

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Toro Goto on Negative Impact of Faith-Breaking on Families

Knut Holdhus
March 23, 2025



Toru Goto, representing the "[National Association of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion Victims](#)", gives a lecture on the morning of March 20, 2025 in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan



Victim of abduction and 12 grueling years of forcible detention describes the negative impact faith-breakers and lawyers had on his family that was constantly fed manipulated and hostile information

Tokyo, 21st March 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

A Family Changed under Strange Circumstances

Victims of Abduction and Confinement Speak in Yokohama

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



Poster used for the exhibition in Yokohama, Japan 19th and 20th March 2025

On 20th March, a believer of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) who was abducted, confined, and forcibly pressured to renounce his faith by relatives under the guidance of pastors and professional "faith-breakers" opposing the [Family Federation](#), spoke at a [panel exhibition](#) in Yokohama. The event was hosted by the "Yokohama Citizens' Association for the Protection of Religious Freedom and Fundamental Human Rights".

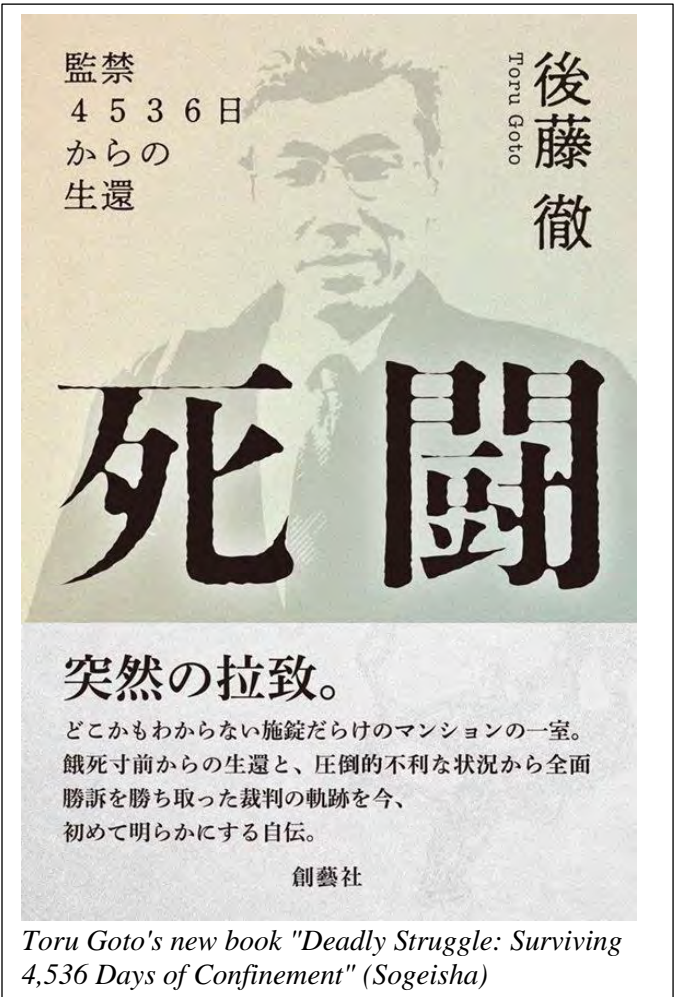
Toru Goto (後藤徹) represented the "[National Association of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion Victims](#)". He had been confined for [12 years and five months](#) and pointed out that former believers who were forced to leave the [religious organization](#) through [abduction and confinement](#) often developed hostility toward the [organization](#), leading to an increase in lawsuits and other reported incidents.

He also noted that the day of the event marked exactly 30 years since the Aum Shinrikyo Tokyo subway sarin attack, which occurred while he was in confinement. Goto recalled being told by faith-breaking activists about the murder of lawyer Tsutsumi Sakamoto (坂本堤弁) and his family [See

editor's note 1 below].

Goto stated,

"Under those strange circumstances, my family came to believe that if they released me, I would commit acts similar to Aum Shinrikyo."



Toru Goto's new book "Deadly Struggle: Surviving 4,536 Days of Confinement" (Sogeisha)

Last month, Goto published an autobiography detailing his experiences and appealed to the audience,

"Was it the [religious organization](#) that changed my once close and ordinary family, or was it the influence of a third party? I want readers to decide for themselves."

Sarutahiko Okami (pseudonym), co-representative of "Ame no Yachimata no Kai" [See editor's note 2 below], an organization working to [restore parent-child relationships](#) disrupted by [abduction and confinement](#), emphasized,

"Repairing a parent-child relationship once it has been broken is not easy. The first step is for parents and children to face each other and foster mutual understanding through dialogue."

Additionally, citing [materials distributed to elementary schools](#) across Japan, the event raised concerns that excessive measures against "child abuse" in Japan could lead to religious persecution. One example highlighted was that if parents provide religious guidance to their child, and the child later tells their school that they "didn't like it",

school counselors and child welfare authorities might collaborate to separate the child from their parents, intentionally creating family divisions.

[Editor's note 1: Tsutsumi Sakamoto (坂本堤, 1956 - 1989) was a Japanese lawyer and a key member of the notorious "anti-cult" organization National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (全国靈感商法対策弁護士連絡会, Zenkoku Reikan Shōhō Taisaku Bengoshi Renraku-kai). He was especially known for his work against the Aum Shinrikyo group, which later carried out the 1995 Tokyo subway sarin gas attack.

Sakamoto's legal efforts were seen as a significant threat to Aum Shinrikyo. This led its leader, Shoko Asahara, to order Sakamoto's assassination in 1989. In November 1989, Sakamoto, his wife Satoko, and their one-year-old son Tatsuhiko were murdered by Aum Shinrikyo members. The attackers entered the Sakamoto's home in Yokohama at night, drugged the family, and strangled them before disposing of their bodies in three different prefectures.

The case remained unsolved until 1995, when Aum Shinrikyo members confessed after being arrested for the sarin gas attack. The murders shocked Japan.

Tsutsumi Sakamoto is known for his activism pursuing legal action against Aum Shinrikyo based on the use of consumer protection law to reclaim donations to the organization. He represented so-called apostates, members who had left the group and become hostile to it. Sakamoto claimed that the Aum Shinrikyo were involved in unlawful activities years before the sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway.]

[Editor's note 2: The Japanese expression Yachimata (八衢) refers to a crossroads or intersection where multiple paths converge. It is often used in a metaphorical sense to symbolize choices, encounters, or the meeting of different fates.

In mythology and classical literature, 八衢 (Yachimata) can also evoke a mystical or sacred space where important decisions or transformations occur. It appears in the name of the deity Ame no Yachihoko (天

の八衢), associated with crossroads and divine encounters in Japanese folklore.

As for the above-mentioned association Ame no Yachimata no Kai (天の八衢の会), the term symbolizes a place for reconciliation, dialogue, and resolution - a meeting point where estranged families can reconnect.]

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• January 28, 2025 • Knut Holdhus

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
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A gathering was held on 26th January in Yokohama City protesting the illegal acts of abduction, confinement, and forced renunciation of faith involving over 4,300 believers of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). The event condemned the involvement of “faith-breakers” and Christian pastors in these actions. There were more than 100 participants, including Buddhist representatives.

The event was organized by the “Association of Residents of Kanazawa Ward, Yokohama for the Protection of Freedom of Religion and Human Rights”. Senator Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡) of the [NHK Party](#) and Toru Goto (後藤徹), who was a victim of abduction and confinement for 12 years and 5 months, gave speeches.

NHK党
The logo of the NHK, originally a protest party founded in 2013 to oppose the license fees for the national broadcasting organization NHK. The party's policies have since broadened to include lower taxes, strengthening military defense, and achieving energy independence through nuclear power. [Public domain image](#)

Goto condemned these acts of forced renunciation of faith as “the worst human rights violation in postwar Japan”, explaining that they strip individuals of their constitutionally guaranteed freedoms. He emphasized that such actions deprive people of fundamental spiritual freedoms, including freedom of thought and conscience (Article 19), freedom of religion (Article 20), and freedom of expression (Article 21). Additionally, they violate economic freedoms, such as the inviolability of property rights (Article 29), and physical freedoms, including freedom from unlawful detention and torture (Article 18) and the right to due process (Article 31).

Sharing his harrowing experiences, Goto announced that he would soon publish a book titled “*Deadly Struggle: Surviving 4,536 Days of Confinement*” to bring these issues to wider public attention.



MP
Hamada

Professional faith-breaker **Takashi Miyamura** (宮村峻), responsible for hundreds of deprogrammings based on abduction and forcible detention. He is said to have been advisor to the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP). Photo: [FFWPU](#)

addressed these human rights violations, specifically naming Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻), a well-known “faith-breaker”, and pointing out his ties to certain political parties. Hamada questioned the fairness of media coverage, citing Article 4 of the *Broadcasting Act*, which mandates broadcasters to ensure accuracy and impartiality in their reporting. Hamada has raised these concerns through written inquiries and in the *House of Councillors’ General Affairs Committee*, where he questioned the fairness of media coverage.

He expressed his intention to continue submitting written inquiries in the current Diet session, arguing that they reflect a certain degree of public opinion.

At the venue, members of the [Family Federation](#) showcased panels depicting the realities of abduction and confinement. They explained that perpetrator groups frame such acts as “protective persuasion” by family members. Biased media coverage has prevented the issue from gaining broader recognition as a social problem.

Featured image above: Senator Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡, House of Councillors, NHK Party) – to the right – speaking at a gathering about the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) on 26th January 2025, in Yokohama City, Kanaqawa Prefecture, Japan. To the left: Toru Goto (後藤徹) who

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Front cover page of Japanese edition of Toru Goto's new book “*Deadly Struggle: Surviving 4,536 Days of Confinement*”

spoke about his experiences as a victim of abduction and confinement. Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

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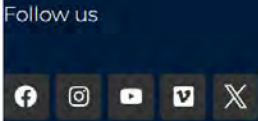
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