

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: In Japan Mental Healthcare is Human Rights Violation

Knut Holdhus
September 10, 2024



Hirohiko Mitsuma, Tomoyasu Yoneda, and Masumi Fukuda (from right to left in the back) attended and gave lectures at the symposium, which was held on the afternoon of 9th September 2024 in Toshima Ward, Tokyo



Speakers at Tokyo symposium describe steep battle to fight propaganda that has "permeated every nook and corner of society" against religious minority

Tokyo, 10th September 2024 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

"Japanese Mental Healthcare is a Human Rights Violation" - Symposium Held in Tokyo

A council that violates the principle of separation of church and state

A symposium was held in Tokyo on 9th September 2024 focusing on human rights violations stemming from prejudice against mental healthcare and religion. The theme was "Protecting Freedom and Democracy in the Local Community!" It was hosted by the Association for Protecting Freedom of Religion and Human Rights, Northwest Tokyo. The event featured speeches from Noriyasu Yoneda (米田倫康), representative of the Japanese branch of the Citizens' Human Rights Defense Association; YouTuber Hirohiko Mitsuma (三津間弘彦); and journalist Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ).



Hirohiko Mitsuma

Noriyasu Yoneda emphasized the situation of mental healthcare in Japan, stating,

"Mental abnormalities are seen as brain problems, and patients are forcibly isolated through hospitalization. Actions that strip away a person's human rights are justified using unfounded theories that incite fear."

He advocated for the abolition of such forced measures and called for an approach based on human rights.

Hirohiko Mitsuma focused on the Religious Corporations Council, an advisory body to the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, which had approved the policy to request a dissolution order for the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)).

He raised concerns over the fact that a senior member of a religious corporation that calls the [Family Federation](#) a "cult" on its official website is a member of the Religious Corporations Council. Mitsuma argued,

"The government sides with the claims of a specific religious organization to attack another. That violates the principle of separation of church and state."



Masumi Fukuda, here speaking in Kumamoto June 16, 2024

Masumi Fukuda presented cases where being a member of the [Family Federation](#) led to unfavorable court outcomes. She said,

"Propaganda against the [Unification Church](#) has permeated every nook and corner of society. Even though such a request for a dissolution order would normally never pass, we must not be complacent and need to raise our voices in opposition."

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Glaring rights violations of believers pointed out by UN, USA and experts

Part 3 of Norishige Kondo's speech 10th Sep. 2023

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Norishige Kondo (近藤徳茂), author and Deputy Director of the Legal Affairs Department of the *Family Federation of Japan*, spoke at a special symposium on the theme "Abduction and Confinement – Who Destroys Families?" 10th September 2023 at the Shibuya, Tokyo headquarters of the *Family Federation of Japan*. It was organised by the *Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion*. His speech was titled, "Response of Public Institutions to the Abduction and Confinement Issue".



Norishige Kondo speaking in Tokyo 10th Sep. 2023. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission

Next I would like to talk about the abduction and confinement case of a male believer

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named K.S. He was kidnapped and held captive on a 10th floor apartment rented on a weekly basis in November 1992.

by Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion

The police were called because K.S. caused a big commotion, and riot police rushed to the scene. However, they only listened to the parents' side, and told K.S. that the **Unification Church** issue was a parent-child issue. The police left the scene, telling him not to cause any more trouble.

In the end, K.S. was released after causing a commotion for 10 days. He was abducted and held captive for a second time, and then a third time in April 1997.

That time, he was abducted by relatives near the police station, put in a van, and taken away. However, they were immediately followed by a police patrol car. The police wanted to take him to the police station.

However, 20 relatives got out of their vehicles and confronted the police, shouting, "The **Unification Church** is an evil group. This is a parent-child issue." In the end, the police officers were overwhelmed by this and asked the relatives to tell K.S. that because it was a parent-child problem, the police left it alone.

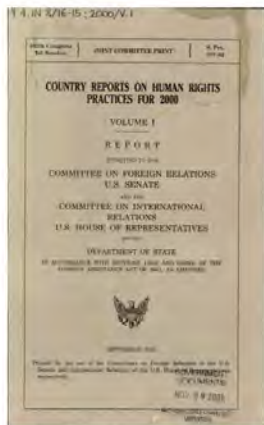
K.S. was able to escape from the place he was forcibly detained on 18th September 1997, when a gap suddenly opened up. He was however eventually brought back there by his parents. A police car later arrived as a result of a report from a witness, but after listening to both sides, the police ended up leaving K.S. in the apartment where he was held by his relatives.

Next, I would like to talk about cases in which the Public Prosecutor's Office did not prosecute. All of the cases listed here were cases that were filed with the Public Prosecutor's Office for kidnapping and forcible detention or attacks on churches. In the end, all those cases were dismissed by the prosecutor despite having been reported to the police.

There was an incident called the Tottori (鳥取) church attack, in which about 20 men carrying weapons abducted a female church member. And the female believer herself filed criminal charges on the grounds that she had been forcibly detained for one year and three months.

There was also a case where a woman was attacked and abducted in a parking lot after a meal at a restaurant in Kawasaki (川崎). Then, there was a case where a woman from Yamagata (山形), who returned from her and her husband's home in Korea, was attacked and pressured by her relatives that night. There was also a case where a woman from Kochi (高知) was abducted when she returned from her and her husband's home in Korea to visit her mother.

