

LDP Apologizes to Soka Gakkai
By JEFF FARR
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The Liberal Democratic Party has publicly apologized to the Soka Gakkai for its coverage of the Nobuhira case in its newspaper, *Jiyu Shimpō*.

In 1996, Nobuko Nobuhira falsely accused SGI President Ikeda in a tabloid of raping her three times over a 23-year period. *Jiyu Shimpō* picked up the story, running a series based on her claims, while LDP politicians used it to attack President Ikeda and the Soka Gakkai's support of the now defunct New Frontier Party.

The LDP apology was prompted by an April 13 letter of protest from Soka Gakkai attorneys. Printed in the April 21 *Jiyu Shimpō* and *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, the apology said: "We failed to conduct an adequate investigation of the facts.... We must acknowledge the inappropriateness of having in effect cooperated in the spreading of falsehoods. For this we apologize...."

In addition, the April 22 *Asahi Shimbun* reported that Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto apologized to the Soka Gakkai by telephone, admitting, "We caused you trouble."

Behind the LDP's apology is an acknowledgment that Nobuhira's case is falling apart. Most of the charges have been thrown out, and her appeal for a postponement of the case has been denied twice.

"We are gratified by this long-overdue apology," SGI spokesperson Rie Tsumura said. "The ruling party has acted in a highly irresponsible manner, as it has exploited these sensational charges for clearly political purposes."

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