

Hiroshima: Latest victim of kidnapping and confinement - Miho Matsushita

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Forum for Religious Freedom Europe



Hiroshima/Vienna, April 2013 - FOREF Europe: **According to Mr. Toshiyuki Honda's report, just 10 days ago another young woman has been kidnapped and confined in Japan. The Brussels based human rights organisation Human Rights Without Frontiers has confirmed, that over 80% of the (more than 4000) victims of religious kidnappings in Japan during the last 40 years are woman. This hideous crimes are generally committed by family members or close relatives with the aid of professional faith-breakers. Police has repeatedly turned a blind eye to this kidnappings by brushing it off as "family matter" in spite of the fact that almost all victims are already more than 20 years old. Even though the perpetrators are (in the UN-jargon) "non-state actors" the state has the clear responsibility to protect its citizens. Miho Matsushita, a young woman from Hiroshima seems to be the latest victim.**

The following report gives revealing insight into the Police and Judicial authorities impunity and the utter powerlessness of Mr. Shinichiro Yanagi, the section head of the Civil Liberties Bureau:

Name: Miho Matsushita
Gender: Female
DOB: May 10, 1986 (26 years old)
Affiliation: Unification Church - Hiroshima Church
Occupation: Caregiver
Marital Status: Engaged (with a Japanese man)
Date of occurrence: March 29, 2013
Personal history

2005: She graduated from high school. (18)
2005: She started job as a caregiver. (18)
2007: She was introduced to the Unification Church and started learning. (22)
2008: She started a communal life with other followers of the Unification Church . (24)
2012: She was put under house arrest by her parents from January 1 to 7.
2013: She participated in the Blessing Marriage Ceremony of the Unification Church .
2013: March 28: She visited her parents' home.
2013: March 29: She lost contact with the church.

After she was put under house arrest for 7 days by her parents in 2012, her parents visited the Unification Church in Hiroshima and her living place. Since that time, she visited her parents' home once a month in order to keep good relationship with them.

The last contact with her was 8:02 PM on March 28.

Since she was supposed to work as a caregiver at Harada Hospital on March 30, she should have returned by the night of March 29 but she did not.

When a church staff called the hospital, the hospital staff told him that they got a phone call from her mother saying **"My daughter needs some time off from work."**

The Unification Church staff visited her parents' house (Iwakuni City, Yamaguchi Prefecture) on 8:00PM, March 30, but the house was empty and found the lights to be out. She had a "CoCo-Secom" which is a GPS device to locate a person. The data indicates that she is in her parents' house, but actually nobody was there.

Since there was some evidence that her elder brother had a contact with an anti-Unification Church minister named "Murata," the church staff visited the minister and asked about her on 8:30 PM of March 30. He denied his involvement with this case.

On April 1st, the church staff will visit the police and Civil Liberties Bureau's office in Yamaguchi Prefecture.

Report from the Unification Church Staff who visited the Police and Civil Liberties Bureau's office

On April 1st, four Unification Church staff visited the Police Station of Iwakuni City. Names of these staff are Mr. Honda

(in charge of legal affairs), Ms. Tamura, Mr. Ide and Ms. Mio (these three are from youth department to which Ms. Miho Matsushita belongs)

In the Police Station, Mr. Imai of Community Safety Division responded to us.

We informed basic facts about Ms. Matsushita's situation. Since Ms. Matsnaga wrote a note on her experience after she was put under house arrest for 7 days in January of last year, we show a copy of the note to the police.

We also prepared the following materials: Mr. Goto's photo taken 3 days after his release, materials to explain that Mr. Goto's criminal complaint was dismissed, statement of Mr. Nakai, the former chairman of the National Public Safety Commission, at a Diet session, statement of Ms. Chiba, the former Minister of Justice, at the same Diet session, history of kidnapping and confinement of 4300 members of the Unification Church, fact-finding tours on this issue from oversea, report by Human Rights Without Frontiers, and photos of our demonstration in Japan.

When we were talking with Mr. Imai, his senior officer intervened several times and called him to a backroom.

Finally Mr. Imai said, ***"If we can contact her parents, we will confirm her will and get back to you. However, an application to search for a missing person can be submitted only by family members or someone asked by the family members. If this is not the case, we cannot really investigate on it."*** Our conversation took about 25 minutes and we recorded it.

On the same day, we visited the Regional Legal Affairs Bureau in the government office complex of Yamaguchi Prefecture and met Mr. Shinichiro Yanagi, section head of the Civil Liberties Bureau.

We explained basically the same thing to him as we did to the Police Station of Iwakuni City.

He said, ***"Even parents should not confine their child. According to the situation we can inform to the police."*** We explained him that we already did so; then he just listened to us. We asked him to report on this matter to his senior officer.

