

Justice and Victory for Toru Goto

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October 8, 2015



On September 29, 2015, Japan's Supreme Court handed Toru Goto the final victory in his civil case stemming from his 12-year and 7-month confinement by faith breakers.

Mr. Toru Goto (51), president of the *National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement and Forced Conversion*, was confined in an apartment in Tokyo and pressured to give up his faith and leave the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU). Upon his release, he sued his relatives and the deprogrammers for their forced confinement actions, and last November, the appeals court judgment ordered the relatives and deprogrammers to pay a total of 22 million yen as compensation for damages. Last week, the Japanese Supreme Court dismissed the final appeal of the defendants and let the previous verdict by Tokyo High Court stand. This ended Mr. Goto's seven-year legal battle to receive justice.

The following comments were given by Mr. Goto following the final ruling in favor of his case:

"I am sincerely grateful that the civil verdict in my favor has been finalized, and I want to thank everyone who supported me. Following my release from confinement on February 10, 2008, I fought a total of seven years in both the criminal and civil courts. This was not just a personal fight. I also fought with the

thought that I was representing the 4,300 victims of abduction and confinement during the past 50 years.

“By the finalization of this verdict, the unlawful actions by Christian ministers known as ‘opposing ministers’ and deprogrammers who received money in return for their deprogramming activities, who until now had escaped legal accountability, were condemned.

“Also, it is important that the courts have stated clearly that faith-breaking involving physical confinement, even by family members, is unlawful and can never be permitted.

Perhaps influenced in part by the current case, there have been only two incidents of abduction and confinement during the past year (or perhaps I should say there have been as many as two). Also, we have seen that members, when confined, strongly protested and resisted and were soon released by their families. This is something that we had not seen previously. Such developments give us hope that abduction, confinement and forced conversion are coming to an end.

“At the same time, I want you to know about Masato Ishibashi, who has been missing for 1 year and 9 months since January last year and is presumed to be confined. We must secure the release of Mr. Ishibashi as soon as possible. Please continue to give us your interest and support as we work to root out abduction, confinement and forced conversion.”

Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of the Family Federation in the United States of America, also remarked on this case:

“This is an important human rights victory for all minority religious believers in Japan, not just for Toru Goto and the many other Family Federation members who have suffered confinement and persecution for their faith. I congratulate our Japanese colleagues for their dedication and commitment to this cause, and add my prayers for those members of our community of faith who are still suffering from forcible confinement in Japan.

“Rev. and Mrs. Moon, our True Parents, have always taught that we all are children of our Heavenly Parent, regardless of our racial, religious and national background. We are created to be one family under God, living together in mutual understanding, love and respect. Buoyed by this landmark decision in Japan, we now move on together toward that ideal with a renewed sense of confidence.”