

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japanese Police Aid Kidnapping and Captivity

Knut Holdhus
July 25, 2026



Natsumi Asamori (pseudonym), who was present when her sister was assaulted in their family home. Photographed in Tokyo on the afternoon of the 17th



Police inaction leads to crisis of trust as Japanese woman kidnapped twice for her faith is now afraid to report new violent attack to police

Tokyo, 24th July 2026 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Part 2 of the Series Dissolution Threatens the Human Rights of Believers

Alleged Kidnapping and Confinement Ignored

Growing Distrust of Police Leads Woman to Hesitate Before Reporting Broken Bones

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

See part 1 of the series: [When Religious Intolerance Turns Violent](#)

"The problem of [kidnapping and confinement](#) has still not been clearly and fully resolved."

So says Tomoe Asamori (pseudonym), a woman in her fifties living in Tokyo and a member of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)).



Abduction for the purpose of deprogramming (faith-breaking): A reenactment of [Yukie Kanamori](#) (pseudonym) having been forced into a sleeping bag and abducted into a van by several men. Image provided by the person involved, partially edited.

Twice, concerned about her religious donations and involvement with the [religious organization](#), her parents [confined her in apartments](#) and other rooms in an attempt to force her to renounce her faith.

During one period of confinement, a pastor acting as a [deprogrammer](#) (faith-breaker) [See editor's note 1 below] - who had been directing her relatives - struck her on the head with a floor cushion. Yet what shocked Asamori most was not the violence itself, but the fact that her parents lowered their eyes and pretended not to notice as the pastor assaulted her.

Supporters of [deprogramming](#) (faith-breaking) [See editor's note 1 below] have argued that believers are under "mind control" [See editor's note 2 below], making confinement necessary as part of what they describe as "protective

persuasion" or "rescue". Asamori strongly rejects that reasoning,

"They claimed they locked me up out of parental love to persuade and save me. But if that were true, why did they leave everything to the pastor and never intervene? The whole situation was completely contradictory."

Police Allegedly Assisted the Forced Deconversion

Asamori also says that police personnel assisted in her confinement.

Regarding the first incident, she explained:

"One of my relatives knew a retired police officer. After being consulted, that former officer apparently agreed to cooperate and provided information."

She also recalls another incident that left her deeply disappointed with the police shortly before her second confinement.

