

Victims of Forced Conversion in Japan Confront their Persecutors in Protest

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The Japanese Victims' Association Against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion has issued a formal letter of protest confronting the Christian Ministers and professional faith-breakers responsible for their ordeals. The victims allege that these so-called "deprogrammers" have in fact engaged in an unethical and illegal conspiracy to violate them of their human rights.

Dated July 13, 2011 the full text of the victims' protest follows:

Protest

1. Introduction

To those who continue to provide guidance for kidnapping and confinement against Unification Church members and continue exit counseling under confinement, and those who used to lead forced conversion by kidnapping and confinement:

Incidents of kidnapping, confinement and exit counseling against Unification Church members continue to the present day. Those of you who are expert in such activities should be well aware of their illegal nature. Although you do not come to the fore, you are providing guidance and instruction for kidnapping and confinement activities behind the scenes. We are the victims of those activities who were kidnapped and confined by our relatives who were under your guidance and suffered pain caused by you through coercive counseling. We are writing this protest out of a sincere desire to appeal to you to stop those kidnapping and confinement activities.

July 13 is the anniversary of the death of Ms. Takako Fujita, who was driven into a corner and committed suicide during her kidnapping and confinement in Kyoto. We are sending this protest on this day with the strong feeling that such a tragedy must never be repeated.

This is a lengthy protest, but we want you to read it to the end and sincerely receive it as your natural duty because of what you have done.

2. Reality of kidnapping and confinement and your responsibility

Forced exit counseling started at Ogikubo Glory Church (United Church of Christ in Japan) in 1966, and all kinds of creative methods have been invented ever since to prevent kidnapped Unification Church members from escaping confinement and assure the success of exit counseling to destroy their faith and convert them. That knowledge of the methodologies of kidnapping, confinement and exit counseling has been conveyed to, shared with and accumulated by Christian ministers throughout Japan.

Because you possess abundant information and experience with kidnapping, confinement and exit counseling, all kidnapping and confinement against Unification Church members was carried out centered on you, with a few exceptions. Although the number of such incidents has decreased in recent years, annually 370 Unification Church members, indeed more than one member per day on average, were kidnapped and confined somewhere in Japan during the peak years. In total, more than 4,000 incidents of kidnapping and confinement against Unification Church members have occurred so far, and you have

provided guidance for those activities behind the scenes and been directly involved in them. As you got involved in more and more kidnapping and confinement activities, the methods of those activities became more skillful and malicious. We expose their reality below.

Place of confinement

First, in terms of place of confinement, you provided guidance to families and relatives of victims to rent an apartment dedicated to confinement in a conveniently situated condominium building. On top of that, you provided them with creative methods to prevent victims from escaping. Usually, the front door and window locks of residential dwellings are designed to prevent intruders from outside. Thus, they cannot be opened from the outside without keys but can be opened easily from inside without keys. However, because you wanted to prevent confined victims from escaping, you installed additional locks to prevent victims' opening them from inside and remodeled them to prevent victims from escaping.

If you change the structure of the front door lock, that could cause some issues with the landlord. If you engage a pre-installed door chain and place a padlock on the door chain to shorten it to remove any slack, the door cannot be opened from inside. All you have to do is to conceal a padlock key from the victim and manage it. This is a simple, creative method that cannot be easily thought of. However, we were confined in apartments with uniformly engineered door lock systems, as mentioned above, throughout Japan.

Also, once exit counseling against one member is finished in an apartment remodeled for confinement, it is continuously used for confinement and exit counseling of other members in a premeditated way. This fact has been mutually confirmed among the victims of kidnapping and confinement through our own experiences. The same remodeled apartment is repeatedly used because that can save efforts to remodel a new apartment for confinement and exit counseling. Also, by repeatedly using the same apartment, knowledge and lessons learned to assure escape-prevention get accumulated in the apartment.

If the windows are small and located high above the ground, that can prevent victims from jumping out of them to escape. But as long as the windows can be opened even slightly, victims could still scribble "Help!" on a piece of paper and make it into a paper plane to convey a message outside. Some victims scribbled "Please communicate my whereabouts to this and this Unification Church" on pieces of paper and scattered them from windows. So windows need to be closed all the time. Even if windows cannot be opened, as long as the glass was transparent, some members wrote "Help!" on a piece of paper and showed it to the outside. Based on the lessons learned from those experiences, you started providing detailed instructions to permanently lock glass windows and use frosted glass for windows or sheets of plywood to cover windows.

