

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Japan's Christian Churches, Apologize for Abductions and Confinements

Knut Holdhus
August 13, 2025



Tsutomu Nishioka (center) and Haruhisa Nakagawa (left) in discussion - 11th August 2025, Ochanomizu Christian Center, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo, Japan



Christian leaders in Tokyo denounce complicity of churches in persecution of Family Federation and warn dissolution order threatens Japan's religious freedom

Tokyo, 13th August 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Christian Churches Urged to Apologize for Abductions and Confinements

Dissolution Order Against Family Federation Linked to Forces Opposed to Recognizing Abe's Achievements

SALTY Opinion Site Hosts Meeting

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

See also [Minister Reveals Crucial Facts to Court](#)



Professor Tsutomu Nishioka

A meeting to discuss the problems with the [dissolution order](#) against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) was held in Tokyo on 11th August. The theme was "A Dissolution Order Threatening Freedom of Religion". The event was organized by the Japanese Christian opinion site SALTY (Represented by Haruki Kinoshita (木下春樹), pastor of Aboshi Christ Church).

Tsutomu Nishioka (西岡力), Editor-in-Chief of SALTY and a specially appointed professor at Reitaku University, along with other Christians, agreed that churches should not remain silent about the [dissolution order](#) and should apologize for their involvement in [abducting and confining Family Federation](#) members in attempts to break their faith [See editor's note below].

Nishioka harshly criticized the current state of Japan regarding the [dissolution order](#),

"Japan is no longer a nation under the rule of law, but a dangerous country ruled by the monster of public

opinion. This is a serious challenge to the system of freedom and democracy."

In July 2022, when former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) was assassinated, "suddenly, Japanese society began persecuting the [Family Federation](#)," Nishioka said he felt something was wrong from the very beginning, and, from the conviction that "we must [not allow terrorists to achieve their goals](#)," he declared,

"Remaining silent is not what a Christian should do. Those with a normal mind should be able to see that what is happening now is abnormal."

He revealed that he has been sounding the alarm on this issue ever since. He analyzed the background of the persecution of the [Family Federation](#), saying:



Kiichi Miyazawa (1919-2007), prime minister of Japan 1991-1993. Member of House of Representatives for LDP 1967-2003

"Some in the media and certain political forces did not want to acknowledge Abe's achievements. They deliberately aimed to eliminate opportunities to talk about his accomplishments - and that's exactly what ended up happening."

Nishioka also argued that the Liberal Democratic Party "went along" with the movement to discredit Abe, which in turn led then Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (岸田文雄) to arbitrarily reinterpret the law so that alleged wrongdoings according to civil law could be included among the requirements for dissolving a religious corporation.

"The whole country was brainwashed," Nishioka said, comparing the situation to the Asahi Shimbun's 1990s campaign about the alleged forced recruitment of wartime "comfort women" by the former Japanese military. He recalled how the public had been deceived when the media ran in one direction and the atmosphere of the times aligned with it - just as then Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa (宮澤喜一) had apologized eight times because the social circumstances left him with no choice.

Pastor Haruhisa Nakagawa (中川晴久) of Christian Church of the Lord's Sheep (Yokohama) criticized the government's decision, pointing out the human rights violations [Family Federation](#) believers have faced since the [dissolution order](#):



Rev. Haruhisa Nakagawa of the Christian Church of the Lord's Sheep

"Once one-sided reporting was aired, it should have been obvious that [Family Federation](#) believers would be subjected to [religious hate and harassment](#)."

Nakagawa believes part of the responsibility for the [dissolution order](#) lies with the Christian churches. He stated that there are 205 pastors confirmed to have been involved in the [abduction and confinement](#) of [Family Federation](#) believers, and if those suspected (another 85) are included, the number rises to nearly 300. The majority of plaintiffs suing the [religious organization](#) for the return of donations are former believers who abandoned the faith after such abductions, and their lawsuits directly led to the dissolution request.

He argued,

"This is the [largest human rights violation](#) in postwar Japan, and an apology alone is not enough."

Nishioka agreed:

"Even though the [dissolution order](#) is a serious problem for Christian churches as well, there's no outcry. One reason may be that some were complicit in these [abductions and confinements](#)."

On the leftward drift of churches, Pastor Ryuichi Sunagawa (砂川竜一) of Tsukishiro Christ Church (Nanjo City, Okinawa Prefecture) commented:

"Because pastors have long been told not to get involved in politics, they've come to swallow whatever the media and newspapers say without question."

He asserted that churches involved in [abductions and confinements](#) should apologize to the [Family Federation](#), saying,

"Only after that apology can Japan truly be restored."



Rev. Ryuichi Sunagawa, May 13, 2025

Nakagawa told this paper that many Christians, even if they haven't spoken out, believe the [dissolution order](#) is wrong. Compared with right after the assassination, "the atmosphere has changed considerably," expressing hope.

One pastor said that attending the meeting was motivated by the belief that

"Remaining silent (about the [dissolution order](#)) is the same as participating in wrongdoing."

