stance and announced his intention to exercise the right to ask questions to the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification [a move that under Japanese law is preliminary to seeking the dissolution of a religious organization]. In response, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) exercised its first right to ask questions on November 22. And in December, approximately 200,000 online signatures were submitted to the Division of Religious Affairs of the Agency for Cultural Affairs in the MEXT, demanding that an order to dissolve

the Family Federation should be sought and obtained as soon as possible. Hiroaki Ishizaki, who was the head of the Division of Religious Affairs at that time, made the following promise to [apostate ex-member of the Family Federation] Sayuri Ogawa and [anti-cult journalist] Eight Suzuki, who were visiting the Division: “We will collect enough evidence to avoid that it may be overturned in court.”

But what about the results? Although the MEXT has now exercised its right to ask questions for five times, it has not “collected enough evidence.” In fact, it has not found a single piece of evidence. This is the best proof that the religious organization is innocent.

Not unexpectedly, an increasing number of citizens are beginning to wonder why attorney Masaki Kito, Yoshio Arita, Eight Suzuki, and others are so insistent on the dissolution of the Family Federation, and why they are so obsessed with this issue. Some have argued that “If the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales wants to dissolve the Family Federation, why don’t they just request an order to dissolve it themselves?” Lawyer Kito and others did not respond to such objections.

In fact, however, the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales had petitioned MEXT multiple times in the past, asking it to exercise its right to ask questions to the Family Federation. However, the Agency for Cultural Affairs rejected the petitions. The reasons were that in 2003, “There are no data providing the grounds for invoking this right,” and in 2008, that “Even though there are many cases in which the religious corporation has lost civil lawsuits, these are only cases of vicarious liability. We do not think that these cases justify a report or an investigation.”

Unhappy with these responses, the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales filed a lawsuit for state compensation with the Tokyo District Court in 2012, claiming that the MEXT’s failure to exercise its right to ask questions and to request a dissolution order against the Family Federation was illegal. In 2017, however, the Tokyo District Court dismissed the claim, on the grounds that the Agency for Cultural Affairs had interviewed the Family Federation nine times in the past, and that the non-exercise of the right to ask questions was not unreasonable.

The readers should consider that this happened in the years 2003 and 2008, i.e., before the Family Federation’s 2009 Declaration of Compliance [with the

laws prohibiting the so-called “spiritual sales”], and the number of claims for damages was higher than it is today. Even under such circumstances, the MEXT decided that the non-exercise of the right to ask questions was reasonable. It should also be noted that for the seven years from 2016 to 2023, i.e., from the last year before 2017, when the Tokyo District Court rejected the Network’s state compensation claim, to the present, not a single lawsuit has been filed over new donations from believers, and the number of “victims” of the spiritual sales has also drastically decreased.

Significantly Unfair Measures

In other words, the MEXT suddenly exercised its right to ask question at the will of Prime Minister Kishida last year, after having rejected all the repeated requests of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales up until then, although the claims of damages allegedly caused by the Family Federation had been decreasing rather than increasing. Both the Network and the MEXT should have realized how logically and objectively unreasonable their acts were.

Furthermore, according to an investigation by lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama, who represents the Family Federation’s international headquarters, in three cases orders to dissolve religious corporations were sought in court. In one case, the founder had raped and indecently assaulted a number of female believers. In another case, the founder assaulted and killed a believer. In the third case, a leader of the organization administered “spiritual therapy” to a believer who died as a consequence. However, in none of these cases was an order issued to dissolve the organizations. In fact, they continue to exist today as religious corporations.

On the contrary, in another five cases no request for a dissolution order was filed nor was the right to ask questions exercised. These included a case where a group of devotees lynched another believer to death, and one where a number of criminal cases had been filed and the leader was convicted of fraud. Except for one, all these organizations continue to operate as religious corporations today.

In contrast, while the Family Federation has certainly been involved in several civil lawsuits in the past, it has not had any criminal cases against it or involving its executives, which is normally the ground for requesting a dissolution order. In other words, the exercise of the right to ask questions in this case is remarkably

unfair, as it emerges from a comparison with the cases of these other religious organizations.

