



**FROM THE DESK OF THE
ICRF PRESIDENT DAN FEFFERMAN
May 8, 2013**

First the bad news:

Two more UC members in Japan have gone missing during the last few weeks and are presumed to be undergoing forced de-conversion. One is Ms. M.M., a 26-year old hospital worker from Hiroshima, who went missing on March 26. The second is Mr. T.I., a 21-year old CARP member and engineering student at Kanazawa University, who disappeared on April 27. Both M.M. and T.I. had reason to believe their families might abduct them so they carried GPS devices in case of trouble. In both disappearances, church members traced the warning signal to the homes of victims' relatives but found the premises deserted. Police were alerted, but as usual, they refused to accept missing persons' reports, saying "it is a family matter." In T.I.'s case the police even refused to recognize her fiancé (to whom she was blessed in a church ceremony) as a legitimate complainant. Please keep both of M.M. and T.I. in your prayers. More complete information about them on the front page of religiousfreedom.com.

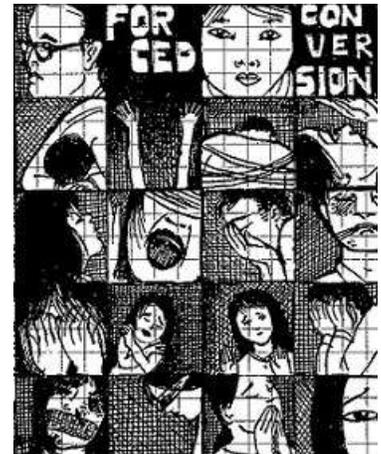


Illustration by Rhonda Williams

Now to the signs of hope:

- **USCIRF Report.** The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has for the first time reported officially on the problem in Japan. This report is widely read in the human rights community worldwide. Ordinarily USCIRF deals only with 'Countries of Particular Concern,' but this year they expanded their report to include a section entitled: "Japan: Kidnapping and Forced Religious De-Conversion."
- **Mainstream Media Recognition.** The *Washington Post* reported on May 3rd that "the trend [in Japan] is about as alarming as its name implies." It quoted USCIRF as follows: 'Over the past several decades, thousands of individuals belonging to the Unification Church, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and other new religious movements (NRMs) have been kidnapped by their families in an effort to force them to renounce their chosen beliefs... Those abducted describe psychological harassment and physical abuse by both family members and "professional deprogrammers." Police and judicial authorities have neither investigated nor indicted those responsible for these acts, often citing lack of evidence.'



- **Becket Fund to Publish Kiyomi’s Story.** The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty has decided to publish Kiyomi Miyama’s story in an upcoming book, featuring female victims of religious freedom violations, “In Our Own Voice.” You may recall Kiyomi as the woman who was forced by her captors to annul her marriage before they would release her. Even though she renounced her faith after six months, they imprisoned her for an additional two years until the annulment was finalized. Despite losing her marriage and suffering from years of depression, Kiyomi eventually regained her faith and is now speaking out.
- **Seattle Rally.** SAFE activist Scott Dolfay organized a protest event during the recent 38th annual Cherry Blossom Festival in Seattle in late April. As a result, festival organizers are pushing the Japanese consulate to take the issue seriously. Scott and his team asked passers-by to sign a petition to the Japanese government demanding that authorities enforce the laws guaranteeing all Japanese citizens the freedom to practice their religion without fear of abduction or violent de-conversion attempts. Scott reports that a festival organizers admitted the protest has been an embarrassment. “The organizers are now pushing the consulate to deal with us directly,” Scott told familyfed.org “As the official sees it, it is the responsibility of the Japanese government to talk to us.”



Scott Dolfay explains petition to passerby.

- **Amnesty International Event.** The George Washington University chapter of Amnesty International featured the Japan deprogramming issue at a campus event on March 19. Many GW students attended, especially those who are active in human rights issues. Shani Shih, a student board member of Amnesty International at GWU, said the turnout was far greater than she expected. “It was spectacular. I was very happy,” she said. SAFE (Survivors Against Forced Exit) president Luke Higuchi related his harrowing personal story of torture and forced confinement in Japan in the late 1980s. Other survivor testimonies were heard from Yumi Hoshino and Mitsuko Antal. Ichiko Sudo reported that 80 percent of the victims are women whose own parents have paid huge sums to faith-breaking specialists and that torture sometimes includes beatings and rape. Dan Fefferman briefed participants on efforts to raise awareness of the issue at the United Nations Human Rights Council, the U.S. State Department and with the Justice Ministry of the Japanese government. At the conclusion of the meeting GWU Amnesty International representatives invited students and GWU community activists to sign letters of concern to various Japanese leaders and human rights officials.



Students, speakers and survivors at the GWU Amnesty Int'l event.

YOU CAN HELP! We need more activists like Scott Dolfay in Seattle and the students at GWU who organized the A.I. event there. Please contact Luke Higuchi if you can help. Also, please consider helping ICRF with a financial donation. Simply visit <http://www.religiousfreedom.com> and click on the “donate button.” We want to rely less and less on help from the Japanese church for this effort, so please give as generously as you can!