Methods of kidnapping

Next is the method of kidnapping Unification Church members. The easiest way is to deceive a member so that he voluntarily comes to the site where the kidnapping is to take place. Often there were cases in which a member was told "Let's go take a look at the new house which a relative is moving into" or "Your brother has rented a new apartment so let's visit him," which turned out to be a lie. Then the family members take the church member to the place of confinement. When he enters the apartment, measures are taken to prevent him from leaving.

If that is not possible, a method is chosen to take advantage of the opportunity of a member's visit to his parents' house to forcibly take him away from the house. However, once such a method of kidnapping was attempted and failed, the member tries to avoid contact with his family from fear of being kidnapped again. In response to those cases, you started to recommend kidnapping on the street.

Although kidnapping a member on the street required a lot of effort and was risky, you became increasingly resourceful in doing it. You considered how best you could avoid failure in kidnapping a member on the street and whether it should be carried out in broad daylight or at night. You figured out a method to put a shadow on a member, track and observe his pattern of behavior for a period of time in advance and choose the best time frame and place to easily kidnap him. In many cases, you focused on a time when a member walked on a desolate street at night, having enough people waiting there for an ambush, bringing a vehicle there to be on hand and quickly forcing him into the vehicle with people outside and inside the vehicle to overpower him. A minivan was typically used because its door can open widely to easily force someone inside even if that person resists strongly. Even before cell phones were widely used, you had collaborators use many cell phones to communicate among themselves and coordinate vehicles and manpower seamlessly. You learned the importance of such well-coordinated actions.

While transporting the member to the place of confinement, you went out of your way to have kidnapers make him sit in the middle, away from the door, to prevent him from escaping and used a rope or handcuffs to deprive him of freedom in anticipation of his desperate physical resistance. You also have them prepare a portable toilet for use inside the vehicle during a long-distance drive to the place of confinement. You applied the same method to female members. This was an extremely humiliating experience for her. The reason you provided such guidance was that you knew cases where a member was allowed to get out of the vehicle to use a bathroom and escaped.

Once the vehicle arrived at the apartment building prepared for confinement, it was necessary to let him get out of the vehicle and take him to the apartment for confinement. There is a high risk of escape at that time, so it was necessary for you to have many people deployed at the vehicle arrival spot and discourage the member from escaping. Three or four people are enough to overpower him and prevent him from escaping, but by mobilizing more people it is easier to take him to the place of confinement while also preventing him from shouting loudly for help. It has not been unusual that 10 or 20 people were mobilized for this. Typically, those people included strangers dispatched from organizations such as the parents' association you sponsor. Even with this much preparation, it is still very difficult for each collaborator to carry out his designated role in a timely fashion in a short period because the victim desperately resists their efforts. Because of this, once a kidnapping plan was decided on, people of similar physique as the victim are selected and the whole group conducts rehearsals of the kidnapping, which ensure that the kidnapping can be carried out smoothly even if the person who plays the role of the victim resists with all his strength. Kidnapping on the street often has been carried out with such thorough preparation.

Unprecedented criminal organization for kidnapping and confinement

The victim's residence remains vacant while his confinement is carried out. It is important to consider how to deal with mail delivered to the empty residence during this period. If the victim is not allowed to go back to his residence from time to time to retrieve his mail, a mail-forwarding request has to be filed with the post office. However, if the place of confinement is registered as the forwarding address, it creates a risk that the place of confinement would be revealed. So you typically give detailed guidance to use a different address that belongs to a person who can cooperate, based on your experiences.

You displayed many additional examples of wisdom and ingenuity. The accumulation of your wisdom and ingenuities increased the success rate of kidnapping, confinement and forced conversion of Unification Church members. Receiving your guidance means your target's family members inherit the wisdom and know-how that have been built up through many experiences.