Deprogramming and Exploitation of the Deprogrammed Ex-Believers

Nevertheless, the desperate and extraordinary persistence of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales in trying to force the government to dissolve the Family Federation at any cost looks like a form of fanaticism. They pride themselves on being an anti-cult organization that fights “cults,” but their brand of anti-cultism looks “cultic” enough itself.

The largest problem, in my opinion, is the fact that they would literally do anything to destroy the Family Federation. As a result, they have fabricated several “pseudo-victims.”

In the December 2022 issue of this magazine [*Hanada*], I contributed an article with the title “Crimes of ‘Deprogrammers’: Not Reported by Newspapers and Television.” In the article, I described how, in the past, more than 4,300 believers were literally abducted and confined by their relatives, who were instigated by professional deprogrammers and Christian pastors, and were forced to abandon their faith. The majority of these believers left the church under extreme circumstances. They understood they could not be freed from confinement unless they agreed to leave the church and abandon their faith. The anti-Unification-Church camp “used” the deprogrammed believers for various purposes and exploited them in a vicious way.

First, they received lavish honoraria from the believers’ relatives for their successful deprogramming. It was also an excellent opportunity for the numerous Christian pastors who had been actively involved in deprogramming to bring the deprogrammed believers, who were experiencing a religious void, into their own denominations. In fact, many deprogrammed believers converted to these pastors’ brands of Christianity.

As a final step, the deprogrammers urged the former believers to sue the organizations to which they once belonged. If they refused to do so, they were suspected of having faked their defection, so they had no choice but to agree to sue.

In other words, former believers were forced to abandon their faith and presented as victims of the former Unification Church. They had to claim that they had been brainwashed by the church and forced to join. They also had to claim that they had been forced to purchase pots and pagodas [as objects with a spiritual significance, sold at a price considerably higher than their material value], and to make large donations.

When the trials began, they were represented by attorneys from the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, including Masaki Kito and Hiroshi Yamaguchi. For the Network, the deprogramming business was of great benefit because its lawyers were able to greatly increase the requests for damages allegedly caused by the “spiritual sales” and pocket the corresponding attorney’s fees.

The Culmination of a Series of Fabricated Lawsuits

The so-called “Youth Return” lawsuits took place in Sapporo, Niigata, Tokyo, Nagoya, Okayama, Kobe, and other cities throughout Japan from 1987 to 2001, and represented the culmination of the fabricated lawsuits.

The plaintiffs, 180 former believers, claimed that the missionary work of the former Unification Church was an illegal act carried out by concealing the church’s true identity. They demanded compensation for the damage they claimed the church had caused to them during the years of their youth, when they were believers. This was an unprecedented case. Normally, believers who have voluntarily left a church would never sue their former organization, unless something unusual happened.

In fact, all but a few of the 180 plaintiffs were former believers who had been forced to abandon their faith by deprogramming through abduction and confinement. They had been persuaded to join the lawsuits by the deprogrammers.

During their confinement, the former believers were told by deprogrammers such as Takashi Miyamura, and Christian pastors that, “The Unification Church lies!” “You have been brainwashed!” and “The Unification Church believers are less than human!” As a result, almost 70% of the believers finally came to believe that they had been deceived by the Unification Church and abandoned their faith.

At the same time, they developed resentment and hostility toward the organization that, they were now led to believe, had deprived them of precious years in their lives. They fell into a psychological state in which they thought that they could do anything to destroy the Family Federation. They could tell any lie, and it would be justifiable. This was “brainwashing” in the opposite sense. These former believers stood up in court and testified in the “Youth Return” trials.

As for the results of these trials, the plaintiffs won in Sapporo, but lost in Nagoya, Okayama, and Kobe. In some cases, they settled. However, the anti-Unification Church side widely broadcasted that “The former Unification Church has now been recognized as an anti-social organization,” based on the fact that the plaintiffs had won some of their cases.

However, these unusual lawsuits were part of a plot orchestrated by the anti-Unification-Church side to use deprogrammed former believers who had been forced to abandon their faith to destroy the church’s social reputation and to force its dissolution.

