FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Toru Goto, Imprisoned 12 Years to Break Faith

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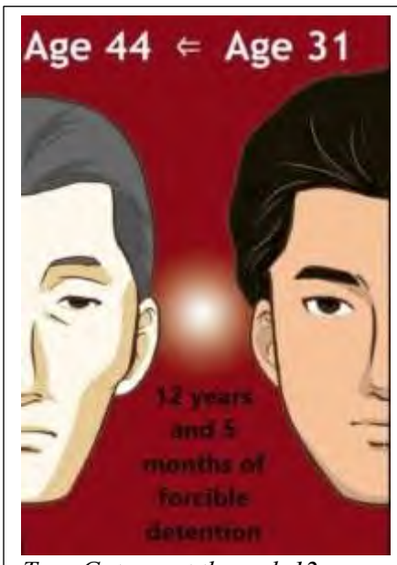
Toru Goto



Toru Goto went through 12 years and 5 months of forcible detention

Toru Goto recounts how a family dispute became a 12-year ordeal of abduction, confinement and attempted coercive faith-breaking in a Tokyo apartment made into a prison

Part 1 of **"My Experience of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion"**, a testimony on 19th September 2026 by Toru Goto (後藤徹), a Japanese member of the Family Federation and victim of attempted coercive faith-breaking - locked up for over 12 years in apartment turned prison. This first-hand witness account - of high relevance for the current dissolution case against the Family Federation in Japan - was delivered at a Zoom conference organized by Peace and Reconciliation Together (PnR-T), a Dutch-registered foundation focused on reconciliation, peacebuilding, dialogue, and healing historical conflicts.

I was confined for 12 years and five months, from September 1995 until February 2008. In terms of age, I was 31 when it began and 44 when it ended. These should have been the brightest years of my life.

I was not confined in a foreign country or in some remote mountain area far from civilization. I was moved between three apartments, and for the last ten years or so I was confined in an apartment in Tokyo.

This photograph was taken immediately before I was confined for those 12 years and five months.

Toru Goto at 31

What I would like to tell you today is not simply what happened to me. I want to explain how I maintained my faith during those 12 years and five months of confinement - what I suffered, and what enabled me to preserve both my heart and my faith.

First, let me tell you about my family.

There were five of us: my parents, my older brother, myself, and my younger sister. We were a very ordinary family who lived happily and got along well.

My father was a company employee who was extremely dedicated to his work and very capable. Although he could be strict and scold us when necessary, he also had a warm and friendly side. For example, he would sometimes make food himself and serve it to the

family.

My mother was gentle and reserved, somewhat prone to worrying and conscious of what other people thought, but she was a wonderful mother who sincerely loved her family.

My brother and I sometimes argued, but whenever I had a problem, he was someone I could turn to for advice. I remember teaching my younger sister before her exams and celebrating together when she achieved good grades.

Perhaps we were just an ordinary family like any other. But it was our unique place in this world - the one place that belonged to us.

None of us could ever have imagined that we would later engage in such a bitter struggle over this family and our living environment.

I first encountered the teachings of the Unification Church in 1986, when I was in my fourth year at university.

Protesting against the evil of deprogramming (faith-breaking) in Shinjuku, Tokyo 8th December 2024. Here, Toru Goto, representing the National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Religious De-Conversion (center), delivering a speech. The posters behind him carry pictures of Toru Goto hardly able to walk after more than 12 years of forcible confinement

My older brother called me and said,

> "There's a place where you can study some useful things. Why don't you come with me and take a look?"

I was worried that my brother had gotten involved with something strange. My father also said, "Why don't you go and see what it's like?" I went with the intention, so to speak, of bringing my brother back.

When I first watched the introductory video, I found it boring and one-sided, and I complained quite strongly to the staff.

But my brother pleaded with me:

> "I'm sure this will be useful to you in the future, so why don't you study it?"

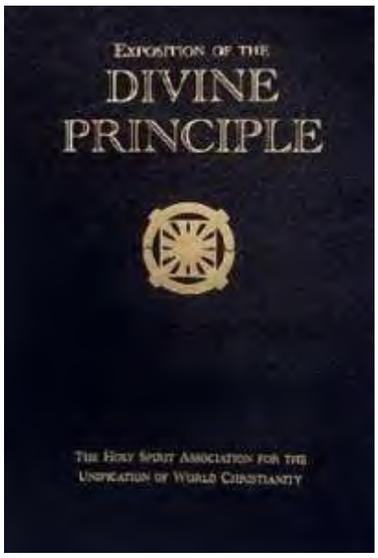
I thought that if this really was a suspicious organization, I could simply leave together with my brother. So I began studying.

But once I actually began learning, I became deeply absorbed in its teachings.

At that time, I was struggling with spiritual and existential questions that I could not discuss even with my closest friends or family. I was depressed by the irrational things I encountered in the world - war, crime, adultery and so on - and I felt ashamed of my own selfishness. I was tormented by a sense of emptiness

and meaninglessness, unable to find hope or value in human beings or in life itself.

At the same time, somewhere deep inside me I was searching for a noble way of life and for an unchanging, genuine love.



Exposition if the Divine Principle, the official English version of the Unification Principles, published in 1996

It was precisely at such a time that, through my brother, I encountered the teachings of the Unification Church.

For the first time I encountered ideas such as the existence of God; that God's purpose in creating was to realize love and joy; that God and human beings are related as parent and child; and that human history is the history of God's efforts to save humanity.

