

# Kidnapping, confinement and forced conversion a modern-day 'Holocaust'!



Yonemoto Kazuhiro

## Do you know about kidnapping, confinement and forced conversion?

Picture the following scene: A group of some 20 men carrying iron pipes or stun guns abruptly stormed into a church and assaulted church members there in the course of kidnapping a female church member. This member was detained for more than 15 months in order to break her faith. This incident should definitely cause a major social uproar! Such acts not only amount to crimes according to Penal Laws such as those related to arrest or confinement (Article 220) and extortion (Article 223) but directly violate Japan's constitutional principles related to basic human rights (Article 11) and freedom of faith (Article 20).

### PERTINENT LAWS AND REGULATIONS

#### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 9:**

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

#### **Article 11, Japanese Constitution:**

The people shall not be prevented from enjoying any of the fundamental human rights. These fundamental human rights guaranteed to the people by this Constitution shall be conferred upon the people of this and future generations as eternal and inviolate rights.

#### **Article 20, Japanese Constitution:**

Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all.

#### **Article 220, Japanese Penal Code (arrests and confinement)**

Anyone who would arrest or confine other individuals unlawfully shall be subject to imprisonment for the period of more than three months and not exceeding seven years.

#### **Article 223, Japanese Penal Code (extortion)**

A person who, by intimidating another through a threat to another's life, body, freedom, reputation or property or by use of assault, causes the other to perform an act which the other person has no obligation to perform, or hinders the other from exercising his or her rights, shall be punished by imprisonment with work for not more than 3 years.

In Japan, because such criminal acts were committed with the direct involvement of the victims' own parents and kin, the perpetrators were not restrained at all. Believe it or not, in the past 43 years, roughly 4,300 followers of the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, or the Unification Church (UC) have been subjected to this or similar criminal practices.

The practices of kidnapping, confinement and forced conversion involve kidnapping people by violent, forcible or deceitful means, cutting off communications with the outside world while attempting to break their faith and confin-

ing them until they renounce their beliefs.

Freedom of faith, the universal value constituting the bedrock of democracy, is protected widely in the world as the most vital human right. Even parents are not entitled to deprive their adult children of the freedom to choose their own religion. Moreover, if it involves physical confinement, it would definitely amount to a criminal act.

However, religious persecution against Unification Church members has continued to this day, to a degree reminiscent of the cruel oppression of Christians in medieval Japan!



**A young woman confined against her will; the note beside her reads, "Help me!"**

## Tragic cases: 12-year confinement, rape, suicide, etc.

The photographs in this pamphlet show Mr. Toru Goto, the head of our association (The Japanese Victim's Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion), immediately after his release from kidnapping and confinement, which was carried out by his own family members. He was held for 12 years and 5 months! Mr. Goto was detained in a prison-like room and subjected to daily pressure to renounce his faith with invective and assault and battery—hardly humane living conditions. He refused to eat in protest against these human rights violations. After he stopped the fasting, his relatives retaliated by refusing to provide him with even meager rations of food. Owing to extreme malnutrition, he had to undergo prolonged hospitalization following his release. During his detention, he was bombarded with such relentless rebukes and abuses that he sometimes felt as if he wanted to die.

And his case was not an isolated one! A faith breaker tried to convince a pregnant mother not only to give up her faith but to abort her unborn baby because the child was conceived in a Unification Church marriage. She testifies that the aftereffects of the extreme fear caused by the threat remain with her and her child even 10 years later.

A young man, in an escape attempt from a 6<sup>th</sup>-floor apartment where he was detained, fell to the ground during a scuffle with his family on the balcony and suffered a near-fatal injury. To this day, he has not recovered his memory. A woman was raped by a professional deprogrammer during her detention. Her father, who had hired the depro-



**Takashi Miyamura**  
Professional faith-breaker



**Tadaharu Takayama**  
Christian minister



**Mamoru Takazawa**  
Christian minister

grammer and subsequently came to learn of the rape of his daughter, regretted what he had initiated so deeply that he eventually killed himself. A 27-year-old Japanese wife who was happily married to her Korean husband was kidnapped during a homecoming visit to Japan. In deepest despair, she committed suicide in the bathroom of the apartment-‘prison’ where she was detained.

