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TO: HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

JAPAN

URGENT JOINT NGO REPORT

**SHOOTING AGAINST FORMER PRIME MINISTER ABE
AND DAMAGES CAUSED BY THE WORLD CHRISTIAN
ASSOCIATION FOR THE UNIFICATION OF GOD AND
SPIRIT (FORMERLY THE UNIFICATION CHURCH, NOW
THE FAMILY ASSOCIATION FOR WORLD PEACE AND
UNIFICATION)**

This report is a product of a collaborative effort by the following civic organizations:

- 1 Women's Active Museum on War and Peace
- 2 Support Group for the Case of Itabashi High School Graduation Ceremony and “Freedom of Expression”
- 3 Lawyers’ Association Against the Conspiracy Law
- 4 People's Association against Criminalization of Conspiracy
- 5 Japan NGO Action Network for Civic Space (NANCiS)
- 6 The Organization to Support the Lawsuits for Freedom of Education in Tokyo
- 7 Action network against the land survey law
- 8 Society for Abolishing the Family Registration System and Discriminations against Children Born out of Wedlock (AFRDC)
- 9 Consumers Union of Japan
- 10 Group of Protesters Against the Secrets Law and the Anti Conspiracy Law in Aichi, Japan
- 11 League of Lawyers Against the State Secret Act
- 12 Media Research Institute
- 13 Lawyers' Network Against a Digital Surveillance Society
- 14 Human Rights in Japan project

Recommendations

- **The former Unification Church's illegal acts of evangelism and extortion of donations, in which it conceals its true identity, infringe on the freedom of the subject of its recruitment to choose their faith(Articles 18 of the Covenant), and violate not only the property rights of its followers, but also their personal rights (Articles 6 and 7 of the Covenant) and family rights (Articles 17 and 23 of the Covenant).**
- **In response, the government should conduct appropriate criminal investigations and administrative investigations to properly deter their illegal activities and protect the freedoms and rights that have been violated(Articles 2 of the Covenant).**

Reasons for Seeking Recommendations

1 Shooting of former Prime Minister Abe

On July 8, 2022, at approximately 11:31 a.m., former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a member of the House of Representatives, was shot and killed near Yamato Saidaiji Station in Nara City. The suspect, Tetsuya Yamagami ("Mr. Yamagami"), who was arrested on the spot, explained his motive for the shooting. He claims that his mother was a member of the World Christian Association for the Unification of God and Spirit (formerly Unification Church, currently the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. Abbreviated as "Family Federation") and his family was destroyed by the former Unification Church, and Mr. Abe was a strong supporter of the organization.

2 Mr. Yamagami's Family was Destroyed by the Former Unification Church's Illegal Extortion of Donations

Mr. Yamagami was born in Nara City in September 1980. He was 41 years old at the time of the incident and had an older brother and younger sister. According to his uncle, his father, a graduate of Kyoto University's Faculty of Engineering who ran a construction company and whose family was wealthy, committed suicide in 1984 when he was four years old.

At the same time, his older brother was diagnosed with pediatric cancer. According to his uncle, these events led his mother to join the former Unification Church.

According to his uncle, his mother had also lost her brother in a car accident, and was additionally impacted by the death of her own mother in 1982. His uncle states that Mr. Yamagami's mother joined the church in 1991, according to what she told him.

In contrast, the former Unification Church admits that she became an active member around 1998. His uncle supported Mr. Yamagami and his family from 1984, when his father committed suicide, until about 2020. His mother had sold two residential lots and her own home in Nara City by 1999, and donated approximately 100 million yen, including 50 million yen of her husband's (Mr. Yamagami's father's) life insurance.

In March 1999, he graduated from a prefectural high school in Nara Prefecture, but in 2002, his mother went bankrupt because of the 100-million-yen donation. Mr. Yamagami was unable to attend college and joined the Maritime Self-Defense Force in August 2002. He attempted suicide in 2005 while serving in the MSDF. He explained that his plan was to give his own death benefits to his brother and sister, whose lives were impoverished by their mother's donations to the former Unification Church.