A police detective who investigated a case of kidnapping and confinement against a Unification Church

member was surprised to find an intricate scheme was involved that was carried out so skillfully. He commented, "This is not the work of an amateur. This is the work of professional criminals." Actually, that is no surprise. Where in the world can you find a criminal organization that carried out 300 kidnappings or confinements per year? Even in the case of North Korea's abduction of Japanese citizens, there have been only 17 cases confirmed by the government, and the total number does not exceed 500 cases, including all suspected cases. On the other hand, you, some of the Christian ministers in Japan, were directly or indirectly involved in 370 cases of kidnapping and confinement of Unification Church members per year during the peak time and more than 4,000 cases in total throughout the years. In terms of the number of kidnapping and confinement cases, you Christian ministers are the group that provided guidance to carry out the highest number of cases of criminal acts in the world. Without your wisdom and know-how accumulated through an enormous number of experiences, it would have been impossible to continue carrying out confinement of Unification Church members for forced conversion for such a long time.

Your liability

As mentioned above, kidnapping and confinement of Unification Church members for the purpose of their forced conversion would have been almost impossible without your direct or indirect guidance, approval, advice and direct persuasion.

We repeat that, in essence, you are the real masterminds of forced conversion of Unification Church members through kidnapping and confinement. That is why if you cease to plan and guide kidnapping and confinement activities, most of the confinement cases will end. It is our sincere hope that that day will become a reality as soon as possible. Our experiences of kidnapping and confinement brought sufferings as painful as death. Because of such sufferings, many victims seriously thought about taking their own life during their confinement and some actually died. We, the victims of kidnapping and confinement, demand that you, the real culprits, directly face the horrible acts you carried out, become aware of your own liability and immediately stop your acts of planning, advising and having members' parents and relatives carry out kidnapping and confinement of the members.

3. Refutation of your justification of kidnapping and confinement

When we requested that you stop kidnapping and confinement led by you, you argued by saying, "That was not kidnapping and confinement but protection and counseling, rescue counseling." We have heard and read your various arguments to justify your acts using justifications (1) to (6) shown below.

(1) There was no other way because parents cried and begged us to help.

(2) They were merely calm discussions, objectively speaking, and it is an overstatement to characterize them as confinement.

(3) It is impossible for an amateur to make members under mind control by a destructive cult leave the organization. The only way to make them do so is to carry out protection and counseling with guidance from an expert counselor.

(4) It is justified because the Unification Church is a heretical cult.

(5) Some extreme measures are justified because the Unification Church is an anti-social criminal group.

(6) Efforts to destroy the heretical Unification Church and rescue many members from it are noble efforts by men and women of faith.

We will deal with these arguments one by one and refute them.

(1) The argument that there was no other way because parents cried and begged you to help

We demand you to stop kidnapping and confinement, some of you claimed that you have nothing to do with these acts because parents are doing them. In reality, we the victims know well that you are the ones who took initiative behind the scenes and gave parents detailed instructions on what to do, because we observed during our confinement that our family members desperately asked you for instructions through notes and telephone calls, and their words and actions changed frequently, according to your instructions.

And when it became impossible to deny your involvement, you say you reluctantly assisted them because parents cried and begged for help. Yet you ignored *us* when we were deprived of freedom during your exit counseling under confinement and we sometimes cried for help out of suffering and indignation. Are you saying that you can justify criminal acts because parents cry and beg you to help?

If that is the case, let us ask you a question: When you decided to become a Christian minister, did you all receive full approval and support from your parents for your decision? Many of you must have chosen to become a Christian minister despite your parents' opposition. That is clear when we read biographies of prominent Christians. In the history of Japan, Christianity is the religion that suffered most over the issue of familial ties. We want to raise this point: Christianity, which historically suffered predicaments caused by familial ties, is now trying to trap Unification Church members and their families using familial ties as an excuse.

In the early years after the founding of the Unification Church, most members devoted themselves completely to the church. So it was natural that parents lamented the plight of their children. Today, however, it is common for Unification Church members to lead a life of faith while working in companies outside the church. Not many parents will voluntarily decide to confine their children even if their children belong to the Unification Church as they observe their children live with them under the same roof or work in outside companies and lead an ordinary life.

