

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Very Profitable Business of Faith-Breaking Continues Unabated in Japan

Knut Holdhus
September 24, 2024



Pastor Yoshihiro Iwamoto delivering his speech September 23, 2024 in Chuo Ward, Chiba City, Japan



Ugly faith-breaking: Conference held in Japan September 23, 2024, shedding light on abductions, forcible detention and nasty coercion to abandon one's faith

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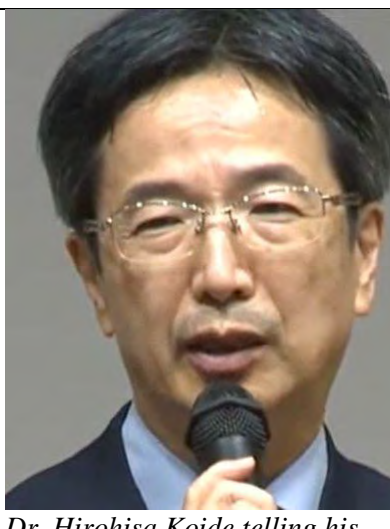
Abductions and Confinements Still Occur

Chiba Prefecture Conference on Freedom of Religion

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



Hiroshi Ogasawara



Dr. Hirohisa Koide telling his story Sep. 10, 2023 in Tokyo



Masumi Fukuda in Tokyo Jan. 20, 2024

The "Symposium on Freedom of Religion" organized by the Chiba Prefecture Citizens' Association for the Protection of Freedom of Religion and Human Rights was held on 23rd September 2024 in Chiba City. The event addressed the issue of forced renunciation of faith through abduction and confinement. About 200 members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) participated.

Hiroshi Ogasawara (小笠原裕), representing the organizers, stated, "Abduction and confinement targeting members of the [Family Federation](#) still occur today. This has led to deteriorating parent-child relationships, the onset of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), and even suicides." He further argued that if Japanese society continues to overlook these abductions and confinements, "it can be said that we are neglecting the freedom of religion, which is a cornerstone of democracy."

Pastor Yoshihiro Iwamoto (岩本能弘), an independent pastor who broadcasts on YouTube, reflected on his time when he was a member of the United Church of Christ in Japan. He revealed that he thought pastors who were involved in helping believers leave the church were volunteers, but later learned they received large sums of money. Regarding the government's request for a dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#), Iwamoto, quoting from Christianity, said, "There is no shame in being persecuted and slandered for something you did not do."

Dr. Hirohisa Koide (小出浩久), a victim of abduction and confinement, and non-fiction writer Masumi Fukuda (福田ますみ), raised concerns about the collusion between lawyers and Christian pastors in relation to abduction and confinement, pointing out that the media and the legal community are also involved.

According to the [Family Federation](#), more than 4,300 members have been victims of abduction, confinement, and forced conversion since 1966.

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Yet more about ugly faith-breaking: [12 Years of Forcible Detention and Awful Abuse](#)

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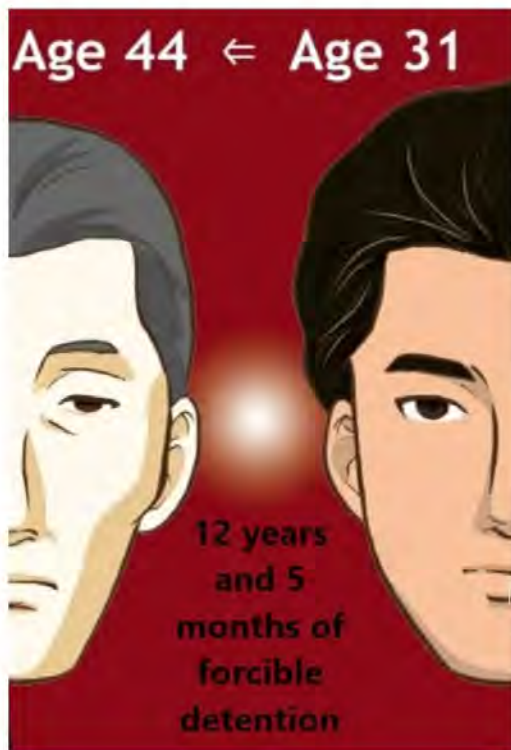
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Harsh Reality Of 4300 Forcibly Deprogrammed

• January 31, 2024 • Knut Holdhus

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Kishida administration pushing for many more to be forcibly deprogrammed

6th of six parts of large Monthly Seiron report – More on part 1, part 2, part 3, part 4, part 5.

Seiron (正論), a Japanese monthly opinion magazine, carried in its December 2023 issue a large report on the **vicious persecution** of the **Family Federation** (formerly the **Unification Church**) in Japan.

Two parts of the report by Makiko Takita, well known journalist and editor-in-chief of the magazine, contain an interview with Toru Goto, victim of horrible abuse during more than a decade of forcible detention.



Bitter Winter published this part of the report of Seiron on 24th January 2024, as the **sixth of six parts**



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of the English version of the original Japanese large report. Read the [whole Bitter Winter article](#). More on [article 1](#), [article 2](#), [article 3](#), [article 4](#), [article 5](#).

In this article, headlined "The Unification Church Case in Japan: The Harsh Reality of Deprogramming, Part II", journalist and editor Makiko Takita continues her interview with Toru Goto, recounting his ordeal of being forcibly abducted from the [Unification Church](#). Goto describes being neglected by his family during a hunger strike until he was on the brink of death. Despite pleading for a normal diet after his strike, he was subjected to further food deprivation, leading to extreme physical deterioration.