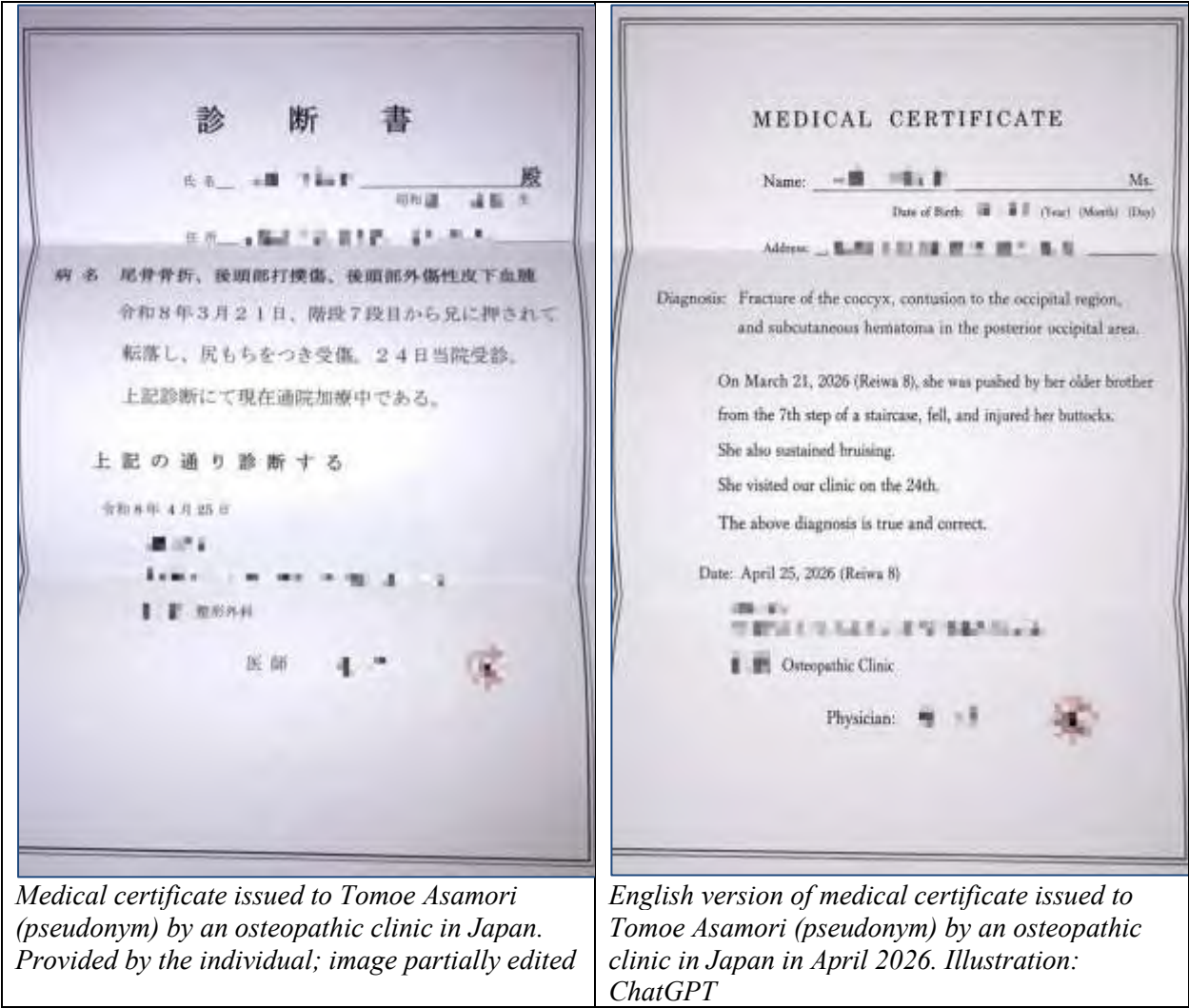
One day she accidentally lost her wallet, which was turned in to a police station. When she went to retrieve it, she noticed that an officer was staring at her with what she describes as "a strange expression".

Only later did she learn why.

According to Asamori, her parents had telephoned the police station beforehand to inform officers that they intended to "take their daughter into protective custody" on a certain date and requested that the police "respond appropriately".

In other words, if she cried out from inside the [apartment](#) and neighbors called the police, officers had effectively been asked not to intervene.

Having experienced what she believes were two occasions on which police ignored her [kidnapping and confinement](#) because she belonged to the [Family Federation](#), Asamori says she gradually came to feel that reporting such incidents would be pointless.



Even after recently suffering serious injuries - including broken bones - when her brother [pushed her](#) down a flight of stairs at her parents' home, she has hesitated to file a police report.

"To explain what happened, I'd inevitably have to talk about my religion. And in today's climate, I don't know whose side the police would take."

She worries that there may be other [Family Federation](#) members experiencing violence behind closed doors without anyone knowing.

Sister Surprised by Brother's Violence

According to Asamori's younger sister, Natsumi (pseudonym), who was the only eyewitness to the recent incident, their brother had previously been violent not only toward her but also toward their parents.

However, she said he had never before become physically violent toward Tomoe.

"In fact, they probably communicated better than anyone else in the family."

For that reason, she was shocked to see him assault his sister.

Natsumi also noted:

"My sister said she could smell alcohol coming from our brother's room on the second floor. After our mother was gone, his eating habits deteriorated, and he may have become dependent on alcohol."

She grimaced as she recalled that immediately after [pushing his sister down the stairs](#), her brother's "eyes looked like those of a demon."

Where Did the Anti-Family Federation Materials Come From?

In front of the family's Buddhist altar were books by lawyers and journalists critical of the [Family Federation](#), along with photocopied articles.

Natsumi questioned how they came to be there.

"Knowing my brother's personality, I doubt he would go to the trouble of printing out articles and keeping them himself."

Years earlier, their parents had attempted to force Tomoe to abandon her faith through [kidnapping and confinement](#), and their brother had attended study sessions connected with those efforts.

