

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Still Abductions, Confinement, And Faith-Breaking in Japan

Knut Holdhus
February 23, 2024



Illustration of a member of the [Family Federation](#) being forcibly detained by his parents and relatives

There are still abductions of members who are then forcibly detained nine years after landmark Supreme Court victory



Front page of Monthly Hanada February 2024

Award-winning Japanese author and investigative journalist Masumi Fukuda has written an in-depth report titled "Dissolve the Anti-Cult Lawyer Group, Not the [Unification Church](#)." She has discovered that a group of leftwing activist lawyers have specialized in fabricating false "victims".



In a series of four articles, [Bitter Winter](#), the online magazine for human rights and religious freedom, has published her report originally written in Japanese and published by the magazine Monthly Hanada in its February 2024 issue.

On 31st January 2024, [Bitter Winter](#) published the 4th of its four articles in English. It was headlined "[Deprogrammed, Then Compelled to Sue](#)".

On [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4a](#) of Masumi Fukuda's report.

In this final part, the investigative journalist exposes that cases of abduction, forcible detention and faith-breaking still persist, nine years after the successful civil trial in 2015 of Toru Goto, a member of the [Family Federation](#) (FFWPU). Goto's victory in the Supreme Court of Japan after having gone through the horrendous ordeal of being kidnapped, locked up for an incredible 12 years and 5 months and exposed to cruel faith-breaking sessions, marked a significant milestone in the legal battle against the evils of abduction, confinement, and deprogramming. Since 2015, reported incidents of such nature have dwindled. Nonetheless, there are still sporadic cases of abduction targeting second-generation believers. That underscores the ongoing challenge in completely eliminating this issue.

One such incident involved a 25-year-old male believer in Shizuoka Prefecture, who, despite not being a second-generation believer himself, found himself confined by his family for a month starting 31st December 2020. His journey into the [Family Federation](#) began during his university years when he was introduced to it through an affiliated student organization called "World CARP Japan". He became a member of it and also joined the [Family Federation](#) later.



Toru Goto in 2008 barely able to move after being held in forcible detention by faith-breakers for more than 12 years

He recalls,

"I developed a desire to learn about [God](#) through the [Divine Principle](#). I informed my parents about joining the CARP during my third year of university, but they seemed worried. To reassure them, I had both my parents participate in a CARP Parents' Meeting and arranged for them to have a meeting with the responsible person to help them understand that it was not a bad organization."

He had countless positive experiences with CARP members and was genuinely interested in exploring spirituality, but then something really strange and unexpected happened. Fukuda writes,

"However, on New Year's Eve in 2020, when he returned home, he encountered a strange situation. In the evening, his uncle and aunt visited, stating, 'We want to discuss your future with relatives.' Six people, including his parents and brother, gathered for a discussion. At that moment, his brother said, 'We want to talk without any interference. Please give us your mobile phones.' Hearing stories from CARP leaders about many believers being abducted and forced to resign in the past, he felt uneasy. However, he never expected to be confined at home. For the time being, he handed over his two mobile phones to his brother."



Device making it impossible to open windows

He found that special locking devices had been installed on windows and doors throughout the house. The young student found himself in a situation of being completely confined, as if in a prison. He asked his parents why they were doing this to him and begged them to let him out, but they refused, saying they wanted to keep him there until they "understood him".

Despite his pleas to understand the situation and his attempts to reach out

for help through a pre-arranged "rescue request letter" with CARP, his confinement persisted.

"On January 7, CARP staff came, and on January 11, a [FFWPU](#) lawyer visited the house. However, the man was inside the locked room and could not answer the intercom, so the rescue was unsuccessful. In both instances, the family called the police immediately after the rescuers arrived, and the police questioned the young man. But the police sided with the family, and even when the man told the police he was being 'confined', they did not listen."

The young man was desperate to find a way out. He discovered that an upstairs bathroom window had neither a lock nor bars on the outside. On 30th January 2021, he managed to remove the glass and could climb out, descend to the ground by clinging to a pipe, and getting a taxi to Tokyo.