The media coverage of these incidents made the relatives of believers feel anxious. They were encouraged by professional deprogrammers, who scared them by saying, “If this continues, your children will become criminals.” Their aim was to kidnap and confine their family members, too. This vicious cycle has been repeated for many years.

In the first place, is the testimony of those who have been abducted and confined credible in a court of law? Article 38, paragraph 2 of the Constitution states, “Confession made under compulsion, torture or threat, or after an unreasonably long detention or confinement, shall not be admitted as evidence.” In other words, any legal statement or signature by a person who is detained, threatened, and in an abnormal mental state should be invalid—but surprisingly, this hardly became an issue in these trials.

The reason for this, as I have pointed out time and again, is largely due to the fact that “In civil lawsuits, there is a kind of unwritten rule, that ‘If you are a cult, you lose,’” and “Claims that would not be accepted in other cases would be easily accepted if the opponent is a religion labeled a ‘cult’” (testimony of lawyer Yoshiro Ito, who was a member of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales).

Incidentally, the Family Federation cannot be called a “cult.” It is impossible to make a clear distinction between so-called “cults” and other religions. In the West, many religious scholars have already abandoned to use of the term “cult” as it is a discriminatory term used to denigrate the religions those who use this word do not like.

A Lawyer “Rescue” Group Launched with “One Victim”

Going back to its origins, the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales has intentionally produced “victims” since its foundation in 1987. In the January 2023 issue of this magazine [*Hanada*], I wrote an article titled “The Mastermind Behind the Unification Church Issue.” It is fair to say that the true purpose of the Network, founded in 1987, was not to help victims of “spiritual sales,” but to prevent the enactment of the Anti-Espionage Law, which was being promoted at the time by the International Federation for Victory over Communism (VOC), an organization affiliated with the former Unification Church. Lawyer Hiroshi Yamaguchi, a core member of the Network and one of its founders, stated that “Money made through the spiritual sales is being used by the Unification Church and the VOC to finance the efforts to enact the Anti-Espionage Law.” In other words, they believed the money made from the “spiritual sales” was used to promote the enacting of the Anti-Espionage Law. The Network thus tried to cut off the flow of money by stopping the “spiritual sales.”

The church as such is not involved in the “spiritual sales” now, nor has it been responsible for them in the past. At that time, it was a company run by believers that had engaged in these sales activities.

In August 1986, lawyer Takeshi Ono of the Yokohama Bar Association, who pioneered the initial lawyers’ group that acted against the fortune pot sales, stated at a symposium:

“Many ordinary lawyers did not join us because they thought that cases where consumers voluntarily bought the items were difficult, and they wanted to avoid complicated matters. We launched the team with the idea of helping the victims (...) At the time of its founding, there was only one victim, but we decided to

launch a lawyers' group at any rate and have the media covering it, hoping to discover more victims."

They decided to organize a group of lawyers to "rescue the victims" when there was only one victim. It was a classic case of confusing the means with the end.

Filing a Lawsuit Without the Clients' Permission

Almost all the lawyers in the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales are affiliated with the former Socialist Party and the Communist Party, maintain relationships with extremist groups and North Korea, and are leftists and atheists. In contrast, the former Unification Church is an anti-communist and conservative organization that believes in God. It is clear that this was an ideological struggle between the two groups. Lawyer Hiroshi Yamaguchi had clearly stated, "I would like to establish a lawyers' organization to deter right-wing activities, especially to prevent the enactment of the Anti-Espionage Law."

Furthermore, from the very beginning, the lawyer commented, "I would like to pursue the Unification Church's anti-social activities and demand that MEXT withdraw its approval as a religious corporation" (*Shakai Shimpō* [the official newspaper of the former Socialist Party], February 20, 1987). There was clearly a political agenda in making such a statement when the actual extent of the alleged damage caused by the Unification Church was still unknown.

At any rate, the extensive use of television, newspapers, and magazines to report on the "spiritual sales" was indeed a powerful tool to find "victims." This was because people who were originally happy with their purchase of marble pots and pagodas became so anxious that they rushed to the consumer affairs centers. However, Masataka Ito, then editor-in-chief of the *Asahi Shimbun*, which was one of the first newspapers to launch a campaign against the "spiritual sales," revealed an "inconvenient truth" about the "victims" at a gathering of his colleagues on October 23, 1987. "The newspapers and TV stations call them victims, he said, but nine out of every ten purchasers of these items report they are happy. Actually, 99% say they are happy. So why do they only report on the 1% or so who are against these sales? I have received many protests [from the sellers]."