Natsumi believes the family's names would likely have appeared on lists maintained through [deprogramming](#) (faith-breaking) [See editor's note 1 below] networks, making it entirely possible that anti-[Federation](#) materials had been sent to them.

Following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三), a flood of media criticism was directed at the [Family Federation](#).

As Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) gathered evidence from former members and believers' relatives in preparation for seeking a dissolution order against the [religious organization](#), the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales - which can be described as having close ties to [deprogrammers](#) (faith-breakers) [See editor's note 1 below] - along with others, cooperated in collecting such evidence.

Describing her brother as "serious and meticulous, but not someone who is good at thinking independently and taking initiative," Natsumi said:

"If someone handed him materials and explained, 'This is what the [Unification Church](#) is like,' he might simply accept it as true."

She added:

"I'm sure my brother has feelings he can't put into words. It wasn't just prejudice against religion. I think many emotions he couldn't express built up over time until they finally exploded. Now he can't bring himself to apologize, and he's only driving himself further into a corner."

See part 1 of the series: [When Religious Intolerance Turns Violent](#)

[Editor's note 1: Coercive faith-breaking ("deprogramming") in Japan refers to the practice of coercively attempting to separate individuals from their religious affiliations or beliefs, typically through intervention by family members, professional faith-breakers (deprogrammers) or organizations hostile to new religious movements (NRMs). This phenomenon often targets

members of such movements, e.g. relatively large faiths like the [Family Federation](#) or Jehovah's Witnesses, but also smaller groups like Happy Science (Kōfuku no Kagaku) and other newer religious movements.



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of Soka Gakkai. Here students belonging to the faith in 2001

However, also Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist-based lay organization with more than 8 million Japanese members, and affiliated with Nichiren Buddhism, has occasionally been subject to faith-breaking attempts.

The practice gained attention in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Parents or concerned family members often hired faith-breakers who taught them how to abduct and forcibly detain believers. Almost all such cases involved confining the individual believer and cutting him or her off from the religious community. During the confinement, the believer was subjected to intense questioning or indoctrination designed to break his or her faith. The aim was to "rescue" the person from what the family often had been tricked by faith-breakers or lawyers to regard as harmful influence from the religious organization.

Critics of forced de-conversion argue that it violates fundamental human rights, including freedom of thought, religion, and association. Reports of psychological trauma and accusations of unlawful detention have sparked debates over its ethical and legal implications. In response, some religious groups, particularly NRMs, have lobbied for greater protections against such practices.

Japanese courts have been inconsistent in addressing cases of coercive faith-breaking. While some verdicts have condemned the practice as illegal detention, others have been more lenient, citing family concerns about "mental health" or alleged "exploitation" as mitigating factors.]

[Editor's note 2: In Japan, the "mind-control" myth has been a powerful tool used to stigmatize and suppress new religious movements (NRMs), particularly since the 1980s. The concept suggests that NRMs manipulate or "brainwash" their followers, depriving them of free will and rational thought. This narrative gained traction after the 1995 Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attack, when public fear of dangerous cults intensified. Although Aum was an extreme and violent exception, the incident cast suspicion on all NRMs, allowing critics, media, and the government to label diverse groups as manipulative or psychologically coercive.

The "mind-control" myth serves multiple social and political functions. It simplifies complex questions of belief, making it easier to portray converts as victims rather than as individuals exercising spiritual agency. This framing justifies legal and social intervention, including the coercive "[deprogramming](#)" of believers - sometimes involving confinement or psychological pressure to force renunciation of faith. Lawyers, ex-member groups, and certain media outlets have used the idea of mind control to construct NRMs as threats to family stability and national order, reinforcing social conformity and Japan's preference for established, non-controversial religions such as Buddhism and Shinto.

In recent years, the myth resurfaced following the 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose attacker cited resentment toward the [Family Federation](#). A public outrage largely created by media reignited scrutiny of NRMs, and politicians and journalists revived "mind-control" rhetoric to explain fundraising and recruitment practices. Critics argue that this framing discourages genuine religious tolerance and critical examination of Japan's restrictive religious climate. Overall, the "mind-control" myth functions less as a scientific or psychological concept and more as a moral panic - a cultural weapon used to delegitimize minority faiths and to reaffirm mainstream social norms about religion, obedience, and the boundaries of acceptable belief.]