A doctor, treating a woman for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after her confinement, noticed that her deep resentment toward her parents was something similar to anger against a rapist. She stated, "I can hardly forget what my family did to me. I wish to remove my name from my family registry."<sup>1</sup> (*Japanese Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, October 2000).

Another woman, one who left the Unification Church as the result of forced conversion, requires daily medication to cope with the aftereffects of her kidnapping ordeal even a decade after her confinement.

People opposed to the Unification Church sometimes declare, "Once you become a Unification Church member, your whole family will suffer." In reality, it is the kidnapping and confinement carried out by misguided relatives that has destroyed family bonds, with disastrous consequences.

1 A government record of Japanese citizens. Her statement is tantamount to her saying she wishes she could ‘divorce’ her parents.

## A brief history of forced conversion through kidnapping and confinement

The first incident of kidnapping and confinement, perpetrated by Christian Pastor Satoshi Moriyama, occurred in 1966. He dared to commit this act out of his conviction as an evangelical minister, based on his literal interpretations of the Bible, that the "Unification Church is heretical."

In July 1967, parents of some Unification Church members became so concerned about news reports such as '[UC's] Campus Activities Make Parents Weep!' in the *Asahi Daily*, that they sought Pastor Moriyama's guidance. Incidents of confinement then increased dramatically.

In April 1978, when the Japanese Communist Party failed to win the Kyoto gubernatorial election due to the educational campaign of the Federation for Victory Over Communism (FVOC), an affiliate of the Unification Church, then-party chairman Kenji Miyamoto publicly pledged to annihilate the Uni-

fication Church and the VOC movement.

In the 1980s, the leftist camp grew so apprehensive about possible enactment of anti-espionage legislation promoted by the FVOC, among others, that they became determined to annihilate the Unification Church and the FVOC by campaigning against what they termed 'spiritual sales practice.'<sup>1</sup>

Subsequently, the anti-UC Christian ministers began collaborating with left-leaning lawyers, who managed to launch a series of court cases using former UC members as plaintiffs. In this way, a strong network was forged to extract huge sums of money from the Unification Church. If the ministers succeeded in the deprogramming, they would receive substantial rewards from parents, while the lawyers could garner huge legal fees through the court cases.

Because the police did not clamp down on the cruel forced conversion practices, malicious incidents continued in the latter half of 1990s, including an assault on the local Unification Church in Tottori Prefecture (the incident described in the opening sentence) and street kidnappings in broad daylight. When the victims began winning some lawsuits against the Christian ministers who were engaged in forced conversion activities in the early 2000s, the number of incidents decreased but has not disappeared altogether.



**In a reenactment photographed by the police, Mrs. Hiroko Choi demonstrates how she unsuccessfully tried to prevent her relatives from kidnapping her.**

<sup>1</sup> "Sales in which the salesperson speaks of the customer obtaining a spiritual benefit.

## How was "deprogramming" stopped in America?

In the United States, "deprogramming" incidents were common occurrences in 1970s and 1980s. One of their main instigators, Ted Patrick, initiated the practice of forcibly confining followers of new religious movements that he considered 'cults.' At first he was able to do this with impunity. Because his methods were violent, however, he was eventually sentenced to a one-year prison term in Denver, Colorado, in June 1974. Later, as he continued to practice "deprogramming" activities while on parole, he received a total of seven guilty verdicts by 1985. Several other "deprogrammers" also faced prison terms and severe civil penalties.

Thus, “deprogramming” in the United States peaked in 1976 and was terminated toward the end of the 1980s. An “anti-cult” organization that systematically cooperated in these practices, the Cult Awareness Network, or CAN, went into bankruptcy in 1996 when it was ordered to pay approximately one million US dollars in a civil suit relating to a failed “deprogramming” attempt. Accordingly, primarily thanks to legal challenges “deprogramming” was halted in America!

## Reports by the U.S. State Department

The U.S. State Department has issued its International Religious Freedom Report every year since 1999. In the Japan section of its 1999 edition, it said, “Members of the Unification Church have alleged that police do not act in response to allegations of forced deprogramming of church members. They also claim that police do not enforce the laws against kidnapping when the victim is held by family members, asserting that Unification Church members are subjected to prolonged arbitrary detention by individuals, who are not charged by police.”