They do have a point. Less than 5% of the buyers reported being victims of ‘spiritual sales.’ We took a sort of a poll, and the majority still believes in the effectiveness of the vases.”

They did blow the whistle, but the “victims” did not show up as expected. So, the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales tried to lure purchasers of the artifacts who visited Consumer Affairs Centers into filing lawsuits through aggressive strategies. The book *The Truth About Spiritual Sales*, published by *Sekai Nippo* in 1996, describes in detail the reality of the situation.

In September 1987, an unprecedented case occurred in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, where lawyers filed a lawsuit without the clients’ permission. The “victims” were three people, including Mrs. T, a 60-year-old housewife at the time. The lawyers who filed the lawsuit without their clients’ consent were fifteen attorneys including Hideo Mizutani, who belonged to the “Lawyers’ Association for Freedom,” an organization of attorneys affiliated with the Communist Party of Japan.

They filed a lawsuit in the Sendai District Court against import and trading companies run by former Unification Church believers and their employees, demanding 43.4 million yen in compensation for damages, claiming that they “took advantage of Mrs. T’s simple faith and forced her to buy seals, pagodas, pots, and other items totaling 36 million yen.”

They Went to Her Home with an Asahi Journalist

It all started when Mrs. T, who had purchased marble pots and pagodas, visited the Consumer Affairs Center in Miyagi Prefecture at the suggestion of her son, who had become concerned by reading the media coverage of “spiritual sales.” There, she was introduced to lawyer Mizutani, who asked her to pay 250,000 yen in legal fees to get the full amount back, which she did.

However, there was no mention of filing a lawsuit, and the plaintiffs, Mrs. T and her son, were not contacted at all when the suit was filed in September. When Mrs. T realized that she had become a plaintiff without even knowing it, she was surprised to see her own complaint for the first time. What is more, the content differed significantly from what she had told lawyer Mizutani. In October, she and others withdrew their complaint and sent a notice of dismissal to Mizutani.

It seems that the employees of public institutions such as Consumer Affairs Centers and certain lawyers had a “deep relationship” with each other.

In August 1987, Mr. S, then 75 years old, of Mizuguchi Town, Koka County, Shiga Prefecture, had purchased a miniature pagoda for her ancestor’s memorial service. She became concerned because of the media frenzy and visited the Shiga Prefectural Government’s sub-office.

She was immediately taken to a Consumer Affairs Center in Kusatsu, and from there she was directed to the “Shiga No. 1 Law Firm” in front of JR West Japan’s Otsu Station.

This law firm was affiliated with the Communist Party, and at the time, it handled all consultations on “spiritual sales” in the prefecture. Mrs. S noticed a stack of *Shimbun Akahata* [“Red Flag,” the newspaper of the Communist Party of Japan] in the office, which made her uncomfortable. However, at the recommendation of lawyer Kyoko Ogawa, who introduced himself as “the lawyer in charge,” and a prefectural official, she signed a contract entrusting Ogawa with negotiations on the return of the money she had paid for the pagoda, without fully understanding what they were all about.

Later, however, the lawyer came to her house with Tetsuro Tatsuno, then a journalist of the *Asahi Shimbun*, without any notice. Mrs. S realized that the contract was structured so that the lawyer would be paid a fee even if Mrs. S negotiated personally and received a refund. She decided to revoke the power of attorney she had given to lawyer Ogawa.

Mrs. S told a journalist from *Sekai Nippo*, “Those people say they are on the side of the victims, but I think their real purpose is to spread bad news about the ‘spiritual sales’ and destroy the Family Federation, and to increase the lawyers’ own income.”

The National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales claims that the damage caused by “spiritual sales” has been enormous. It is true that some aggressive sales techniques may have been used. However, if there really were so many victims, there would be no need to use such a devious technique to make up victims in the first place. Incidentally, the Network’s lawyers may still be using this technique today.

