

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japanese Government's Court Case Has Deep Links to Faith-Breakers

Knut Holdhus
March 4, 2025



Toru Goto (center), representing the [National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion](#), and non-fiction writer Masumi Fukuda (right), attending the symposium in Tokyo on the afternoon of March 1, 2025



Politicians and activists at symposium in Tokyo condemn the anti-religious dissolution case and its obvious links to faith-breaking based on criminal methods

Tokyo, 3rd March 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Abductions and Dissolution Closely Connected

Toru Goto and Others Hold Symposium in Tokyo

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

A symposium opposing the issue of religious believers being [abducted, confined, and forcibly deconverted](#) - primarily affecting members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) - was held in Tokyo on 1st and 2nd March 2025. The event was organized by the North Tokyo Association for the Protection of Freedom of Religion and Fundamental Human Rights, which consists mainly of believers.

On 1st March, Toru Goto (後藤徹), representing the [National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion](#), who was confined for [12 years and 5 months](#), and non-fiction writer Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ) took the stage. Goto emphasized the importance of freedom, which he came to deeply appreciate after his long-term confinement. He stated,

"[Faith and freedom are precious](#), and we must eradicate [abduction and confinement](#) to protect them."

He also pointed out that half of the testimonies submitted by alleged "victims" at Tokyo District Court as evidence for the dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#) were from individuals who had left the [religious organization](#) after being [abducted and confined](#). He argued that this issue is closely connected to the legal proceedings for the church's dissolution.

Fukuda expressed the view that one cannot discuss the issues of the [religious organization](#) without

addressing the abduction and confinement problem. She criticized Japanese society for ignoring this matter, warning, "We must not turn a blind eye to this postwar Japan's worst human rights violation." She further urged believers, "Don't stay silent - continue speaking out."



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



Masumi Fukuda, here delivering a speech Sep. 23, 2024 in Chiba City, Japan

On the second day, politicians took the stage, including House of Councillors member Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡) and Norio Hosoya (細谷典男), a city council member from Toride, Ibaraki Prefecture. Hamada, who had submitted a [written inquiry](#) regarding allegations that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) [fabricated testimonies](#) for the dissolution order, remarked, "The fact that MEXT has not denied this fabrication is a significant point." He added, "If true, this is a serious matter, and I intend to continue pursuing it."



House of Councillors member Satoshi Hamada (left) answering questions from the audience on the afternoon of 2nd March 2025 in Tokyo. Beside him: Norio Hosoya

Hosoya criticized the movement to label the [Family Federation](#) as "anti-social" and [exclude it from society](#) despite the lack of solid proof of wrongdoing. He warned that such actions are [characteristic of totalitarianism](#) and urged, "We must nip the seeds of totalitarianism in the bud before they grow."

Additionally, the symposium featured a lecture by the representative of Ame no Yachimata no Kai (天 (あめ) の八衢 (やちまた) の会), an organization dedicated to [repairing relationships between confined believers and their parents](#). Drawing from personal experience, the speaker emphasized that resolving the [abduction and confinement](#) issue requires parent-child reconciliation and stressed the necessity of dialogue.

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

• March 3, 2025 • Knut Holdhus

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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, 2nd March 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 Yasuhisa Ueno (宇野泰弘)


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

[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.*”



Toru Goto (the most known faith-breaking victim, forcibly detained for more than 12 years. here second from the riaht. front row) and

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others from the [National Association of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion Victims](#) participating in a protest march, 10th February 2025, Sugunami 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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