

# [***Kishida vows no more fundraising parties at Parliament's ethics hearing over a funds scandal***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BFC-K4C1-JC5B-G268-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Associated Press

February 29, 2024 Thursday 7:53 AM GMT

Copyright 2024 Associated Press All Rights Reserved

**Section:** INTERNATIONAL NEWS

**Length:** 692 words

**Byline:** MARI YAMAGUCHI, Associated Press

**Dateline:** TOKYO

**Body**

TOKYO — Japan’s beleaguered prime minister renewed his apology over his governing party's corruption scandal, promising to not hold any more parties himself as leader during a political ethics committee Thursday.

Fumio Kishida has fought against plummeting support ratings since his [*governing party’s corruption scandal*](https://apnews.com/article/japan-politics-kishida-party-scandal-corruption-9a24f47e73552422a1a41a1f537e0760) rocked the government. The scandal, considered the biggest in decades, centers on political funds raised through party event tickets bought by individuals, companies and organizations. It led to 10 people — [*lawmakers and their aides — being indicted*](https://apnews.com/article/japan-kishida-funds-scandal-arrest-prosecutors-ikeda-2fae98f45f312b7e25c900387f26eb55) in January.

While Kishida himself is not the focus of the scandal and was not even invited to the hearing, the surprise announcement of his personal appearance broke a deadlock between the opposition lawmakers and his governing party Wednesday when the five implicated attendants refused to go public, holding up a hearing. Kishida expressed a “sense of crisis” that the deadlock on the hearing would further deepen the public’s distrust in ***politics***.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party’s resistance to have a fully open session fueled public criticism that Kishida’s party is taking the corruption lightly and trying to hide something.

Kishida's action could help ease criticisms that he was too slow and lax in addressing the public's distrust and [*taking anti-corruption measures*](https://apnews.com/article/japan-politics-kishida-parliament-corruption-scandal-7c3c9f3f9b2e095aafe65a1f8abaf6fd).

In his opening statement, Kishida renewed his apology for triggering public distrust in ***politics***, and promised to take leadership in reforming his party, saying seniority-based tradition, lack of compliance and a sense of privilege among lawmakers need to be removed if they were part of the problem.

Kishida said he volunteered to appear at the hearing to provide an explanation as head of the LDP. But he brushed off questions from opposition lawmakers seeking further details about the fundraising problems, such as when and how they began. Kishida said the governing party’s internal probe focused on preventive measures instead of digging deeper into details of the wrongdoings.

Former Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, now an executive of main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, criticized Kishida for holding a number of his own fundraising parties. Kishida in turn promised not to hold any more of what he called “benkyo-kai,” or study meetings, during his leadership.

Asked about his own faction’s accounting irregularity, which had to be corrected, and its prior status, he said documents were lost and details were unknown.

Kishida doesn’t have to call a parliamentary election until 2025, but his party has set a leadership vote for September.

The ethics committee is tasked with determining whether a lawmaker violated political ethics standards and should be held responsible, but critics say it's largely a show and any serious investigative role is not expected.

Its hearings can be held in a closed meeting, but all but nine of its previous hearings were held publicly.

[*More than 80 LDP lawmakers*](https://apnews.com/article/japan-kishida-fundraising-scandal-unification-church-26257498b503bd46298b4349d0b68400), most of them belonging to a faction previously led by [*assassinated former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe*](https://apnews.com/article/shinzo-abe-elections-japan-tokyo-assassinations-12f89e6af06d8b5a031de57fce2ade6f), acknowledged not reporting funds in possible violation of the Political Funds Control Law. The money was alleged to have gone into unmonitored slush funds in the systematic long-term practice.

Kishida removed a number of ministers from his Cabinet and others from party executive posts, while some stepped down in the sandal, though support ratings for his government dwindled to around 20%.

The prime minister has announced the dissolving of his faction following the scandal, and has established an internal task force to make reforms. But half of its members are linked to the scandal, raising questions about how much it can achieve.

The LDP has governed postwar Japan almost without interruption and has [*repeatedly had corruption scandals*](https://apnews.com/article/shinzo-abe-japan-crime-tokyo-south-korea-4bac3b7b504b857bc4d2a8ff503b4b37) followed by promises for cleaner ***politics***.

Kishida and a former Internal Affairs Minister Ryota Takeda, who belongs to another powerful faction, were to appear at the hearing Thursday. Four Abe-faction members, including former Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno and former Trade Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, were set to show up Friday.

**Load-Date:** February 29, 2024

**End of Document**