The Reality of the “Large Donations Lawsuits”

Since the mother of Tetsuya Yamagami, who killed former Prime Minister Abe, donated more than 100 million yen to the former Unification Church, critics are accusing the church of soliciting extravagant donations. Those who are not familiar with religions may think that a donation of 100 million yen must come from a fraud, or a financial exploitation by the former Unification Church based on “brainwashing.” However, this is not true.

For almost all religions, including the former Unification Church, donations, endowments, and charitable gifts are expressions of piety and are offered willingly to God. For example, not a few overseas Christians donated vast tracts of land or even their entire wealth before the end of their lives and died penniless. Will their relatives sue the religious corporations for depriving them of the inheritance they expected to inherit?

It is not unusual for other religious corporations to receive donations of hundreds of millions of yen. It is problematic to unilaterally criticize only large donations made for the altruistic reason of “promoting world peace” or “the good of humanity.”

Unfortunately, however, even if the donors are convinced at the time of the donation that they are donating freely, as time goes by, their faith may wane. Their relatives may rush to the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales to recover the donation. The donors may be persuaded by lawyers from the Communist Party of Japan or the former Socialist Party that they have been “deceived,” and a lawsuit against the religious organization for the return of the donation may follow. In fact, there are many cases in which relatives consulted with the Network on how to force the donors-believers to sue.

In the past, the Family Federation has faced 169 donation lawsuits. According to lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama, the MEXT considered 22 of these cases where the church had been regarded as responsible for vicarious liability and examined where they could be used as a basis for the dissolution case. However, when Nakayama analyzed the cases one by one, he found that the Family Federation had won 50% of them. Considering all the 169 cases, the rate of victory was 30%.

When reading the plaintiffs’ court statements from the early years of the cases, we constantly find the same claims, such as “The plaintiffs were persuaded to

donate money by stirring up anxiety and fear that their deceased husbands should be rescued from hell,” “The plaintiffs were told that their children’s and grandchildren’s illness and misfortune were caused by their ancestors’ karma,” “The donations were made under threat of baseless stories about karma,” and so on.

In other words, in almost every lawsuit, the lawyers, as if they copied the same sentences from one case to the other, kept claiming that the plaintiffs were intimidated into donating by creating “awe and misunderstanding” through an emphasis on ancestral karma and fear of hell.

At first, no matter how much evidence and arguments were submitted by the church to refute them, the plaintiffs’ claims were accepted at face value.

Clearly Unjust Judgments

Here are some examples of court decisions that were clearly unjust.

In 1996, the former Unification Church lost a donation lawsuit for the first time at Fukuoka District Court. According to the church, one of the plaintiffs, N, learned about its doctrines after she lost her husband. She was impressed by the teachings, and after joining the church, she made donations to contribute to the development of the Unification movement. However, N’s relatives and others urged her to give up her faith or they would take her only daughter and raise her themselves. Pressured by them, she filed a lawsuit against the church.

At the trial, plaintiff N claimed that she donated because the believers told her that her late husband in the spirit world would suffer in hell if she did not make a donation. This was in total contradiction to the testimony of the believers. The Fukuoka District Court awarded the plaintiff 35 million yen in damages. In addition to the lack of any objective evidence, the court ignored the religious nature of the case, and found for the plaintiff based on a very secular rule of thumb: “It is impossible for a believer to make such a large donation within a short period of joining the church.” [The original text of the judgment states, “It is extremely difficult to imagine that anyone would respond to a sudden request for an extremely large donation of 30 million yen.” The statement “within a short period of joining the church” in this article is an expression of the rule of thumb adopted by the court, and does not literally correspond to the original text of the

judgment, which is based on the idea that only in the case of a person who was part of a religion for many years it would not be unnatural for her to make a large donation when suddenly told to do so].

On August 21, 2002, the Tokyo District Court ordered the church to pay 3.7 million yen in damages to the plaintiff, a former believer called T, who had claimed that she had donated 1 million yen based on an illegal solicitation. In her written statement, T asserted that in the past, when Japan ruled Korea as a colony, T's uncle worked for the Japanese police there. When she told this story to O, a believer of the Family Federation, O accused T, explaining that her family had committed an irreparable sin and that the illness of a child of a relative was caused by her uncle's torture of the Korean people. O urged T to donate money, saying that if she did not donate all her money, her ancestors would accuse her when she would go to the spirit world.