Masumi Fukuda speaking in Tokyo 20th Jan. 2024

Masumi Fukuda writes that he still cannot trust his parents and has cut the relationship to them. The forcible detention destroyed it.

The catalyst for his confinement stemmed from his mother's exposure to literature critical of the [Family Federation](#), particularly a book by lawyer Masaki Gouro associated with the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS). This book purportedly justified parental actions of confinement under Article 35 of the Penal Code, sparking the mother's belief that such measures were permissible.

However, legal experts contest Gouro's interpretation, highlighting the flawed legal basis for justifying abduction and confinement. Despite the legal ambiguity, the prevalence of

abduction, confinement, and deprogramming of members of the [Family Federation](#) remains a pressing issue.

The investigative journalist writes,

"The deprogrammed ex-believers, mass-produced through abduction and confinement, are now placed on another conveyor belt to be fabricated as 'victims' of the [church](#), and they are reconfigured into apostates to attack the [church](#). Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, whether knowingly or unknowingly, or pretending not knowing, chose to maximize the use of these testimonies, pushing the UC [[Unification Church](#), now called the [Family Federation](#)] to the brink."

Furthermore, the manipulation of deprogrammed ex-believers to vilify the [Family Federation](#) underscores the insidious agenda of deprogrammers and>NNLASS. This deliberate exploitation of testimonies to undermine the [Family Federation](#)'s credibility has prompted calls for the dissolution of>NNLASS, which is perceived as a malicious and persistent force perpetuating harm.

Fukuda puts it like this,

"The deprogrammers and>NNLASS, who devised this scheme, are truly cunning. Therefore, this lawyers' organization fully meets the three criteria of organization, maliciousness, and continuity requested for dissolution. Indeed, there is an organization worthy of dissolution. It is the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales."

On [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4a](#) of Masumi Fukuda's report.

"Still Abductions, Confinement, and Faith-Breaking" - text: Knut Holdhus

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Japanese journalist exposes ugly leftwing conspiracy at the core of the dissolution case against Family Federation

Masumi Fukuda, award-winning Japanese author and investigative journalist, has penned an in-depth report titled "Dissolve the Anti-Cult Lawyer Group, Not the **Unification Church**." She is referring to a **group of leftwing activist lawyers who have specialized in fabricating false "victims"**.

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Opposition Inciting

In a series of four articles, [Bitter Winter](#), the online magazine for human rights and religious freedom, has published her report originally written in Japanese and published by the magazine *Monthly Hanada* in its February 2024 issue.



On 31st January 2024, [Bitter Winter](#) published the 4th of its four articles in English. It was headlined “[Deprogrammed, Then Compelled to Sue](#)”.

On [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4b](#) of Masumi Fukuda's report.

In this part, Fukuda points out that more than half of those who went to court against the [Family Federation](#), then called the [Unification Church](#), had suffered kidnapping and deprogramming before they were asked to take legal action in order to prove they really had given up their faith.

Fukuda returns to the discussion surrounding the request for a dissolution order. She details how it has come to light that the 32 judgments that acknowledged the [church's](#) liability for compensation are highly problematic. Among those judgments, 22 recognized the responsibility of the [Family Federation](#) towards former members who acted as plaintiffs, with a compensation totaling approximately 1.4 billion yen. The malignancy of those cases was cited as the grounds for the government to exercise its right to ask questions, a process that occurred in November 2022.



Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama. Photo: Sekai Nippo

With details of those 22 cases somewhat made known, Tatsuki Nakayama, the attorney representing the [Family Federation](#), meticulously scrutinized each judgment. Surprisingly, it was discovered that out of the total 231 plaintiffs, 55.4%, or 128 individuals, were former members who became victims of abduction, forcible detention, and deprogramming.

For instance, in 2001, there were two such plaintiffs at Hiroshima High Court Okayama Branch, and 80% of the 21 plaintiffs at Sapporo District Court. In 2002, Tokyo District Court dealt with 3 such plaintiffs, while at Niigata District Court there were 58.