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When Religious Intolerance Turns Violent

July 24, 2026 • The News Desk

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After the dissolution in Japan, believers report growing hostility and intolerance



Tokyo, 23rd July 2026 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

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*Dissolution Threatens
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**Family Violence and
Life-Threatening
Danger**

*Woman Pushed Down Stairs by
Enraged Brother*

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the
editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

See part 2 of the series: *Police Trust Shattered After Forced
Confinement*



The Supreme Court of Japan. Photo: 江戸村のとくどう /
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More than one month has passed since the dissolution of
the religious corporation *Family Federation for World
Peace and Unification* (formerly the *Unification Church*)
became final following the *Supreme Court's dismissal* of its
special appeal. In its decision dated 22nd June, the Supreme
Court stated that the psychological impact on the *religious
organization's* believers was “necessary and unavoidable”.

But did the Court give sufficient consideration to the effects
that the negative stigma attached to the *organization* could
have on its members?

Two female believers suffered serious injuries, including
fractures, after being assaulted by family members who
opposed their faith. The human rights of believers are now
under threat.

“I Thought I Was Going to Be Killed”

Ms. Tomoe Asamori (pseudonym), a woman in her fifties
living in Tokyo who is a member of the *Family Federation*,
became involved in an argument with her older brother
over her religious beliefs at her parents' home in late March
of this year, shortly after the *Tokyo High Court's decision*
initiated the *liquidation process* for the *religious
corporation*.

As the argument showed no sign of ending, she decided to
leave and began walking downstairs from the second floor.
At that moment, her brother shoved her from behind.

Ms. Asamori joined the *religious organization* in her
twenties. In the past, she had twice been subjected to
abduction and confinement by her parents and relatives in
attempts to *force her to abandon her faith*.

Her father has since passed away, and her mother now lives
in a nursing facility because of dementia. Her older brother
has been living alone in the family home for the past several



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years.

At the time she was confined years earlier, her brother had not taken as active a role in the coercive faith-breaking efforts as their parents had. However, he helped by driving the car and attended study sessions organized by [deprogrammers](#) (faith-breakers) [\[See editor's note below\]](#) – specialists who seek to persuade members to leave religious groups.

“You Still Haven’t Quit?”

In late March, after visiting the family grave together with her younger sister, Ms. Asamori stopped by her parents’ home.

Their mother had undergone surgery in early March while living in the care facility, but Ms. Asamori had been unable to reach her brother. Even when she went directly to the house, he appeared to pretend that no one was home.

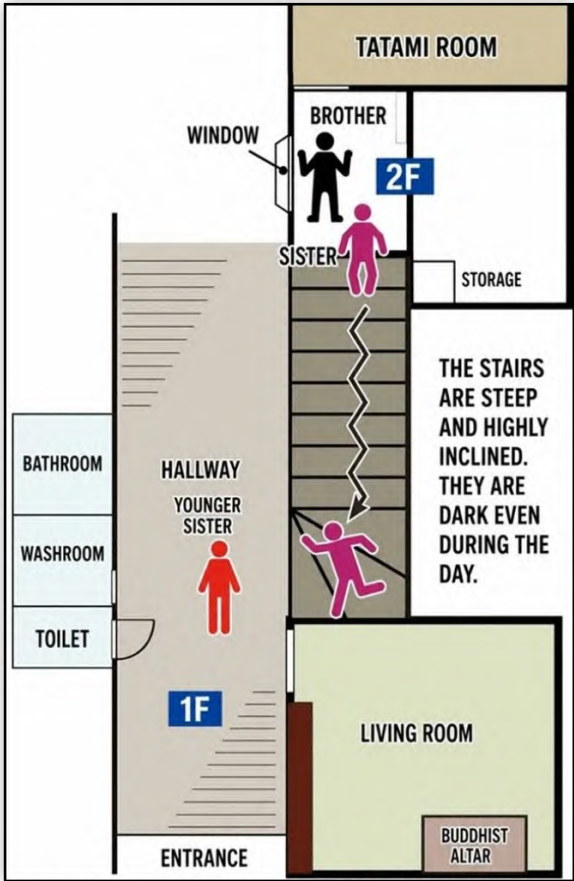
Several years earlier, the keyhole of the front door had apparently been sealed with some kind of adhesive, making the spare key Ms. Asamori possessed unusable.