However, other evidence revealed that T had discovered that her uncle had worked for the Japanese police in Korea only after she had made the donation. In other words, her statement was a complete fiction referring to facts she could not have known at the time of the donation.

Surprisingly, however, the Tokyo District Court found that believer O had cursed and threatened her, saying that "T's family had committed tremendous crimes" and "sins. [The judgment found that believer O persistently told plaintiff T to "Donate money to compensate for his ancestor's sins," "The ancestor wants you to make amends for his sins," "Your ancestor will be saved by your donation," "Your attachment to money and material things is evidence on an evil mind," "You cannot make amends for his sins unless you cut off such evil mind," "If you don't do so, you will go to hell when you go to the spirit world and be blamed by the ancestor," etc. The article offers a short summary of these statements for the sake of conciseness].

The court accepted T's statement even though it was clear that there were no threatening remarks. This was clearly an unfair judgment.

Perjury and Falsification of Evidence

On January 13, 2016, the Tokyo District Court found that K, a member of the Family Federation, had donated her husband's bank deposits without his

permission and ordered the church to pay approximately 34.3 million yen. K's ex-husband filed a lawsuit against the church after he and K divorced. His ex-wife K denied the fact that she had donated money to the church. However, the judge found that all the money listed in her ex-husband's bank passbook, for which the purpose of the use cannot be proved, was a donation to the church by the wife. The judge then held the organization liable, on the grounds that it must have known that the donations were the ex-husband's property, and that K was donating against his will.

Surprisingly, however, while aware of how the church was organized, the court did not clarify the facts, such as which executives or members of the church received the donations. It can be said that the judges made their decision based on mere speculation.

On the other hand, there have been cases in which the court found clear perjury and falsification of evidence by the plaintiffs, and the church won.

In a lawsuit, former believer A sought compensation for damages at the Nagoya District Court. She claimed that she had donated 10 million yen to the church due to baseless karma stories and other threats by fellow believers. However, the claim was dismissed on February 28, 2003. Subsequently, the High Court and the Supreme Court upheld the District Court's decision, and the church completely won the case.

In the plaintiff A's written statement, she stated that she had donated a large amount of money to the organization because the believers told her stories about the karma of her love affairs, the karma of killing and wounding others, the karma of an unborn baby, and so on, so she was instilled with fear. However, during the dispute, plaintiff A visited a facility related to the church, where a believer showed her the statement allegedly written by A and verified its contents one by one.

According to the believer, "Mrs. A's statement said that the church had repeatedly threatened her, starting with the study in a video center. However, when I asked her about her remarks in the written statement, she denied almost all of them. So, I recorded what she said and submitted it to the court as evidence."

The believer reported that the examination of Mrs. A at trial was as follows. "She was asked, 'Your statement says you were threatened to make donations. Is it correct?' Then she clearly answered, 'No, it is not correct.' 'Then this statement

was not written by you?’ ‘No, I didn’t write it.’ ‘Then there is no point of asking any more questions.’ ‘Yes.’ At that moment, the presiding judge’s face turned very pale. He was disappointed that he had no choice but to let the church win the case.”

On March 1, 2022, the Tokyo District Court dismissed the plaintiff’s claim for damages in a lawsuit filed by S, a former believer of the Family Federation, against the church and some of its members. She claimed that she was told about an ancestral karma, a karma pushing her towards sexual relations, a karma to kill and wound. She became worried that illnesses, accidents, and other misfortunes might occur if she did not donate money to exorcise her karma, and she was thus forced to donate 21 million yen. However, it was discovered that when S was still a devotee, she had sent a letter to the believer who was mentoring her expressing her joy and gratitude for her faith.

The plaintiff also submitted as evidence several notebooks and passbooks in which she had noted each time she made a donation or other contribution. However, when the defendants analyzed these notes, they found that some of them had not been written at the time of the donations, but later, in order to fabricate favorable evidence for the trial.