However, concerning the ten newly added cases, no information has been revealed regarding the reasons for leaving the [church](#). With the submission of the dissolution request, the judicial system is now tasked with making judgments. Yet, since the proceedings will occur behind closed doors, there remains a possibility that a dissolution order might be given with minimal information made public until the judgment is delivered.

In the past, investigative journalist Masumi Fukuda has on several occasions mentioned the abduction and confinement perpetrated against members of the [Family Federation](#), resulting in over [4,300 victims](#) of faith-breaking. She elaborates how deprogrammers (faith-breakers) or pastors affiliated with mainstream Christian churches, perceiving the [Unification Church](#) as heretical, have incited close relatives of believers to kidnap them. Those adherents are then forcibly detained at secure locations, such as locked apartments, where escape is impossible.



Victims of abduction, forcible detention, and faith-

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Almost every day, deprogrammers and hostile pastors would visit those abducted believers, subjecting them to verbal abuse and sometimes physical violence. The professional faith-breakers and preachers would persistently criticize the teachings of the **Unification Church** and highlight scandals attributed to the **founder** until the believers express a desire to renounce their faith. As a result, around 70% of the **4,300 kidnapped members** reportedly gave up their faith.

Some members, wishing to put an end to the forcible detention, feigned to have quit their beliefs. To expose such deceit, the deprogrammers would take various measures: de-converted believers are required to draft apostasy letters, consume alcohol (against the guidelines of the **Unification Church**), disclose addresses of other members (to target them for kidnapping), and visit other adherents in forcible detention in order to persuade them to abandon their faith.

On top of that, those de-converted believers are coerced into filing lawsuits, such as seeking an annulment of marriages conducted in **Unification Church's Blessing Ceremonies (collective weddings)** and insisting the return of donations given to the **church**. Fearing that they might be abducted and forcibly detained again if they don't do as they are told to by the faith-breakers and hostile lawyers, the de-converted adherents end up having no choice but to comply.

In court, those forcibly de-converted believers paint a black picture of the **Family Federation**, as instructed by hostile lawyers and deprogrammers. In addition, the professional faith-breakers and pastors teaming up with them direct the coerced believers to present themselves in media as "ordinary" former members who simply wish to denounce the **religious organization**. Witnessing this, parents of other members become worried and turn to deprogrammers for help, resulting in further instances of abduction and forcible detention, thus creating a vicious cycle.

If MEXT (the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*) base its "right to question" the **Family Federation** on assertions from numerous abducted and deprogrammed plaintiffs in the 22 above-mentioned cases, and if it leads to a verdict that the **church's** malicious nature is evident and warrants dissolution, that would be exceedingly unjust. It would then be most proper for the **Family Federation** to resolutely resist the request for a dissolution order.

Masumi Fukuda writes that to her it seems like MEXT never had the intention of facilitating a fair and impartial trial, as evidenced by its collaboration with *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS)*, an anti-religious group deeply antagonistic towards the **Unification Church**. MEXT deliberately leaned on NNLASS lawyers for collecting information and carrying out investigations. Indeed, the powerful impact of NNLASS on MEXT becomes apparent in Government Minister Masahito Moriyama's comments during a press conference,



Masahito Moriyama, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Photo (2023): 首相官邸ホームページ. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int. Cropped

"The **church** [...] continuously restricted the free decision-making of numerous believers over an extended period, impeded normal judgment, and caused significant damage by inducing them to make large donations and purchase goods, disrupting the peace of their lives."

Such a claim echoes the accusations made by NNLASS. Without examination, the absurd nature of Moriyama's claims might not be perceived. It actually suggests that the **Family**

Federation for a long time extensively has employed "brainwashing" on its members, turning them into obedient robots used by the church. The concept of brainwashing is of course discredited in the West and abandoned since a long time. It is considered pseudo-scientific.

If the Minister Moriyama of MEXT had in earnest read such a preposterous statement, he ought to have asked some questions. Investigative journalist Fukuda asks,

"Could it be that officials at MEXT have been "brainwashed," or mind controlled, by the>NNLASS?"

Continued in [part 4b](#)

On [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4b](#) of Masumi Fukuda's report.

Featured image above: Masumi Fukuda in April 2023. Photo: [FOREF](#)

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