

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Exhibition Shows Shocking Faith-Breaking in Japan

Knut Holdhus
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A panel exhibition raising awareness about [abduction and confinement](#) victims - March 19, 2025, Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan



Behind closed doors: The harrowing reality of thousands of shocking faith-breaking cases in Japan. Exhibition held.

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Panel Exhibition in Yokohama Highlights Abduction and Confinement Victims, Calls for Reconciliation

by the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

A panel exhibition shedding light on the experiences of [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU, formerly the [Unification Church](#)) followers who were allegedly [abducted and confined](#) to force them to renounce their faith is being held in Yokohama from 19th to 20th March 2025.



Protesting the coercive faith-breaking business in Japan. Toru Goto (second from the right, front row) and others from the [National Association of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion Victims](#) participating in a protest march, February 10, 2025, Sugunami Ward, Tokyo

The exhibition explains how, under the guidance of so-called "faith-breakers" (professional deprogrammers), parents of believers and Christian pastors have carried out abduction and coercive faith-breaking. The exhibition claims that these individuals were confined for extended periods, subjected to physical and psychological abuse, and coerced into renouncing their faith, violating their fundamental human rights as guaranteed by the Constitution.

A section of the exhibition, occupying about one-third of the space, introduces the activities of Ame no Yachimata no Kai (Heaven's Eight Crossroads Association) [See editor's note below], a group working to restore parent-child relationships that were severed due to abduction and confinement.

Two women in their twenties who attended the exhibition commented,

"We had heard about this issue before, but listening to the detailed explanations today was truly heartbreaking."

They emphasized the importance of raising awareness through lawsuits and other means but also noted,

"Legal action alone won't resolve the conflict with opposing parents and pastors. Efforts like those of Ame no Yachimata no Kai [See editor's note below], which seek [resolution through reconciliation](#), are also necessary."



Toru Goto, here at the [official launch 10th February 2025](#), of his book "Deadly Struggle: Surviving 4,536 Days of Confinement"

The exhibition is organized by the Yokohama Citizens' Association for the Protection of Freedom of Religion and Fundamental Human Rights, a group consisting of [Family Federation](#) followers. On 20th March, Toru Goto, a [Family Federation](#) member who was allegedly confined and abused for [12 years and five months](#), is scheduled to give a lecture.

[Editor's note: The Japanese expression Yachimata (八衢) refers to a crossroads or intersection where multiple paths converge. It is often used in a metaphorical sense to symbolize choices, encounters, or the meeting of different fates.

In mythology and classical literature, 八衢 (Yachimata) can also evoke a mystical or sacred space where important decisions or transformations occur. It appears in the name of the deity Ame no Yachihoko (天の八衢), associated with crossroads and divine encounters in Japanese folklore.

As for the above-mentioned association Ame no Yachimata no Kai (天の八衢の会), the term symbolizes a place for reconciliation, dialogue, and resolution - a meeting point where estranged families can reconnect.]

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Pastor's Confession: "I Didn't Want To Confine Them"

• March 3, 2025 • Knut Holdhus



Tokyo symposium hears pastor's confession and how the many victims of coercive faith-breaking may restore the broken bonds to abusive parents and pastors turned deprogrammers



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

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A Believer Gives a Lecture on Efforts to Repair Parent-Child Relationships Broken by Abduction and Confinement

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“I Didn't Want to Confine Them” – A Pastor's Confession

by Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

A



Young believer being abducted in order to have his faith broken. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, 10th August 2024.

A [symposium](#) discussing the issue of [abduction and confinement](#) of believers of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the Unification Church) was held on 2nd March 2025 in North Tokyo. Ōkami Sarutahiko (猿田彦大神), co-representative of the “Heaven’s Eight Paths Association” (天の八衢の会), which works to restore parent-child relationships torn apart by such incidents, delivered a lecture stating,

“To resolve the issue of [abduction and confinement](#), we must support not only the parents but also the pastors involved.”

Having been a victim of [abduction and confinement](#) three times, Sarutahiko explained the mindset of his mother, who carried out the act:

“She felt something was wrong when she was told to do it, but she stopped thinking. She felt she had no choice but to go through with it.”

Following his experiences, Sarutahiko found that his relationship with his parents had been severely damaged. He engaged in prolonged conversations to rebuild their bond, believing that

“restoring parent-child relationships is impossible without understanding the feelings of the parents who confined their children.”

During his lecture, Sarutahiko also shared an episode about the late Pastor Keiko Kawasaki (川崎経子) of Tanimura Church, *United Church of Christ* in Japan. Kawasaki had been involved in coercively breaking the faith of [Family Federation](#) believers for many years. However, Sarutahiko began engaging with her, believing that “rather than confrontation, dialogue and understanding were necessary.”

One day, Kawasaki tearfully confessed to him,

“I never actually wanted to confine anyone. I got involved because I was told it was a bad organization.”

Later, as their trust deepened, Sarutahiko asked if she would help in restoring parent-child relationships. She responded, “I would gladly do so.”



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Toru Goto (the most known faith-breaking victim, forcibly detained for more than 12 years, here second from the right, front row) and others from the [National Association of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion Victims](#) participating in a protest march, 10th February 2025, Suginami Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

Regarding the issue of [abduction and confinement](#), Sarutahiko pointed out that both parents and pastors involved in coercive faith-breaking [See [editor's note below](#)] likely acted based on preconceived notions that "[the Family Federation is evil](#)," formed from secondhand information from third parties. As a result, they may have felt compelled to take action.

Featured image above: The [symposium](#) venue was packed with attendees – 2nd March 2025, Kita Ward, Tokyo Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

[Editor's note: **Coercive faith-breaking** in Japan refers to the practice of coercively attempting to separate individuals from their religious affiliations or beliefs, typically through intervention by family members, professional faith-breakers (deprogrammers) or organizations hostile to new religious movements (NRMs). This phenomenon often targets members of such movements, e.g. relatively large faiths like the [Family Federation](#) or Jehovah's Witnesses, but also smaller groups like Happy Science (Kōfuku no Kagaku) and other newer religious movements. However, also Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist-based lay organization with more than 8 million Japanese members, and affiliated with Nichiren Buddhism, has occasionally been subject to faith-breaking attempts.

The practice gained attention in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Parents or concerned family members often hired faith-breakers who taught them how to abduct and forcibly detain believers. Almost all such cases involved confining the individual believer and cutting him or her off from the religious community. During the confinement, the believer was subjected to intense questioning or indoctrination designed to break his or her faith. The aim was to "rescue" the person from what the family often had been tricked by faith-breakers or lawyers to regard as harmful influence from the religious organization.

Critics of forced de-conversion argue that it violates fundamental human rights, including freedom of thought, religion, and association. Reports of psychological trauma and accusations of unlawful detention have sparked debates over its ethical and legal implications. In response, some religious groups, particularly NRMs, have lobbied for greater protections against such practices.

Japanese courts have been inconsistent in addressing cases of coercive faith-breaking. While some verdicts have condemned the practice as illegal detention, others have been more lenient, citing family concerns about "mental health" or alleged "exploitation" as mitigating factors.]

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