

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Pastor's Confession: I Didn't Want to Confine Unificationists

Knut Holdhus
March 3, 2025



The symposium venue was packed with attendees - March 2, 2025, Kita Ward, Tokyo



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

Tokyo, March 2, 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

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

"I Didn't Want to Confine Them" - A Pastor's Confession

by Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)



Young believer being abducted in order to have his faith broken

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 March 2, 2025 in Kita Ward, 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."



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, February 10, 2025, Suginami Ward, Tokyo

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.

[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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Rev. **Paula White**, here 11th June 2021 in Grapevine, Texas. Photo: Gage Skidmore. License: [CC ASA 2.0 Gen](#). Cropped

a written response regarding the opposition expressed by Paula White, religious advisor to President Trump, against the Japanese government's request for a dissolution order against the **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** (formerly known as the **Unification Church**).

White had cited reports from the U.S.



Senator **Satoshi Hamada** (浜田聡, House of Councillors, NHK Party) here speaking in Yokohama City, Japan on 26th January 2025. Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

State Department and other sources criticizing a dissolution order. The government's response was made public in reply to a formal **inquiry submitted** on 7th February by Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡参), a member of the House of Councillors from the NHK Party.

In December of last year, White sent a **video message** to a **seminar** held by the Japanese Committee of the *International Religious Freedom Coalition* (ICRF). In her message, she stated that a UN Special Rapporteur on religious freedom had **officially requested** to visit Japan to investigate potential violations of religious freedom, but the request was denied by the Japanese government.

In **his inquiry**, Hamada asked whether the government would accept an investigation by the UN rapporteur. The government's written response acknowledged that the video message existed but avoided commenting on its stance regarding the **request**.

Additionally, in response to Hamada's question about the *U.S. State Department's annual report on religious freedom*, the government stated that it was aware of the report but asserted that the request to dissolve the **Family Federation** does not violate Article 20 of Japan's Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion.

The *U.S. State Department's report*, published in June last year, noted that the U.S. Embassy in Japan had closely monitored issues related to the **Family Federation** and Jehovah's Witnesses. The report stated that embassy officials had engaged with Japanese lawmakers, regulatory authorities, affected individuals, and religious representatives to emphasize the importance of religious freedom.

Concerns over religious freedom and fabricated testimonies

If a religious organization is dissolved, its clergy would lose their positions, and assets, including places of worship, could be lost, potentially depriving believers of their places of worship. According to official statements from the **Family Federation**, the **organization** has approximately 560,000 followers, raising concerns about the impact on religious freedom.



Front cover of U.S. Department of State's 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom, published 26th June 2024.



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Meanwhile, regarding the request for the dissolution of the **Family Federation**, it has come to light – through **reports in this paper** – that some of the testimonies submitted as evidence by the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* (MEXT) to the *Tokyo District Court* were fabricated.

On 19th February 2025, the **religious organization** released a report from its legal representatives titled *MEXT's Fabrication of False Evidence*, which pointed out that some individuals listed in the statements either denied writing them or had no record of membership in the **organization**.

Regarding this issue, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Toshiko Abo (阿部 知子) stated at a press

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Toshiko Abe (阿部俊子) stated at a press conference on 21st February that the dissolution order request had been appropriately carried out. She did not, however, address the accuracy of the submitted testimonies.

Featured image above: Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Toshiko Abe (阿部俊子) 17th Feb. 2025. Photo: 文部科学省 ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

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