

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: TORU GOTO WINS Japanese Faith-Breaker Must Pay

Knut Holdhus
January 31, 2025



After the verdict, Toru Goto (center), representative of the National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Conversion, along with attorneys Shinichi Tokunaga (right) and Tatsuki Nakayama, attend a press conference in Chiyoda, Tokyo, January 31, 2025



[Sekai Nippo](#)

Token compensation for member of persecuted minority the Family Federation in legal victory in defamation case against activist journalist

Tokyo, 31st January 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Eito Suzuki Ordered to Pay 110,000 Yen in Damages by Tokyo District Court over "Hikikomori"-Comment

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

On 31st January 2025, the Tokyo District Court ruled in a lawsuit [See editor's note below] [filed by Toru Goto](#) (後藤徹), representative of the [National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion](#), against journalist Eito Suzuki (鈴木エイト). Goto sought a total of 11 million yen [\$ 71,100] in damages, claiming that Suzuki's remarks, including a comment referring to Goto as a "hikikomori" [social recluse - see editor's note below], damaged his reputation.



Activist journalist Eito Suzuki, born as Kiyofumi Tanaka

The court recognized two of the five statements in question as defamatory and ordered Suzuki to pay a total of 110,000 yen [\$ 711] in damages.

Although there was no planned distribution of courtroom admission tickets for this trial, the courtroom was packed, and many people who could not enter were seen in the hallway.

[Editor's note: According to the complaint, Suzuki criticized Goto on the news website Yaya Nikkan Cult Shimbun, where Suzuki is the main writer, as "a male believer who stayed in his flat and became a NEET [Not in Education, Employment, or Training] after recuperation, becoming just a 'recluse'."

On Nippon TV's Information Live Miyaneya, he repeatedly criticized Goto, such as commenting that he was a "recluse" (引き)

こもり - hikikomori). Furthermore, Suzuki also defamed Toru Goto at a symposium held in July this year. When Suzuki was asked about the fact that he referred to Goto as a "recluse" (hikikomori), Suzuki replied, "I don't care." He also posted on X (formerly Twitter) that Goto was a puppet forced to play the "role of a victim".]



Toru Goto, member of [Family Federation](#) held captive for 12 years and 5 months by his own family and professional faith-breakers who attempted to break his faith

[Editor's note: The Japanese term "hikikomori" (引きこもり) refers to people who completely withdraw from social life, often isolating themselves at home for extended periods - sometimes years. It describes both the phenomenon and the individuals affected by it.

Hikikomori typically avoid school, work, and social interactions, often due to anxiety, social pressure, or mental health struggles such as depression. The term is sometimes used in a derogatory way but is also recognized as a serious social issue in Japan and other countries.]

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Exhibition Exposes Dehumanization Of Believers

• January 30, 2025 • Knut Holdhus



Exhibition reveals dehumanization of believers, allowed to go unpunished by authorities not only turning a blind eye but working in league with perpetrators seeking to dissolve the faith



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

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“Unthinkable Inhumane Methods”

Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion Panel Exhibition in Kurume, Fukuoka, Japan

by the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

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A panel exhibition showcasing cases of abduction, confinement, and forced deconversion against former [Unification Church](#) (now [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)) believers – described as “the worst human rights violation in postwar Japan” – was held on 26th and 27th January at the Kurume City Plaza in Kurume, Fukuoka Prefecture. Around 370 citizens attended the event.

A woman in her 30s, after hearing explanations about the realities of forced deconversion, expressed her outrage, stating,

“The inhumane methods used by those carrying this out are simply unthinkable. They should be properly punished under the law.”

Another woman in her 40s was visibly shaken, saying,

“I was truly shocked to learn that something like this was happening in Japan. It was even more painful to realize that trusted family members and relatives were involved.”



Photo used at the panel exhibition: Toru Goto in 2008, barely able to move after being held in forcible detention by his own family in league with professional faith-breakers for more than 12 years. Photo: Kazuhiro Yonemoto / [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#)

Interfaith Symposium on Religious Freedom

On 27th January, the same venue hosted the “Experts and Interfaith Forum”, featuring a symposium on the role of religion and freedom of belief in modern society.

The session began with two victims of abduction and confinement sharing their personal experiences. This was followed by speeches from:

- Pastor Ryuichi Sunagawa (砂川竜一) of [Tsukishiro Christian Church](#) in Okinawa
- Chief Priest Ryoma Fukami (深見量真) of [Kamo Shojoji Temple](#)
- Shunsuke Uotani (魚谷俊輔), Secretary-General of UPF-Japan ([Universal Peace Federation](#))

Speaking before about 30 attendees, including university professors and religious leaders from Konkō-kyō [[See editor's note below](#)], the panelists addressed issues of religious persecution and freedom.

Pastor Sunagawa, deeply apologetic, said,

“I am truly sorry that Christian pastors have been involved in abduction and confinement. I sincerely apologize.”

He then posed a question, “Why is the [Family Federation](#) being persecuted?” and shared his belief that

“God is preparing this [organization](#), which loves both the nation and the family, for a greater purpose.”



Pastor Ryuichi Sunagawa, Tsukishiro Christian Church, Nanjo City, Okinawa, Japan. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)



Shunsuke Uotani. Photo: Screenshot from X

Meanwhile, Secretary-General Uotani analyzed the current challenges facing the [Family Federation](#), which is facing a dissolution request from the Japanese government. Outlining future prospects for the [organization](#), he suggested a possible breakthrough, stating,

“The key to influencing Japan's government lies with the United Nations and the Trump administration in the U.S.”

Featured image above: *Abduction and Confinement Panel Exhibition held in Kurume City, Fukuoka on 26th January 2025. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)*

[Editor's note: Konkō-kyō is a Japanese religious movement founded in 1859 by Bunjirō Kawate, a farmer from present-day Okayama Prefecture. It became part of the Association of Sectarian Shintō and is considered a forerunner of Japan's post-World War II “new religions.” The faith centers on the deity Konkō (Golden light shines) and emphasizes a direct, personal relationship between humans and the divine.

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A key belief in Konkō-kyō is the role of the *toritsugi* (mediator), a figure who intercedes between people and the deity, taking on their struggles and transmitting prayers. The position of mediator is hereditary, passed down through the founder's male descendants. The faith teaches that god and humans share a bond akin to that of a parent and child, promoting gratitude, sincerity, and harmonious living.

Konkō-kyō remains an active religious movement, with a significant following in Japan.]

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