Goto describes what he went through,

"My family completely ignored me. I did not fix a term to end the third hunger strike, but my consciousness began to fade, and my breathing became increasingly labored. My mother was concerned and said to me, 'It's time to end it,' but the confinement did not end. If I continued like this, I might die. Feeling that my life was in danger, I finally gave up after 30 days.

But it did not end there. In the past two hunger strikes, food was served at the end of the fasting. This time, however, I was cut off. It was unexpected. My family said, 'What is wrong with you that you fasted on your own and asked us to serve your food? Are you stupid?' 'Continue until you die!' My heart was completely broken."

Toru Goto explains how he was treated,

"Finally, food was served. However, the food sanctions in the name of a recovery diet continued. The only food I ate each day was some watery porridge and a sport drink. This continued for another seventy days. My body was emaciated, and I was on the verge of starvation."

Eventually, after **enduring years of confinement and emotional abuse**, he was abruptly expelled from the place where he was forcibly detained, leaving him physically injured and emotionally shattered.

He recalls the day he was finally set free on 10th February 2008,

"My brother and his wife, my mother, and my sister all came in and sat down in front of me. The first thing my brother said to me with a stern expression on his face was, 'Do you have any intention to admit the faults of the [Unification Church](#)?' Everyone was silent. 'No,' I said. As if to confirm, my brother said, 'Are you sure about that?' and I said 'Yes.' Then my brother stared at me, his words getting stronger and more vehement shouting, 'Then get out of here right now!'

I was so stunned by this sudden turn of events that for a moment I could not understand what my brother was saying. My brother suddenly grabbed me with a terrible look on his face. My brother-in-law, sister, and mother joined in, grabbing me by the torso, arms, and legs, lifting me, carrying me toward the front door, and forcibly pushing me outside."



The end of Toru Goto's forcible detention 10th Feb. 2008. Photo: [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#)

Goto's story sheds light on the **widespread practice of forcibly deprogramming church members**, with an estimated 4,300 individuals subjected to such treatment. Many of those individuals were coerced into renouncing their beliefs and becoming plaintiffs in legal cases against the [church](#).

Toru Goto details the **immensity of the faith-breaking business** of abducting and forcibly detaining members of the [Unification Church](#),

"The number of [Unification Church](#) believers abducted and imprisoned by the deprogrammers and their families is estimated to be 4,300. Of these, some 3,000 were forced to apostatize.

Many of those who have been forced to apostatize, as well as

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their brothers, sisters, and brothers and sisters-in-law, often harbor hatred toward the church and are driven to the next stage of forced apostasy or conversion by being directed to the lawyers of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (National Federation of Bar Associations) and become plaintiffs in court cases. More than half of the plaintiffs in the 22 civil lawsuits (increased to 32 at the time of the request) listed in the request for the dissolution order are former believers who were forced to apostatize."

However, Goto expresses frustration at the lack of media coverage on the experiences of those who were forced to go through dreadful faith-breaking sessions and the complicity of certain individuals, including his own family members, in perpetuating these abuses.

Despite legal victories against deprogrammers and a decline in lawsuits against the church in recent years, Goto criticizes the ongoing efforts by the *Cultural Affairs Agency* and the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* to pursue a dissolution order against the [Unification Church](#). He highlights the **lack of transparency and fairness in these proceedings**, which seem to be driven by political motives rather than genuine concerns for religious freedom.



Toru Goto in 2008, barely able to move after being held in forcible detention by deprogrammers for more than 12 years. Photo: Kazuhiro Yonemoto / [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#)

The article concludes by urging readers to **question the motives behind the dissolution order and to consider the broader implications for religious freedom** in Japan. It raises concerns about the silence of other religious organizations and political leaders in the face of these attacks on freedom of belief, emphasizing the importance of defending this fundamental human right against authoritarian encroachments.

Editor of *Monthly Seiron*, Makiko Takita, points out, that the magazine has disclosed details that newspapers and TV stations are aware of, but don't publish. **She calls the whole process strange** that led to the Kishida administration requesting the Tokyo District Court to issue an order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)).

In her concluding remarks, she says,

"To our horror, no objections have been raised by other religious organizations or religious people. The same is true in the political world. We wonder whether Soka Gakkai, the original parent body of the New Komeito Party, should not think that the dissolution order may create future risks for them too. Does all this mean that other religions are relieved because the government is targeting the [Unification Church](#)?"

Makiko Takita calls the **steps taken by the Japanese authorities a violation of religious freedom**,

"I feel a sense of crisis when I see that the whole of Japan is silent on a process trampling freedom of belief and freedom of religion without following the proper procedures and with a political agenda. What leaders of dictatorial regimes fear is people's inner feelings. That is why they focus their efforts on shattering freedom of religion or belief. Have we lost sight of the preciousness of freedom of belief?"

"Harsh Reality of 4300 Forcibly Deprogrammed" – text: Knut Holdhus

Featured image above: Toru Goto went through 12 years and 5 months of forcible detention. Illustration: [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#)

Read Toru Goto's own account of his ordeals: [Heroic Battle Against Evil Japanese Practise](#)

and [Gross Human Rights Violations in Japan](#)

More on [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4](#), [part 5](#) of the *Seiron* article.

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