Making Up False Stories, a Recurring Technique

Another major deciding factor in the church’s victory of that case was a written document S had signed at a notary public’s office indicating that she had voluntarily made a donation when she was a believer.

However, to deny the validity of this written document, S made a series of false claims at the trial. For example, she claimed that she was pressured by the church’s believers to write the statement, citing the fact that her husband’s cancer surgery was successful, and he recovered. However, it was revealed that, in fact, both the discovery of her husband’s cancer and the surgery took place after S had signed the statement.

As in the previously mentioned case decided by the Tokyo District Court on August 21, 2002, where the defendant falsely claimed that she was pressured to make a donation because her uncle had worked for the Japanese police in Korea, the same technique of falsely confusing the timeline was used here as well. In both

cases, it is reasonable to assume that the lawyers, not the plaintiffs who were unfamiliar with the rules of the trial process, took the lead in preparing false statements. It is worth noting that in both cases, the attorneys for the plaintiffs were leading lawyers of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, such as Hiroshi Yamaguchi and Hiroshi Watanabe.

The lawyers from the Network are also suspected of fabricating evidence by combining images from two different videos and falsely submitting them as if they were from a single recording. In an extremely vicious case, a plaintiff, represented by a Network lawyer, sued for the return of 600 million yen in donations but was found to have spent nearly 400 million yen of that money for other uses, and lied systematically at trial. Therefore, we must question the ethics of these lawyers. The claims of the Network can no longer be trusted at all.

Lies About “Internal Documents of the Family Federation”

As we can see from lawyer Masaki Kito’s numerous statements, the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales has also repeatedly made baseless, slanderous, and false allegations against the Family Federation. Here is a typical example.

On September 16, 2022, a Tokyo meeting of the Network was held in Ichigaya, Tokyo. Attorney Hiroshi Watanabe, who has been mentioned earlier, gave the keynote speech. At that time, he distributed a list to the participants. He said it was an internal document of the church.

Under the title “Feedback on Emergency Counter Measures for Persons in Situation of High Danger, August 18,” there was a color table with the following explanation: “We will provide feedback on the implementation of ‘emergency measures’ for believers who were found to be in a situation of high danger in the risk assessment survey.” The table showed the number of people classified as AA or AAA, in each of the 12 districts, and the total number of people was 911. Although the meaning of the numbers was not immediately clear, lawyer Hiroshi Watanabe proudly explained: “I think this document was probably produced by the Unification Church in 2012... The Unification Church lists donors who donated more than 100 million yen, such as the mother of the suspect Yamagami, as ‘highly dangerous.’ And it states that there are 911 such people throughout

Japan. They are divided into AA and AAA. AAA probably means those who donate a billion yen or more. If the church would not take counter measures about them, they would be dangerous. They state that they must take measures.”

He continued: “These 911 people were recruited by believers who hid their true identities. The believers did not tell that they were from a religious organization or the Unification Church, and those people were lured in. They were then threatened, deceived, and had all their property taken away, leaving their families in a collapsed state. If these people sued, the church would be in serious trouble. So, they thought they needed to take measures to prevent this. I think the material shows the anti-social nature of the Unification Church.”

I would like to thank him for his detailed explanation, but in fact, this document is not a list of top donors. AAA refers to believers who were at an extremely high risk of being abducted, confined, and deprogrammed, not to those who donated more than 1 billion yen.

I do not know whether lawyer Watanabe misunderstood the document and explained it in this way by mistake, or deliberately fabricated a false story. However, it is an episode that shows the maliciousness of the Network, which uses any material for its propaganda to discredit the Family Federation.

This press conference was spread by the media. Therefore, the Family Federation was again accused of being greedy and trying to squeeze money out of its top donors.

In 2012, the number of abduction, confinement, and deprogramming cases had decreased considerably, but the danger still remained serious enough that such a list had to be made and measures taken.

Since the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales was deeply involved in the criminal abduction and confinement of believers, I urge them to sincerely face the truth of what this list meant. However, considering their true colors, this is highly unlikely and probably impossible. The question remains: who is more “anti-social,” the Family Federation or the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales?

References

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