Left with no alternative, she entered through the back veranda, went upstairs where her brother was, and opened the door to his room. Recalling what happened, Ms. Asamori said:

“My brother came stomping over and stood right in front of me. ‘You’re still in the [church?](#)’ he shouted. ‘I thought you’d quit.’ Although he’d never heard me say I’d left, he seemed to have convinced himself that I had. But he just kept shouting, ‘I know the truth!’ and ‘Get out!’”

She also tried to tell him about their mother’s surgery and her recovery afterward.

“But all he would say was, ‘So what? It has nothing to do with me,’ and ‘I don’t want anything more to do with this.’ He kept repeating those words.”



According to the testimony of Ms. Asamori’s younger sister, who witnessed the incident from the first floor, Ms. Asamori tumbled down the stairs after being pushed by her brother and crashed into the wall. Illustration: [Sekai Nippo](#). English version by ChatGPT.

Wearing the hood of his jacket over his head, her brother grabbed Ms. Asamori’s right arm and tried to force her

downstairs while holding onto it.

Fearing it was dangerous, she pulled her arm free and began descending the stairs on her own.

At that moment, her brother shoved her from behind. She fell, sliding down the staircase in a seated position before crashing violently into the wall beside the stairs.

Even then, his anger did not subside. After coming downstairs, he also struck Ms. Asamori's younger sister, who had been waiting on the first floor, in the face.

Ms. Asamori struggled to her feet and intervened between them. Her brother then retreated upstairs.

Her younger sister wanted to leave the house immediately, but Ms. Asamori insisted that she had not yet offered incense before her late father's Buddhist altar. Enduring the pain, she first prayed at the family altar before finally leaving the house.

Broken Tailbone, Bleeding Head Injury, and a Month of Pain

“I Could Have Died”

Ms. Asamori later visited a bonesetter's clinic, where she learned that the impact of the fall had fractured her tailbone.

She had also struck her head against the wall, causing bleeding from the back of her head. Fortunately, examinations found no abnormalities of her skull or brain.

The pain was so severe that walking was difficult, and she was told it would be at least a month before she could reasonably undergo another examination. Looking back, Ms. Asamori sighed.

“If I had landed differently, I might have died or been left permanently disabled.”

She also wonders what would have happened if she had visited the house alone. Had she lost consciousness after falling down the stairs, how would her brother have reacted? Would he have called an ambulance? Or would he simply have left her there?

She does not know the answer, and the thought still fills her with fear.

Speaking about her brother, Ms. Asamori said:

“At heart, he's a kind person, but he's the type who forces his own worldview onto others.”

When she visited the family home, magazines, books, and photocopied articles criticizing the [Unification Church](#) were piled densely around her late father's Buddhist altar.

Because the assailant is a family member, Ms. Asamori has not yet decided whether to file a criminal complaint over being pushed down the stairs.

However, she repeatedly emphasized:

“Just because someone opposes my faith does not give them any justification for pushing me down a staircase.”

See part 2 of the series: [Police Trust Shattered After Forced Confinement](#)

Featured image above: Tomoe Asamori (pseudonym), a member of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), says she was pushed down a staircase by her brother. Photographed on the morning of 1st July 2026 in Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

[Editor's note 1: Coercive faith-breaking]

(“deprogramming”) in Japan refers to the practice of coercively attempting to separate individuals from their religious affiliations or beliefs, typically through intervention by family members, professional faith-breakers (deprogrammers) or organizations hostile to new religious movements (NRMs). This phenomenon often targets members of such movements, e.g. relatively large faiths like the [Family Federation](#) or Jehovah’s Witnesses, but also smaller groups like Happy Science (Kōfuku no Kagaku) and other newer religious movements.



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of **Soka Gakkai**. Here students belonging to the faith in 2001. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp](#). Cropped

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