

# Statement

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Lawyers from Across Japan for the Victims of the Unification Church  
(LAJAVUC)

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1. Almost one year has passed since the fatal shooting of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on July 8th last year.

The shooting can never be tolerated, and we must ensure that such a tragedy will never be repeated.

On the other hand, troubles such as very high donations and family disruption caused by the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (formerly named the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, hereinafter referred to as "the Unification Church"), which are believed to be the background to the shooting case, are still ongoing. Our society needs to work together to prevent and provide relief for the damages.

2. After the day of the fatal shooting, the reality of diverse, serious, appalling, and continuing damage to individuals and families caused by the Unification Church, including violation of religious freedom, violation of property rights, and family disruption involving children, came to light in series. Many victims and their families, especially second-generation ex-members of the Unification Church, have courageously raised their voices one after another.

In response to these circumstances, a new law to provide relief for victims of the Unification Church over high donations (Act on Prevention of Unfair Solicitation of Donations) was legislated last December. However, the new law applies only to damages incurred after its enactment and does not apply retroactively to earlier damages. Yet, after the law was enacted, media coverage of the issues concerning the Unification Church decreased significantly, as if all of the problems had been resolved.

3. Lawyers from Across Japan (LAJAVUC) began its activities on November 24, 2022, in response to consultation requests from victims of the Unification Church received through the Ministry of Justice, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, Japan Legal Support Center (Houterasu), and other relevant organizations since last September. Between February 22 of this year and today, we have notified claims of damages to the Unification Church in four rounds on behalf of 109 victims. Currently, we are seeking a total of 3,584 million yen in damages in collective negotiations. However, the Unification Church has been unfaithful and insincere in facing or taking responsibility for the past damages it has caused. Instead, the Unification Church contends that so-called local Congregations are the subject of the issue, does not disclose records of donations and other payments it has received from the victims, and asserts the statute of limitations against the victims who have not been able to voice their claims for many years.

This attitude indicates the church reform that the Unification Church has been presenting to the public was merely a varnishing tactic, which is unacceptable for a religious corporation that should be a public-interest corporation.

4. Despite the gravity of damage caused by the Unification Church, it has continued to be overlooked for many years. We must never forget that the cause of this overlook, in part, was the fact that politicians, the media, and we, the public, were unaware of or knowingly neglected its seriousness, maliciousness, and range of negative social impact.

The efforts for bringing relief to the victims and preventing future damage caused by the Unification Church have just begun. We believe society as a whole is responsible for keeping a close watch on this issue and maintaining and strengthening the efforts.

We should never let this issue fade away again.

We, the members of LAJAVUC, will continue to do our utmost to bring prompt relief to the victims of the Unification Church.