Then there was the incident where Toru Goto (後藤徹) was abducted and held captive for 12 years and five months. There was also an incident in which a Hiroshima (広島) couple was separated from their young children, abducted and held in an Osaka (大阪) apartment. However, the prosecutor's office decided not to prosecute in all those cases.



Cover of year 2000 issue of Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. *Public domain image*

On the one hand, the **U.S. State Department** has addressed the issue of abduction and confinement of **Unification Church** believers in its International Religious Freedom Report and Country Reports on Human Rights Practices since 1999.



Hitoshi Hida (後藤 仁), member of the House of Representatives in Japan. Photo: Family Forum / FFWPU

Also, on 20th April 2000, Hitoshi Hida (後藤 仁), a member of the House of Representatives, asked questions about the abduction and confinement issue in the Diet.

In response to this, the Commissioner General of the National Police Agency stated, "If there is any act that violates the criminal law, even if it is committed by a parent, child or relative, we will take strict action against them in light of the evidence we respond to." That's what he said clearly.

Additionally, in June 2014, a **United Nations recommendation** was issued to the Japanese government.

In this section, under the heading "Abduction and forced de-conversion", it states:

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Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Japan*

From header of UN document with United Nations' recommendations to Japan on human rights of believers.

"The Committee is concerned at reports of abductions and forced confinement of converts to new religious movements by members of their families in an effort to de-convert them (articles 2, 9, 18, 26). The State party should take effective measures to guarantee the right of every person not to be subject to coercion that would impair his or her freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief." [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Human Rights Committee: Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Japan, 20th August 2014]

This (pointing to slide) is about civil cases. The cases written in blue are cases which were won. We were able to win the majority of cases. The UN recommendation mentioned earlier was issued around this belt line (blue line in slide), but after the UN

CIVIL CASES

- Tottori church, assault case: won case
- Tottori, female believer abducted and confined: won case
- Akishima, woman abducted and confined: lost case
- Fujisawa, woman abducted and confined: half settled / half lost
- Machida, female believer abducted and confined: won case settled
- Kochi, married woman abducted and confined: won case
- Toru Goto abducted and confined 12 years, 5 months: won case
- Hiroshima, husband and wife abducted and confined: won case

English version of slide in Japanese used by Norishige Kondo 10th Sep. 2023 about civil cases. Photo: K. Holdhus

recommendation, the scope of liability for tortious acts and the amount of compensation for alleged harm have increased considerably.

And this year, on 14th June, prominent human rights defenders from Western Europe prepared and sent a written opinion to the Japanese government. The written opinion included a request for an end to the current religious persecution of the Family Federation. The issue of abduction and confinement was also mentioned.

"The enormous amount of violence and suffering involved in deprogramming should always be considered when trying to understand the harsh relationships between the Unification Church / Family Federation (FFWPU) and its opponents in Japan." ("Why Japan Should Guarantee Religious Liberty to the Unification Church/Family Federation: A Letter to the Government", Bitter Winter 3rd July 2023

Incidentally, there is a lot of talk these days about filing a request for the dissolution of the Family Federation. The main purpose of this written statement of opinion document [by the European scholars] is however that religious persecution such as requesting the dissolution of the Family Federation must not be carried out.

Therefore, although this content may be a little different from the theme of this symposium, I would like to read out some excerpts.

The section of the article is subtitled, "The liquidation of the FFWPU would expose Japan to international condemnation, and legitimate attacks on religious freedom in nondemocratic countries".

"The



Jan Figel. Photo: Elekes Andor. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int



Massimo Introvigne. Photo: FOREF



Aaron Rhodes. Screenshot January 2023

international Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) community is watching what is happening in Japan, which represents the most serious FoRB crisis in a democratic country of our century. We hope that all organizations that support and defend FoRB in Japan and internationally would support our appeal.



Willy Fautré. Photo: FOREF

The liquidation of the Family Federation as a religious corporation would be a measure comparable to the actions taken against several religious minorities in China and Russia, and unprecedented in

a democratic country. It would also expose Japan to considerable international criticism. What is more, should the Japanese government proceed with this action, it will give cover to assaults on religious groups by authoritarian and totalitarian states around the world, undermining efforts by international human rights institutions to protect religious liberty.

We urge the Japanese government to protect the FoRB of all religious and spiritual groups operating in Japan, including those that have powerful, well-financed, and politically motivated opponents, to withdraw all measures threatening FoRB, and to guarantee to the [Family Federation](#) as a religious corporation the peaceful exercise of its right to religious liberty." (From "[Why Japan Should Guarantee Religious Liberty to the Unification Church / Family Federation: A Letter to the Government](#)", by four European academics and human rights activists (Willy Fautré, Jan Figel, Massimo Introvigne, Aaron Rhodes), published in [Bitter Winter](#) 3rd July 2023).

That's all. Thank you for your attention.

Featured image above: *Illustration of Toru Goto being abducted in 1995.*
Photo: Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion

"Japan Criticized for Glaring Rights Violations" – text: Norishige Kondo

See [part 1](#), [part 2](#)

More about glaring rights violations: [Japan: 4300 Abductions and Forcible Detentions](#)

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