About the Japanese Christian opinion site SALTY: Established in April 2018 as a space for Christian discourse. Born out of a sense of crisis regarding both society and the churches, it warns against the uncritical spread of Marxism and its ideology.

See also [Minister Reveals Crucial Facts to Court](#)

[Editor's note: Coercive faith-breaking ("deprogramming") 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.



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of Soka Gakkai. Here students belonging to the faith in 2001

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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Japan: Hidden History Of Coercive Faith-Breaking

• August 11, 2025
• Knut Holdhus

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Inside Japan’s dark history of deprogramming: How families were urged by professional faith-breakers to lock up their own sons and daughters



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

Tokyo, 8th August 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Reporter’s View

Woman Tearfully Recounts How an Acquaintance, a Family Federation Follower, Was Confined and Had Her Faith

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Abduction and Confinement in Japan Coercively Broken

by Takahide Ishii (石井 孝秀), Deputy Managing Editor, News
Department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

See also [Abduction Called Rescue – It Was Confinement](#)



A reenactment of Yukie Kanamori (pseudonym) having been forced into a sleeping bag and abducted into a van by several men. Image provided by the person involved, partially edited.

Numerous cases have been reported in which relatives of believers of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) carried out [abductions and confinements](#) under the guidance of professional “deprogrammers” (commonly known in Japan as *dakkai-ya*, or “exit counselors”) for the purpose of forcing the believers to renounce their faith [\[See editor’s note below\]](#). It is not uncommon for such victims to be left with deep [psychological scars](#), and even a single day of confinement can result in [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) (PTSD). This is a serious [human rights issue](#).

As this paper reported in “[In District Court Hearings, ‘Confinement’ Rephrased as ‘Surveillance’](#)” (6th March) and “[Statements Details Criminal Technique of Coercive Faith-Breaking](#)” (23rd April), affidavits submitted by the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* (MEXT) to the *Tokyo District Court* contained accounts of such [abduction and confinement](#) experiences. These included being locked in a storehouse or forced into a hotel room to make them abandon their faith [\[See editor’s note below\]](#) – yet the ministry apparently did not view these as human rights violations.

Current believers have submitted rebuttals to these affidavits. I once spoke to one of them, a woman referred to here as Ms. A.

In the early Heisei era (1989-2019), a female university student came to embrace the [Family Federation](#)’s teachings after Ms. A first spoke to her. But after about six months, the student suddenly disappeared. Ms. A only learned what had happened when she read an affidavit written by the student’s father.

According to the affidavit, the parents had been contacted by a pastor working as a deprogrammer (faith-breaker) [\[See editor’s note below\]](#), who told them, “Your daughter attends the [church](#).” The parents then “protected” her by confining her in a hotel room.

Upon reading the affidavit, Ms. A was moved to tears, saying she felt “deeply sorry for her”. She was angry at the entire process of forcing someone to leave her faith without respecting her feelings, yet she also felt personally responsible.

Ms. A recalls,

“When we were talking about her and her father, I felt uneasy that she might be abducted and confined.”

But she did nothing in particular to prevent it, and the tragedy unfolded as parents confine their own daughter



Parents listening to faith-breaker
(deprogrammer). Illustration: Microsoft
Designer Image Creator, 22nd February
2025.

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unfolding of parents confining their own daughter.

The affidavit states that the student's parents had been criticized by the deprogrammer-pastor for having "failed in their parenting". However, Ms. A says,

"She was such a gentle and honest girl. If they had simply talked with her normally, without confinement, she probably would have understood her parents' feelings and left the [religious organization](#). I wonder if being told they had raised her wrong drove them into confining her unnecessarily."

Ms. A's anguish remains.



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, 10th February 2025, Suginami Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

It is certainly natural for parents to want to protect their son or daughter from suspicious organizations. It's unlikely this was just one or two isolated families. But if there were misunderstandings or anxieties on the family's side, to what extent had the [religious organization](#) arranged opportunities for discussion? For example, if students wanted to join, perhaps the [organization](#) could have suggested they wait until after graduation before making a final decision. Flexible, case-by-case responses might have been possible. Now, voices of reflection and calls for improvement are beginning to emerge from individual current believers like Ms. A.

On the other hand, deprogrammers [\[See editor's note below\]](#) insist that "the believers' free will had been taken away" and that "it was necessary to prevent new victims," stubbornly justifying confinement as "protective persuasion". Yet when held accountable, they shift the blame, saying the believers' families acted on their own.

Depriving someone of their freedom for the sake of faith-breaking [\[See editor's note below\]](#) should never be permissible. It is time not only for deprogrammers themselves but also for those who have cooperated with or supported them to reconsider their stance.

See also [Abduction Called Rescue – It Was Confinement](#)

Featured image above: Professional faith-breaker and victim.

Illustration: Grok xAI, 20th April 2025

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Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of [Soka Gakkai](#). Here students belonging to the faith in 2001. Photo: Wikimedia

Here students belonging to the faith in 2001. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp. Cropped](#)

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