Once confinement of a member starts, it takes at least one month, usually two to three months and sometimes more than one year before the member is persuaded to leave the church. If the church member continues to be absent from his job for that long, he will have to quit the company in most cases. In fact, there were many cases in the 1990s in which church members who had a job in an outside company were fired due to prolonged confinement and thus ended up becoming full-time staff of the Unification Church. Many members were kidnapped and confined while they lived with their parents and as a result ended up leaving their parents' houses.

In other words, once kidnapping and confinement are carried out, even when exit counseling against a member is unsuccessful, he will surely get fired from his job. If exit counseling is not successful, his relationship with his parents gets strained and he becomes emotionally distant from them. Before parents and relatives come to decide to carry out forced conversion through kidnapping and confinement, with possible enormous consequences, they are one-sidedly given egregious information, made extremely anxious and psychologically cornered. The gravity of their decision indicates the enormity of psychological pressure placed on them by you.

You typically use former members of the church to tell parents, "Your child is committing a crime," thereby deliberately increasing their anxiety. They then urge them to take action to "rescue," namely kidnap and confine, their child. Considering what you do to parents, your claim that there was no other way because parents cried and begged for help is a lie. There is a journalist who investigated this point

and created a blog.

In reality, parents did not cry and beg for help, but you deliberately created the situation in which parents cry. We wonder if that is the case. If you are really serious about the welfare of our families, don't you think you should cease to make such abnormal instigation as well as carrying out kidnapping and confinement activities?

(2) The argument that they were merely calm discussions, objectively speaking, and it is an overstatement to characterize them as confinement

When we present the opposing argument described in (1), you typically argue that those acts are not kidnapping and confinement but "mere discussion." If that is the case, in spite of your claim that you are experts you are too indifferent to the psychological barriers that exist between you and those who are forcibly confined. Your claim is the same in nature as the claim of an offender in a child abuse case that his action was "mere discipline" of a child.

You apparently feel that even if some coercive force is employed during the initial phase of kidnapping and transporting the target and the subsequent phase of confinement, what takes place after those phases is ordinary discussion. The reality is totally different from the perspective of those who were kidnapped and confined. The physical coercion imposed on us in the initial confinement phase is of course violence. But even if we were then placed in a quiet space, that space always exists under the control of violence called forcible confinement. Even when those confined laugh and joke, their mind is always partially preoccupied with the extremely serious question of how they can quickly get freed from the confinement.

That was true when we engaged in conversations with you in the apartment used for our confinement. In the beginning, we protested your unreasonable method of persuasion, criticized your arguments and questioned you. But as we realized those actions would not give us freedom, we ceased refuting or questioning what you said even though we found something clearly wrong with your opinions and wanted to question you. Therefore, we ended up asking only those questions that pleased you.

In the place of our confinement, you often told us, "Tell me what you are thinking. You can express what you want to say." But your words were so insulting. We would never be freed unless we acted in a way that pleased you, so how could we tell you honestly what we thought? Because of this, all conversations were degraded. That is because we wanted to gain freedom as early as possible by gaining favor with you.

Furthermore, you misunderstand the parents, family and relatives of a member who implemented kidnapping and confinement. After committing a criminal act of kidnapping and confinement for the first time and being placed in the situation where they can neither consult outsiders nor turn back, the only one the family can rely on during the confinement of a member is you, who are well equipped with the techniques to avoid incrimination. Furthermore, since you successfully convinced them that you are rare experts who are capable of persuading Unification Church members to leave the church, parents are filled with anxiety that you might be upset and withdraw from the commitment to persuade their children, and thus they behave as if they completely trust you even though they may have some complaints against you.

In other words, during confinement, you are facing only confined Unification Church members (who are afraid to resist and thus upset you and prolong their confinement) and their families (who are totally dependent on you, whom they consider exit counseling experts, and are thus afraid of upsetting you).

You sometimes bring former church members whom you made leave the church through exit counseling to the place of confinement and have them support the choice of leaving the church, like a background chorus. Those former members are also people who cannot honestly express their complaints against you.

Unless they clearly state their will to leave the church and show their gratitude to you for causing them to leave the church, you don't trust that they actually have left the church and release them from your control. Therefore, they don't express grievances against you.

Furthermore, those members who survived confinement without abandoning their faith and successfully escaped and returned to the Unification Church want to avoid meeting you ever again because they consider you as dreadful professionals who specialize in kidnapping and confinement. Thus, you never have had a chance to hear accusations from them.