It seems that Civil Liberties Bureau does not have power or authority to check the police. We could just inform them that kidnapping and confinement is still happening.

Written by Mr. Toshiyuki Honda of the Hiroshima Unification Church on April 2

Report on the second visit to the Police and Civil Liberties Bureau's office

On April 9, Tuesday, Mr. Satoshi Ohshita (29), fiancé of Ms. Miho Matsushita visited the Iwakuni Police Station together with Mr. Honda, Ms. Tamura and Ms. Mio (from Hiroshima Unification Church to which Ms. Miho Matsushita belongs).

In the Police Station, Mr. Imai, the same person as last time, responded to us.

We show the same note written by Ms. Matsushita once again and Ms. Tamura said to the police, ***"She might suffer a PTSD. She often cried and suffered from a stomach ulcer 6 month after the last confinement."***

We informed Mr. Imai the name of company Ms. Matsushita's elder brother is currently working for.

Her fiancé, Mr. Ohshita told the police that he was deeply concerned for her. He showed her letter to him to prove that they are engaged and love each other. Mr. Imai took a photo copy of the letter. Mr. Ohshita gave the Japanese translation of the **report on abduction issue by Human Right without Frontiers** to the police.*

The policeman Mr. Imai said that he dealt with a similar case in the past and made research on it. He said, ***"Wedding ceremony is just a party and engagement is established only if two families concerned express their consent."*** Mr. Honda refuted, ***"Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes"*** (Japanese Constitution Article 24), but Mr. Imai did not get the message.

However, Mr. Imai was more compassionate than the last time and said that he will consider the possibility of simultaneous raids.

On the same day, we visited the Regional Legal Affairs Bureau in the government office complex of Yamaguchi Prefecture and met Mr. Yanagi of the Civil Liberties Bureau again. We made a five-minute PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Ohshita was introduced as Ms. Matsushita's fiancé. Mr. Yanagi kept the material he received at the time of last visit. He listened to us carefully and studied about this issue.

On April 10, Wednesday, Mr. Honda called the Iwakuni Police Station and Mr. Imai responded. He replied on the phone, ***"I did not call Ms. Matsushita's elder brother. I reported the case to my senior. I am waiting for their decision. If a simultaneous raid was conducted, we will ask you cooperation."*** Although we informed the name of company Ms. Matsushita's elder brother is currently working for on April 9, Mr. Imai asked the telephone number of the company to Mr. Honda. It does not look as if he is motivated to seriously pursue the matter.

(Written by Mr. Toshiyuki Honda of the Hiroshima Unification Church on April 11)

IF YOU WANT TO PROTEST:

Yamaguchi Prefectural Police Headquarters

Noriaki Nakamura, prefectural police chief

Fax number: +81-83-925-8050

* The HRWF- Report is available at <http://www.hrwf.org>

See also:

JAPAN: Severe Human Rights Abuses – Open Letter to the Prime Minister: <http://foref-europe.org/2013/03/11/japan-open-letter-from-human-rights-organizations-and-ngos-to-the-prime-minister-members-of-parliament-the-minister-of-justice-prosecutor-and-the-national-police-agency/>

BACKGROUND

Human Rights Without Frontiers has just published its report “Japan: Abductions and deprivation of freedom for the purpose of de-conversion”. In the last 40 years, about 4000 members of the Unification Church as well as members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, were kidnapped, confined and submitted to brainwashing for days, weeks, months and sometimes years in total impunity to force them to recant their faith. In the year 2011 Human Rights Without Frontiers carried out an independent investigation in Tokyo and in Seoul. The report was published in Japanese and now in English. It is used as a reference for current campaigns in Japan, UN, United States and academic conferences so that an end can be put to this practice and the Japanese authorities prosecute those who perpetrate such illegal activities.

PRESS RELEASE and LINKS:**PRESS RELEASE****HRWF Report (for download)**

Japan: Abduction and Deprivation of Freedom for the Purpose of Religious De-Conversion (in English)
<http://www.hrwf.net/images/reports/2012/1231%20report%20final%20eng.pdf>

HRWF Report (order from Amazon)

Japan: Abduction and Deprivation of Freedom for the Purpose of Religious De-Conversion (in English):
http://www.amazon.com/Abduction-Deprivation-Freedom-Religious--conversion/dp/147763911X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352069446&sr=1-1&keywords=Japan%3A+Abduction+and+Deprivation+of+Freedom+for+the+Purpose+of+Religious+De-Conversion+%28in+English%29

Human Rights Without Frontiers official Website: <http://www.hrwf.net/>

International Coalition for Religious Freedom (ICRF)

Research Documents on Faith-breaking in Japan:

http://www.religiousfreedom.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=30

Japanese Victims Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion: kidnapping.jp/en/

Forum for Religious Freedom (FOREF Europe): www.foref-europe.org (blog in English)