I was deeply shocked and moved by these teachings, which were completely new to me. It felt as though a dead soul had come back to life, and I became a member of the Unification Church.

In 1987, my older brother, who was the most devoted of the three siblings in his involvement with the Unification Church, suddenly disappeared.

Three months later, my father contacted me and said that my brother wanted to see me. We arranged to meet. My father took me to a hotel in Tokyo. When we entered one of the rooms, my brother was there.

Seeing him looking healthy, I almost cried with relief.

But then he told me that he had decided to leave the Unification Church and asked me to listen to what he had to say.

My brother had already been subjected to abduction and confinement for the purpose of breaking his faith, and he had lost his faith. Now they intended to break mine as well.

The door to the room had been secured so that it could not be opened from the inside.

I realized what had happened.

To be continued. Part 2 coming soon

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Father Moon's Washington Monument Rally At 50

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From the large rally at the Washington Monument on 18th September 1976 with a sprawling crowd of 300,000 attendees. Photo: FFWPU

Fifty years have passed since an extraordinary event took place on the grounds of the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., on 18th September 1976. An immense crowd, estimated at 300,000 people, gathered under the late-summer sky to hear a message that was both a stern warning and a profound declaration of hope for the United States. At the center of this historic event stood Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012), the founder of the Unification Church. He delivered a powerful and unforgettable speech titled "America and God's Will". Today marks the 50th anniversary of this monumental rally – a moment that remains a defining chapter in the history of modern religious movements and American public discourse.

See also The Event That Put Father Moon in the Spotlight

The rally at the Washington Monument served as the grand finale of a trilogy of major public speaking events that Father Moon held in the United States during the mid-1970s. This strategic public campaign began at Madison Square Garden on 18th September 1974 and continued with a massive, highly publicized event at Yankee Stadium in June 1976.

Originally, the Washington, D.C. gathering was intended to take place several years later, allowing the movement more time to expand and consolidate its resources. However, riding the immense wave of momentum and spiritual energy generated by the success of the first two rallies, Father Moon made the bold decision to accelerate the timeline. Consequently, the rally in the nation's capital was organized just over three months after the Yankee Stadium event.

The choice of 18th September carried an immense, deeply personal, and providential significance for Father Moon. Exactly thirty years earlier, on 18th September 1946, North Korean communist authorities took the already imprisoned Sun Myung Moon out of his cell and began to brutally torture him in the prison in Pyongyang because he had attempted to secretly send a message to a Christian leader who was in another cell.

The torture was so severe that Sun Myung Moon hovered between life and death for several days. He survived only in what was described as a miraculous manner. On 21st November, his disciples found his battered body cast out in the snow outside the prison walls, more dead than alive. For Father Moon, standing before hundreds of thousands of people in the capital of the free world – on that exact date, three decades after his near-fatal torture – was an ultimate victory of faith over oppression and a testament to God's protection.

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From the crowd at the Washington Monument rally on 18th September 1976. Photo: FFWPU

In front of the sprawling crowd of 300,000 attendees, Father Moon delivered his core message. He emphasized that the United States had not achieved its wealth, power, and freedom by mere historical accident. Instead, he declared that God had consciously chosen and blessed America to serve as a model nation with the mission of establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

This blessing, however, carried an immense global responsibility. Father Moon maintained that the Unification Church and the United States must work together to realize God's purpose in the work of salvation. He warned the nation against turning inward or becoming complacent in its material wealth. America's divine mission was not merely to save its own nation, but to take on the task of saving the entire world and creating "one world under God".

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The first of 11 full-page newspaper advertisements published in The Washington Post and The Washington Star between 5th and 18th September 1976. The campaign was conceived by renowned advertising executive Stephen Baker. Photo: FFWPU

In one of the evening's most memorable metaphors, Father Moon described his sudden and impactful arrival in the West not as a foreign intrusion, but as an act of absolute necessity. He characterized himself as a firefighter rushing to a house engulfed in flames, or a doctor hurrying to treat a critically ill patient – someone who had come from the outside to help America. He declared that the teachings of the Unification Church, which are absolutely God-centered, contained the power to awaken America and create a model of an ideal nation. The situation was marked by immense urgency, which he underscored with the dramatic words:

> "America must wake up today! Tomorrow may be too late!"

Father Moon viewed the United States as the nation representing the entire world in the era of the Second Coming. In 1976, it had been exactly 200 years since the founding of the United States. This Bicentennial coincided with the conclusion of Christianity's 2,000-year history, making 1976 a prophetically and historically unique year.

Because of the great success of the three major rallies in the mid-1970s, Father Moon declared that God's work had now been accelerated by several years. He considered the necessary conditions for a global victory to have been established. Even though this took place in the midst of the Cold War – a time defined by deep

place in the midst of the Cold War – a time defined by deep ideological division – he was already looking far beyond the political barriers of the era. He boldly declared that one day, in the future, he would organize a major rally for God in Moscow itself.

Fifty years later, the Washington Monument Rally is remembered as a peak moment of the public ministry of the Unification movement (Unificationism) in the West. It stands as a striking testament to the scale of religious mobilization in 1970s America. As we reflect on this 50th anniversary, the core themes of that historic September day – spiritual renewal, global responsibility, and the call for a nation to look beyond its own borders to serve humanity – continue to resonate as a powerful reminder of the long lines of history.

***Text**: Knut Holdhus, editor*

***Featured image** above: Sun Myung Moon speaking at the Washington Monument rally on 18th September 1976. Screenshot from video by FFWPU, improved resolution by Grok xAI, 17thSeptember 2026.*

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