Accordingly, you have had little chance to ever hear about the deadly suffering, indignation and stomach-churning anger experienced by victims of kidnapping and confinement. You have had families of church members and family association members carry out risky work that can potentially cause legal problems later on. That is why you seldom feel guilty, while you pull the strings behind these criminal acts. As a result, you have not been able to reflect upon your own actions and you have been blind to the gravity of the problems you have been causing. We cannot but think in this way about your behavior. We hope you come to realize the seriousness of the damage that kidnapping and confinement activities are causing victims and their families as you read this letter.

(3) The argument that it is impossible for an amateur to make members under mind control by a destructive cult leave the organization; the only way to make them do so is to carry out protection and counseling with guidance from an expert counselor

Before discussing whether this argument is correct, we should confirm that the underlying premise of this argument is the claim that the Unification Church is a destructive cult and thus it is absolutely good to make members quit the church. Your perception about the Unification Church probably makes it possible for you to casually put forward such a premise. We want to ask you if you approve kidnapping and confinement against members of any religious organization that is unpopular in society by labeling it negatively as a destructive cult.

You say, "It is impossible for an amateur to make members leave the church. The only way to make them do so is to carry out protection and counseling with guidance from an expert counselor." Certainly, an attempt to confine members will not be a smooth one without guidance from experienced professionals like you. That was explained earlier. However, there are many cases in which members have left the church without kidnapping and confinement. There are countless numbers of people who do not join the church after attending a Unification Church seminar, and many leave the church without undergoing confinement after joining the church. On the other hand, those who have strong faith do not easily quit in spite of confinement. Such individual differences can be found in any religious organization, and it is by no means a unique phenomenon for the Unification Church. There are surprisingly many Unification Church members who did not quit the church even when they were subjected to counseling by professional exit counselors under prolonged confinement after kidnapping. In other words, it is not a fact that "confinement and exit counseling are the only ways to rescue members from the Unification Church."

If you still want to engage in activities to make Unification Church members quit the church in the name of counseling, you should engage in free discussions and persuasion under mutual agreement. You should also publicly disclose the factual contents of the counseling. We emphasize that these are legitimate ways.

(4) The argument that it is justified because the Unification Church is a heretical cult

In argument (3), you justify so-called exit counseling by arguing that the Unification Church is a cult. Originally, Christians labeled the Unification Church a cult for the purpose of discriminating against

heresy, and the word *cult* was used in a contemptuous way although the word's meaning is ambiguous. In past history, there have been many who tried to destroy Christian heresy with the same mindset as yours. They were so-called inquisitors. Inquisitors initially put heresy on trial, but their acts escalated and they started a witch hunt. They believed that it was the right thing to do and implemented it at that time. But in retrospect, it was an egregious mistake.

First, it was arrogant for humans to establish criteria to decide what is a correct faith and what is erroneous faith. You know that there are many noteworthy contents that were initially set aside as heresy. Even if we assume that the criteria are correct ones and the inquisitors' acts were aiming at saving heretics, if inquisitors could not convert heretics after their efforts they should have given up on their efforts at that point. Otherwise, they should have used peaceful methods to persuade those believers to return to what they claim to be orthodox Christian faith. However, they used a nation's sovereign power and force to forcibly convert them and executed those heretics after giving up on converting them. This later on led to a witch hunt and many cruel killings.

Don't you think that is very similar to your attitude toward the Unification Church? It is not so hard to understand your feeling that you want to save Unification Church members based on your belief that the Unification Church faith is wrong. If that is the case, you should stick to peaceful means to persuade the members. No matter how long it may take and even if many of your attempts end in failure, if you continue relating to Unification Church members in a peaceful way, some Unification Church members who are struggling might come to you for consultation voluntarily. But you did not choose such a peaceful method. When you felt peaceful efforts of persuasion were not successful, you resorted to violent methods of kidnapping and confinement. When you were faced with difficulty in guiding the members to what you believed to be the right faith, you became obsessed with destroying Unification Church faith. You destroy a precious treasure called faith that is kept in the depth of one's soul. We are, of course, aware that there are Unification Church members who have been converted to Christianity after being persuaded by you, but the number of those is not so large. After all, many of them merely lost their Unification Church faith. In other words, you gave up on your efforts to convert those whom you believed to be heretics and instead destroyed their souls. There are those who are strong-minded enough to be able to digest such an experience, but as you know there are also many who suffer serious aftereffects of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

