

Japanese Court: Unification Church members kidnapped and forced to convert in Japan constitutes human rights violations, compensations must be paid

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The Tokyo High Court ruled in favor of the victims' association

A ruling awarding large compensations to Unification Church members abducted and confined at home by family members for long periods of time and forced to convert to another religion was made. The ruling pointed out that illegally forcing someone to convert to another religion under the pretext of 'family conversation' goes against the freedom of religion.

According to a statement released on the 14th by the "Nationwide Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement and Forced Conversion", the Tokyo High Court ruled on the 13th in favor of the association's representative, Mr. Toru Goto (後藤徹, 51). The plaintiff, Mr. Goto, won the compensation lawsuit filed against his older brother, his sister-in-law and his younger sister for abducting, confining and forcing Mr. Goto over long periods of time to convert to another religion.

The High Court heard that from 1995 to 2008, Mr. Goto's older brother, his sister-in-law, his younger sister and Mr. A abducted Mr. Goto in a Tokyo Mansion for 12 years and ruled that this amounted to kidnapping and "an unlawful suppression of freedom of action". The High Court ordered the 3 family members to pay a compensation of 22 million Yen (2.2 million US\$). Regarding Mr. A, a religious conversion veteran, the High Court mentioned that "[At the instigation of Mr. Goto's family, he] restricted Mr. Goto's freedom, abetted and forced the withdrawal from the Unification Church." Mr. A was ordered to pay 11 million Yen (1.1 million US\$) in compensation.

The victims' association mentioned that "contrary to the first trial, where the defendant's arguments were partially adopted, this ruling has punished activities aimed at abduction, confinement and forced conversion. From the point of view of religious freedom, this is a noteworthy event."