In October 2020, he registered with a temporary staffing agency in Osaka Prefecture, and began working as a temporary worker at a factory in Kyoto Prefecture from that month. He was unemployed at the time of the incident.

3 Motive for the murder of Former Prime Minister Abe was a grudge against the former Unification Church.

According to media reports, in questioning after the incident, Yamagami stated that "his mother joined the former Unification Church and went bankrupt from transferring a large amount of money, which was the root cause of everything that followed," and that his family life had been ruined and he felt he absolutely had to make them (the former Unification Church) pay.

He said that in October 2019, when Tsuruko Han, wife of former Unification Church founder Moon Sun Myung and now president of the church, visited Japan, he went to the Aichi International Exhibition Hall with a Molotov cocktail, but "only church members were allowed inside the hall, so I couldn't do anything."

He explained that he thought the source of all evil was President Han, but since Abe was the grandson of former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, who was responsible for bringing President Han to Japan, he thought that Abe was to blame for spreading the Unification Church in Japan.

On September 12, 2021, at the "Hope Forward Convention," a rally held at a Korean venue and online, hosted by the former Unification Church-affiliated Union for Peace in the Universe (UPF), former Prime Minister Abe stated in a recorded message, "I would like to pay my respects to President Tsuruko Han and all others who have worked with UPF to resolve conflicts around the world to this day, especially for peaceful reunification of the

Korean Peninsula. I also highly appreciate the emphasis on the value of the family in the UPF's vision for peace.

Mr. Yamagami stated that he saw this video around spring of this year and was convinced that there was a connection between Abe and the organization and that it was imperative that he get rid of him.

The statements he reportedly made to investigators are consistent with the posts he allegedly made on Twitter.

4 Illegal collection of donations by former Unification Church has been confirmed through numerous civil and criminal verdicts.

Since the 1980s, the former Unification Church has reportedly collected exorbitant amounts of donations from its congregation by means of so-called spiritual sales, and using the them to fund political and other activities.

The methods used in so-called spiritual sales consist of explaining the misfortunes of believers as being caused by their heritage, saying, "If you buy this product, you will be protected from your ancestral causality (a predestined fate from a previous life). They exploit weakness and insecurities of believers, and through that sell products at exorbitant prices and demand large donations.

It is believed that Mr. Yamagami's mother, a woman of means but caught in circumstances that caused her great unhappiness, was targeted by the former Unification Church's spiritual sales.

According to data compiled by the National Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales Lawyers Liaison Association, the number of consultations received by lawyers nationwide was 28,236 from 1987 to 2021. The total amount of damages suffered was approximately 118.1 billion yen. If the number of consultations and the amount of damage calculated by the Consumer Center

through 2006 are included, the total number of consultations is 34,537 and the amount of damages suffered is 123.7 billion yen.

In 1994, the Fukuoka District Court ruled for the first time that the Unification Church was liable for the tortious actions of its followers, and since then, there have been numerous court decisions that have found the church liable¹.

In addition, on March 11, 1999, the Supreme Court of Japan rejected an appeal by the Unification Church and affirmed the Tokyo High Court's decision (September 22, 1998) that found the Unification Church vicariously liable and awarded damages equal to the amounts that the victims were forced to donate after being subject to the same means as spiritual sales by followers.

On September 14, 2000, the Okayama Branch of the Hiroshima High Court ordered the Unification Church to pay damages on the grounds that the Unification Church deprived the appellant of his freedom to choose his religion, forced him to join the church, restricted his free will, and deprived him of time to live freely. The decision was upheld by the Supreme Court on February 9, 2001.

On June 29, 2001, the Sapporo District Court ruled that the Unification Church's evangelism and cult activities, which included solicitation of people while concealing their true identity, "may infringe on the freedom of faith and property rights," and awarded damages against the Unification Church. The judgment became final on October 10, 2003.

The Tokyo High Court decision of June 28, 2016 recognized the Unification Church's organizational tort liability as a legal entity, and ordered

¹ [123982D70B1826D049256CC9001B3B5 \(courts.go.jp\)](https://courts.go.jp/123982D70B1826D049256CC9001B3B5)

compensation equal to the donations made. The ruling further ordered the payment of compensation for causing the plaintiff's marriage to break down through its illegal solicitation of donations.