(5) The argument that some extreme measures are justified because the Unification Church is an anti-social criminal group

If you really believe that the Unification Church is a criminal group, you should hand over kidnapped Unification Church members to the police or recommend that they surrender to the police. Especially when kidnapped members accepted your counseling and decided to abandon the Unification Church faith and leave the church, you should recommend that they voluntarily surrender to the police. However, while claiming that the Unification Church is a criminal group and thus justifying protection and counseling (kidnapping and confinement) of Unification Church members, you neither handed over to the police Unification Church members who decided to leave the church nor recommended that they voluntarily surrender to the police. If you argue that those Unification Church members who have just decided to quit are not fully aware of the criminal nature of the Unification Church, you should at least encourage former Unification Church members in your own congregation to surrender to the police. If they are criminally punished as the result of such actions, it would have meant that they proved the criminal nature of the Unification Church at the risk of their own wellbeing.

Those of you who are Christian ministers who argue that the Unification Church is a criminal group are yourselves a criminal group that has continued violating Penal Code Article 220 that prohibits arrests and confinements. Since you yourselves are aware that those are criminal acts, you have parents, families,

relatives of members and family association carry out those acts, and you try to hide behind them.

If you argue that those acts you are educating and guiding others to carry out are rescue counseling and not criminal acts in violation of the Penal Code, you should put yourselves in the front line and participate in the rescue of Unification Church members. But you would never do that. We believe that your crafty behavior is proof of the criminal nature of those acts. Don't you think so? If you feel the pangs of conscience even a little bit, why don't you stop such exit counseling activities through kidnapping and confinement?

(6) The argument that efforts to destroy the heretical Unification Church and rescue many members from it are noble efforts of men and women of faith

In the Japanese Christian community, it is accepted that rescuing people from heresy is a noble act for believers, and those Christian ministers who are engaged in exit counseling seem to be left alone, without open discussions. Even if we assume your argument is right and that Rev. Sun Myung Moon is a false Christ and the Unification Church is a heresy and an anti-social religious organization, and if the Unification Church has been losing the trust of many people due to its anti-social activities and is facing its doom, isn't Christianity also facing doom because of your kidnapping and confinement activities that are criminal and anti-social and are damaging the image of all of Christianity?

Even if the Unification Church is evil, you should not become evil in making Unification Church members leave the church. Don't you think so? If you are saying that since the Unification Church is evil you can also become evil, when is the justice and love of Christ realized? Do you think such methods can really save victims of kidnapping and confinement and their families? What you have been doing is not saving Unification Church members and their families. It rather ended up staining the image of your Christian churches.

4. We demand that you immediately cease kidnapping and confinement, confess the truth about your past acts of kidnapping and confinement and apologize

This turned out to be a lengthy statement, but lastly we want you to consider the following.

Does the Lord Jesus Christ, whom you love, praise and feel joy as he looks at your actions of kidnapping and confinement of Unification Church members against their will, depriving them of freedom and forcibly converting them under the pretext of rescuing heretics? We want you to think about this carefully.

You value the Bible as the source of your life, but are there scriptures in the Bible that support or provide grounds for the coercive exit counseling methods you have thus far carried out? If that is the case, please show us those scriptures.

If you insist that you have behaved with pride as Christians, please do not hide what you have done in a series of events that you called "protection and counseling" and we called "kidnapping and confinement" any longer.

We the victims started frank discussions about the ideal parent-child relationship, among other issues, in order to promote mutual understanding and restoration of trust among families to eliminate kidnapping and confinement against Unification Church members in Japan as soon as possible. We the victims intend to double our efforts to improve our relationship with our families from now on. We the victims of kidnapping and confinement hereby demand that you who are the actual masterminds of those acts immediately stop coercive counseling by kidnapping and confinement, refrain from such acts in the

future, confess the truth about what you have done and offer apology.

July 13, 2011

Members and victims

The Japanese Victims' Association Against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion