

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Healing Bonds After Dehumanizing Faith Breaking

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Members of "Ame no Yachimata no Kai" during an interview April 16, 2025 in Tokyo



**Mission difficult: Healing bonds in families torn apart when following instructions from paid professional faith-breakers**

Tokyo, 30th April 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

**Believers Working to Reconcile Parents and Offspring**

**The Dark World of Deprogramming Spreading Amid the Move to Dissolve the Family Federation (5)**

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

See [article 1](#), [article 2](#), [article 3](#), [article 4](#)

**Reclaiming Bonds Severed by Confinement**



Illustration of pastor Takeo Funada

Uzume (pseudonym, a woman in her 50s), a believer of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), experienced [abduction and confinement](#) by relatives in her 20s. She now serves as co-representative of the private organization Ame no Yachimata no Kai [See editor's note below], which works on parent-child reconciliation.

When she was confined in a condominium room, Uzume believed to the very end,

"My parents would never [kidnap and confine](#) me."

But upon seeing the appearance of Pastor Takeo Funada (船田武雄) - now deceased - she realized she had been deceived and became convinced she had become a victim. A few days after escaping, her parents contacted her, saying, "We want to talk again," but fear of being kidnapped again kept her from meeting them.

Since then, attempts to visit her parents ended in rejection at the door. After her family moved, their whereabouts became unknown. About 20 years later, she was suddenly contacted and informed that her father had already passed away. Uzume reflected, "I wanted to reconcile with my father, but he passed before that could happen. I hope others won't have to live with that same regret."

Co-representative Sarutahiko (pseudonym, 53-year-old man) pointed out that "families often expect the pastors who instructed the [faith-breaking](#) to continue supporting the parent-child relationship afterward," but in reality, they do nothing. He explained,

"The cooperation of pastors and deprogrammers is bought with large sums of money, but once that financial exchange ends, so does their involvement."

The group receives many consultations, such as "I can't go home to see my parents" or "I can't even talk to them on the phone." Some parents have admitted tearfully, "I now believe the abduction and confinement was wrong, but during that time I was brainwashed with negative and questionable information about the [church](#). I can't see my daughter as my daughter anymore."



Not always easy to create reconciliation after having been [kidnapped](#), [held in detention](#) in order to have a family member's [faith coercively broken](#). The illustration is from the case of Toru Goto, who was held in captivity by his own family and faith-breakers for 12 years and 5 months

Sarutahiko, who began working on resolving [abduction and confinement](#) issues around 2012, said that after reconciling with his own parents, he became more committed to helping others achieve reconciliation.

The turning point came when his father was hospitalized. He said,

"By facing my mother, who was rethinking her life, she gradually began to open up about what happened during the confinement."

His mother explained the situation at the time,

"A pastor from the United Church of Christ in Japan scolded me, saying, 'Your son joined a bad religion because you failed as a parent. You must lock him up quickly, or things will get worse.' I didn't know what to do and just lost the ability to think rationally."

Many who have undergone [faith-breaking](#) through [abduction and confinement](#) suffer long-term mental health issues, including

PTSD. Sarutahiko's mother said,

"If I had known my child might develop PTSD, I never would have gone through with it."



Protesting the coercive faith-breaking business in Japan. Toru Goto (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

On the lack of support for parent-child relationships after such incidents, his mother said, "I wish the child would reach out first. As a parent who did something like that, I could never bring myself to say it." Now reconciled with her son, she actively asks him to "help other estranged families reconnect" or "visit families I'm concerned about," and together they work to mend broken relationships.

### About Ten no Yachimata no Kai

The name "Yachimata" refers to the mythological "crossroads" where the god Sarutahiko appears as a guide. As a believer of the [Family Federation](#), Sarutahiko established the group to help reconcile parent-child relationships shattered by [abduction and confinement](#). The group provides consultations and also visits the graves of parents or believers who took their own lives due to such trauma,

offering memorial services.

## Doubts About Dishonest Pastors

Sarutahiko said,

"I've had chances to speak not just with the parents who did the abducting, but also with the Christian pastors who guided them. Seeing pastors lie to the point of severing family bonds, and encouraging parents to do so - something far from their real mission - made me question their roles."

He continued,

"Behind this is a dark, well-structured, and networked system of [faith-breaking](#)."

He emphasized,

"Even now, many families remain broken, with victims and parents still estranged. It is the mission of Yachimata no Kai to heal these families."

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See [article 1](#), [article 2](#), [article 3](#), [article 4](#)

**[Editor's note:** 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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# Coerced Testimonies? Lawyers Under Scrutiny

- April 28, 2025
- Knut Holdhus

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Activist lawyers under scrutiny for alleged coerced testimonies behind dissolution push

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## Court Rulings Crafted by Apostates

[See editor's note 1 below]


The Dark World of Deprogramming Spreading Amid the Move to Dissolve the Family Federation (4)

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*




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**Almost all of the 32 grounds for dissolution are from the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (NNLASS – Zenkoku Benren)**

[Almost all of the 32 civil cases used as grounds for the dissolution (of the [Family Federation](#)) were **brought forward or based on lawsuits led by NNLASS (Zenkoku Benren).**]

“If active members properly assert their claims, it can be shown that their arguments will be recognized. I hope this will serve as some deterrent against unjust trials,”

said Kousuke Yamabe (a man in his 60s, pseudonym), a believer of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) living in Sapporo, Hokkaido.

In September 2019, Yamabe’s two sisters and brother filed a lawsuit at the *Sapporo District Court*, seeking damages on the grounds that Yamabe had “donated” their late father’s inheritance without permission.



Location of Sapporo on the northern island of Hokkaido. Illustration: Maximilian Dörrbecker (Chumhwa) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp](#)



**Arguing in court based on mind control theory: Activist attorney Masaki Goro (Gouro).** Illustration: Grok xAI, 26th April 2025

Representing the plaintiffs was lawyer Masaki Goro (郷路征記) – also written “Gouro” – from *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (NNLASS – Zenkoku Benren).

Attorney Goro argued that Yamabe’s “beliefs had been implanted by the [Unification Church](#),” and therefore he lacked the awareness that his actions were unlawful, claiming that Yamabe’s donations were not made of his free will. Furthermore, he argued that the [religious organization](#) itself was the true perpetrator, naming not only

Yamabe, but also the [Family Federation](#) as defendants.

Yamabe strongly countered these claims, emphasizing that his donations were not due to “brainwashing” but were voluntary acts. He made similar statements during his court testimony. Ultimately, the court judged that there was “no sufficient evidence” to support Goro’s claims, and the claims against the [church](#) were dismissed.

Although Yamabe eventually reached a settlement with his sisters for 4 million yen, the plaintiffs proposed making his resignation from the [religious organization](#) a condition of the settlement, which Yamabe refused. This dismissive attitude toward his faith continued until the end.

Of the 32 civil cases used as



**Issued scandalous dissolution order based on controversial unscientific mind control theory:** Tokyo District Court, here a sign outside the court building. Photo: Screenshot from [FFWPU](#) video.

evidence by the *Tokyo District Court* to request the dissolution of the [Family Federation](#), four were cases previously handled by Attorney Goro (Gouro). In each case, he had promoted a similar “mind control theory” argument as in the case of Yamabe.

What significantly differentiates Yamabe’s case from the others is that many plaintiffs in those cases had left the [religious organization](#) after experiencing deprogramming – that is, being forcibly “deconverted” through confinement. For example, one of the four cases, the “Return My Youth” lawsuit held in Sapporo, revealed that, upon analysis of the testimonies of the 21 plaintiffs, more than **75% admitted to having**

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been physically restrained during the persuasion process. In total, 18 people (86%) had experienced some form of confinement against their will.

It is known that parents, under the direction of certain Christian pastors and activists opposing the [Family Federation](#), confined their believing sons or daughters and subjected them to a “fumi-e” (test of faith) [See editor’s note 2 below]. Even if a believer professed intent to leave the [religious organization](#), they were often forced to sue it to prove their expressed intent was genuine.

As a result, those who left the [organization](#) after being confined and subjected to one-sided critical information inevitably end up giving testimony in line with the intentions of the deprogrammers (faith-breakers) who pressured the believers to abandon their faith, regardless of whether or not they held hostility toward the [organization](#).

In civil cases, unlike in criminal cases, fact-finding is generally less stringent. Particularly in cases involving new religious movements, court judgments are often influenced not by objective evidence but by the voices of those who claim to be “victims” and the tone set by media coverage.

Another notable point is that not only Attorney Goro but also most of the lawyers in the 32 lawsuits were affiliated with *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (Zenkoku Benren), including lawyers such as Masaki Kito (紀藤正樹) and



**Hiroshi Yamaguchi**, activist leftwing lawyer and founder and leading member of *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (NNLASS). Photo: Screenshot / [Bitter Winter](#)

Hiroshi Yamaguchi (山口広). It can be said that people who left the [group](#) through deprogramming (faith-breaking) aligned their testimonies with the claims made by these anti-[Family Federation](#) lawyers, stating that their past donations were “not made of their own free will” or that they had been “deceived”, thereby contributing to the court rulings against the [organization](#).



One of the architects of new law against the [Family Federation](#) and advisor to the Japanese authorities: **Masaki Kito** (紀藤正樹), one of the hostile activist lawyers of *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (全国霊感商法被害対策弁連) and *Nation-wide Unification Church Damage Countermeasures Legal Team* (全国統一教会被害対策弁護団). Photo: Screenshot / [Bitter Winter](#)

If, as in Mr. Yamabe’s case, claims based on disregard for religious faith have become a routine tactic in court, then one cannot help but question whether it is truly a fair and impartial decision for the *Tokyo District Court* to use such accumulated case precedents as grounds for [ordering](#) the [organization](#)’s dissolution.

Testimonies by apostates feature not only in these 32 civil lawsuits but also in the court-related documents submitted by the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* (MEXT). It has also been found that among 159 former members who submitted testimonial evidence, 121 had experienced or were suspected of having experienced [kidnapping and confinement](#).

[Deprogramming \(faith-breaking\)](#) is considered illegal in places like the U.S. and Europe. Meanwhile, China – itself condemned by a UN report for committing “crimes against humanity” by forcing Muslims in Xinjiang into “re-education” camps to erase their faith – has welcomed the *Tokyo District Court*’s [dissolution verdict](#) via its anti-cult organization under the *Chinese Communist Party*, praising the NNLASS (Zenkoku Benren).

Effectively, the *Tokyo District Court*’s [decision](#) amounts to an endorsement of [deprogramming \(faith-breaking\)](#). There are concerns that going forward, the state may encourage efforts to “free” individuals from their faith and intensify state support for religious [de-conversion](#).

See [article 1](#), [article 2](#), [article 3](#), [article 5](#)

**Featured image** above: The Sapporo High Court and Sapporo District Court, where the trial of Kousuke Yamabe (pseudonym), a member of the [Family Federation](#), was held. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石



**[Editor's note 1: Apostate** is the translation of the Japanese word 背教者 (はいきょうしゃ, *haikyōsha*) which is composed of the following elements:

背 (はい, *hai*): meaning "to turn one's back on" or "to betray"; 教 (きょう, *kyō*): meaning "religion", "teaching", or "doctrine"; 者 (しゃ, *sha*): common suffix meaning "person" or "someone who does".

So, 背教者 literally means: "A person who turns his/her back on his/her religion," or "an apostate" or "a religious defector".

It generally carries a negative or accusatory connotation, implying betrayal or abandonment of faith – especially from the perspective of the religious group being left.

In the above text, the article's tone implies that apostates (背教者 – *haikyōsha*) are not just someone who have left the religion, but who are now being used to **undermine** the group, so there is also a hint of *Judas-like* betrayal in the context. Of course, "Judas" refers to Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Jesus to the authorities for 30 pieces of silver. The apostates in the text above are being used by hostile and cynical lawyers for malicious reasons to cause harm to the faith they were forced out of, when they had their faith broken coercively by so-called faith-breakers, working in league with activist lawyers.]

**[Editor's note 2:**

The illustration to the right depicts a **fumi-e** (踏み絵), which literally means "stepping-on picture" – typically an image of the Cross, Jesus Christ, or the Virgin Mary. The Tokugawa Shogunate used this practice to identify hidden Christians (known as *Kirishitan*) and their sympathizers during a time when Christianity was banned in Japan. While the act of stepping



This print shows Fumi-e (踏み絵: fumi "stepping-on" + e "picture"); step on a picture with the likeness of e.g. the Cross of Jesus or the Virgin Mary. Photo: Unknown author. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

on these images was originally called **efumi** (絵踏), the term **fumi-e** is now commonly used to refer to both the practice and the object itself.

Those who hesitated or refused to step on the images were suspected of being Christians. They were taken to Nagasaki and ordered to renounce their faith. If they refused, they faced torture – and if they continued to resist, execution, often by burning at the stake.

This systematic persecution began in 1614 and was enforced by regional authorities. By the mid-17th century, the Tokugawa Shogunate had escalated its crackdown, ordering the expulsion of all European missionaries and the execution of Japanese converts. The suppression of Christianity continued for more than two centuries.]

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