Further, on November 10, 2009, in the "Shinsei" criminal trial of Unification Church followers, the Tokyo District Court ruled that the acts of Unification Church followers that cause victims to purchase expensive products by fueling their anxiety as described above are concerted acts with the Church's evangelism, and are "highly organized and extremely offensive", as it found the defendants in violation of the Specified Commercial Transactions Act and sentenced them to prison among other penalties. Additionally, multiple salespersons of sales companies for the Unification Church were fined for contravening the same law.

As seen above, the fact that the former Unification Church is a group that has repeatedly violated rights to free religion and forced donations by illegal means has been legally recognized in a number of civil and criminal rulings.

5 Many politicians of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) have received financial and physical support from the former Unification Church, and in return have promoted the anti-Constitutional policies advocated by the group.

In 2018 and 2019, the National Association of Lawyers Against Spiritual Lawyers called upon Diet members not to attend events related to the former Unification Church, send messages, or receive support from its followers in elections, as they "run the risk of condoning the illegal activities" of the former Unification Church.

After the shooting of former Prime Minister Abe, many of his party's members, including senior LDP officials who have held key government positions, admitted that they had received physical and financial support from the former Unification Church in their elections. Testimony from several LDP officials also revealed that former Prime Minister Abe was allocating the votes of former Unification Church members to each LDP candidate.

According to reports, the parties that have been supported by the Unification Church are not limited to the Liberal Democratic Party, but there are many similarities between the policies of the government, the LDP, and the Unification Church, including their anti-communist ideology, discrimination against women, and hatred of homosexuals (opposition to same-sex marriage), and citizens are now paying keen attention to the important role of the former Unification Church in the LDP's policy making process.

6 The head of the police agency is also the chairman of a former Unification Church-affiliated event.

The government was responsible for deterring the former Unification Church's repeated and illegal donation-gathering activities. Despite establishing several criminal cases and obtaining convictions, the police stopped their investigations midway through 2010 and have not resumed them to the present day.

The former Unification Church filed an application to change its name to the Family Peace Federation in June 2015, which the Agency for Cultural Affairs accepted in July of that year and certified on August 26 of the same year. The Prime Minister at the time was Mr. Abe, and the Minister in charge, the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, was Mr. Hirofumi Shimomura, a close associate of Mr. Abe. This change was

convenient for the former Unification Church to hide the organization's now-infamous identity and gain access to the general public.

The current head of the police organization, National Public Safety Commission Chairman Satoshi Ninoyu, has admitted that he was the chairman of the Kyoto Prefecture Executive Committee for Peace Road 2018 in Kyoto, an event held on August 1, 2018 by the former Unification Church's Union for Peace in the Universe (UPF) at the Kyoto International Community House. This shows that a group that has repeatedly engaged in illegal activities had a strong influence at the very top of the police organization, making it difficult to ensure proper law enforcement against illegal activities conducted by those involved with the Unification Church.

7 Conclusion

We recognize that this is a sensitive issue that also involves freedom of religion.

However, as mentioned above, the former Unification Church's illegal acts of evangelism and coercion of donations are illegal acts that infringe on the person's freedom of choice of faith (Article 18 of the Covenant), the believers' property rights and rights to life and dignity (Articles 6 and 7 of the Covenant), and family rights (Articles 17 and 23 of the Covenant), and are not protected by "freedom of religion". This has been repeatedly recognized in civil and criminal trials in Japan. We are also very concerned that the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which is under the strong influence of this religious organization, will bring about a dire situation for democracy and freedom of expression (Article 19 of the Covenant).

In fact, until the shooting incident against former Prime Minister Abe, mainline journalism had never reported on the relationship between the

former Unification Church and the LDP. As a result, there are still difficulties in publicly debating this issue.

The government should first ensure that the existing legal system is strictly applied to separate the former Unification Church from government agencies and to preemptively deter illegal activities.

We believe that the HRC's appropriate recommendations to the Japanese government will constitute the starting point of recovering from this dire situation for democracy and freedom of expression in Japan.