Since then, the State Department has raised the issue every year except 2007. Its 2004 edition said, “[The Unification Church] remained concerned, however, by the tendency of officials to judge kidnapping and deprogramming by victim’s family members and deprogrammers as a family matter.”

In its 2008 and 2009 editions, Mr. Goto’s case was mentioned in the section on “restrictions on religious freedom” in Japan. In the 2009 edition, the report said, “The Unification Church reports that on February

10, 2008, an adult member of the Church who had been held against his will by his family members for over 12 years was released and went to Unification Church headquarters. The Unification Church alleges no one has yet been charged and an investigation has not been conducted ....”

The inclusion of our views indicates that America, the land of freedom of faith, is concerned about the issue of abduction, confinement and forcible deprogramming in Japan.



**A crowbar, stun gun and chain like those used in the attack on members in the Tottori church, during which Mrs. Hiroko Choi was kidnapped**

## **We demand strict and fair legal proceedings in Japan!**

The reason the forced conversion activities have not been halted in Japan is nothing other than their lukewarm handling by law-enforcement agencies. This has so far allowed criminals involved in the illegal confinement of adult citizens of Japan to justify their actions as "a matter between parents and their child!"

However, a former Director General of the National Police Agency, Setsuo Tanaka, on April 20, 2000, firmly stated the following in a Diet session:

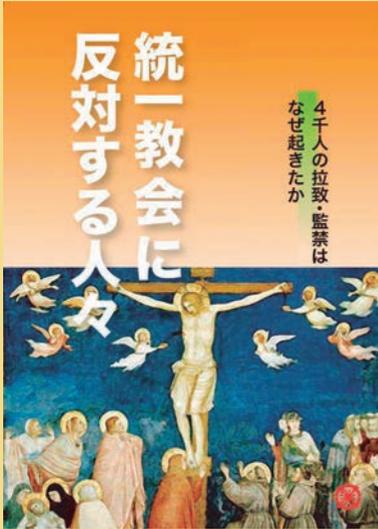
"Supposing a criminal act is committed by the victim's parents or any other relative, it should be dealt with strictly and fairly in the light of laws and evidence regardless of their relationship."

Nonetheless, the police still tend to look the other way in these cases. Even when the victims have filed criminal charges, the police have never arrested any individual, nor have prosecutors taken concrete action to prosecute suspects.

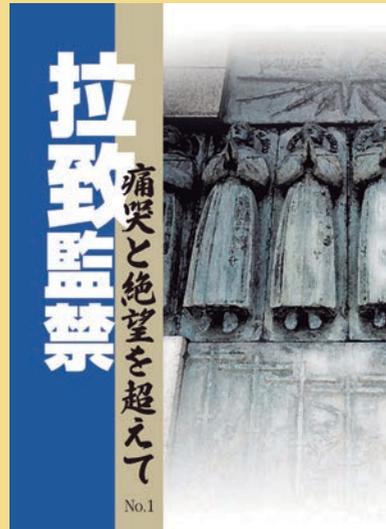
If the legal authority had spared no effort in protecting freedom of faith in accordance with the laws and in restricting those who have violated it, such horrible incidents as Mr. Goto's—namely confinement spanning 12 years and five months—could have been avoided!

### **THE JAPANESE VICTIM'S ASSOCIATION AGAINST RELIGIOUS KIDNAPPING AND FORCED CONVERSION CALLS FOR THE FOLLOWING:**

- 1. The Japanese government must guarantee a social environment in which Unification Church members can practice their faith, preach the church's teachings safely and never be victimized by kidnapping or confinement on the grounds of religious discrimination or prejudice.**
- 2. If any member of the Unification Church becomes a victim of kidnapping and confinement, the Japanese government must immediately intervene and rescue the victim.**
- 3. The Japanese police must promptly search for anyone who has been kidnapped or confined and bring the victim to a safe place where the person may freely decide whom he or she chooses to associate with.**
- 4. The Japanese police must investigate all those who have been involved in past cases of kidnapping and confinement in order to eliminate such incidents from this country once and for all.**



*Those Who Oppose the Unification Church*



*Abduction and Confinement: Beyond Despair and Hopelessness*



*Abduction and Confinement: What Were the Police Doing about It?*



*Religious Freedom Has Been Crushed Underfoot*