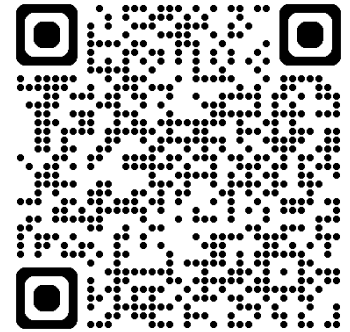


# Yamagami sentenced to life for killing ex-PM Abe



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20260121203307111/>

The man who gunned down former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo with a handmade firearm has been sentenced to life in prison. A court in Nara Prefecture described the killing as an extremely malicious action that put lives at risk. Forty-five-year-old Yamagami Tetsuya admitted to shooting the former Prime Minister at a political event in 2022. He said that he was motivated by Abe's connection to a religious group widely known as the Unification Church. He claimed his family had been ruined by his mother's donations to the organization. During sentencing the court said it was despicable that Yamagami chose to use a gun in the attack. It added that his choice to open fire at a crowded public event was highly dangerous. It also noted Abe's widow Akie is still struggling under the emotional toll. Prosecutors had been demanding life in prison. Yamagami's lawyers had called for a lesser sentence not exceeding 20 years arguing that their client is a victim of abuse who deserved a chance at rehabilitation. Last year a Tokyo district court issued a dissolution order requiring the group to disband as a religious corporation over questionable donation solicitations. The group has appealed. Now we asked an expert about the trial outcome.

I don't think the defendant's upbringing has had that big of an effect on his character. If he were a minor, you could argue that his upbringing could have shaped him as a person, but in this case, he is an adult and already a member of society. He also should have a basic understanding of what is expected of him in society. I understand that he has a lot of anger to the group, but that does not excuse the fact that he committed murder and that he can escape responsibilities for his actions.

An NHK reporter also spoke to a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation religious devotee whose parents were married in one of the group's mass weddings.

The court didn't take into consideration the hardships faced by those growing up as a second-generation religious devotee. I am worried that the plight of people like us, our experiences and struggles may be forgotten.

He believes it is necessary to create a social welfare system that provides support to protect people from financial harm and other abuse. Now the ruling on this landmark case was handed down not far from where Abe was shot. As NHK World's Miyamoto Rikuya explains, the case has gripped the nation. Rikuya brings us the story from Nara.

Hundreds of people streamed through Nara Park early Wednesday morning. All of them hoping for 1 of about 30 seats to a historic ruling. So many people wanted to watch the trial in person that seats had to be handed out using a lottery system. Some people said that they had been watching the trial closely.

I have a child of the same generation as the defendant, so I'm really interested in this case. I hope he'll become a person who can be rehabilitated and contribute to society.

I want to know the main reason this happened. I think there are elements of politics and religion.

It's a case that remained in the public eye since Yamagami Tetsuya's arrest. And as a judge continued to read out the ruling, police encircled Nara district courts to make sure the public stayed back. One woman outside told NHK she thought the sentence was a little heavy. She pointed out the defendant admitted to the crime when the trial began and said that signals, he might feel some remorse and at the very least, it's clear he has taken responsibility for his actions. Yamagami's crime sent shockwaves through Japanese society, and his life sentence marks the end of one of the most important murder cases in the country's modern history unless he decides to appeal.

Source: (NHK World News)

**Now discuss the questions with a partner.**

1. What is your opinion about the verdict of Yamagami's case?
2. Can you think of any other possible sentences besides life imprisonment?
3. How do you think this incident affected Japanese society as a whole?
4. Do you think the recent arrest of the head of the Unification Church in South Korea should have any effect in this case?
5. Should the government do more to protect people from financial or emotional harm caused by religious groups? What can they do?