

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Faith Broken by Force - Secrets of Shady Network in Japan

Knut Holdhus
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A current believer living in Nagano Prefecture, Japan who wrote a rebuttal to the forced testimonies



Statements reveal the coordinated efforts of shady network to force believers out of religious organization and use "their testimonies" in court

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Statements Revealing Criminal Technique of Coercive Faith-Breaking

The Dark World of Deprogramming Spreading Amid the Move to Dissolve the Family Federation (1)

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



Sign outside Tokyo District Court

Tokyo District Court used former court cases (including settlements) as basis for its [court order](#) to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). It has become clear that among the individuals who filed victim claims in such cases, there are many who were actually victims of "[deprogramming](#)" involving [abduction, confinement, and coercion](#) to [break their faith](#).

Sequence of confinement, faith-breaking, and lawyer introduction



The statements submitted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to the district court include several that vividly depict the inhumane conditions of abduction, confinement, and [coercive faith-breaking](#) [See editor's note 1 below].

Recently, [this newspaper](#) obtained detailed information about three statements from current members who wrote rebuttals to the statements made by former members who had been [abducted and confined](#) and their families. The reports reveal that a process has been established in which former members, professional faith-breakers, Christian pastors, and lawyers [work together](#) to make people renounce their faith and then sue the [religious organization](#), like a modern version of the "fumi-e" (forced renunciation test) [See editor's note 2 below].

In one case, a former believer using the pseudonym Yukie Funabashi, from Nagano Prefecture returned to her family home at the end of 2010. While helping clean a storehouse at her family's request, she was

locked inside from the outside and made to leave the [religious organization](#) while [confined](#).



Professional faith-breaker and victim

Although the statement says, "the living conditions such as meals were not poor," the storehouse was a storage building far from the house, not intended for living. There, she was forced to read books criticizing the [religious organization](#).

Her [abduction and confinement](#) began after her younger sister contacted someone who had already left the [church](#). This led to an introduction to a professional "deprogrammer" (faith-breaker) referred to as a "supporter" in the statement.

According to a current believer from Nagano who wrote the rebuttal, Funabashi had been

joyfully attending [church](#) and even invited three coworkers to join. The current believer strongly asserts that "it's undeniable she was forcibly persuaded to leave the [religious organization](#)."



Pastor and faith-breaker Noriko Kawasaki

Hiroshi Yamaguchi, activist leftwing lawyer and founder and leading member of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS)

It is suspected that the "House of Life" (いのちの家) in Komoro City, Nagano was involved - an organization for a long time directed by the late pastor Noriko Kawasaki (川崎経子), who allegedly forced hundreds of believers to leave the [Unification Church](#). The testimony says the younger sister even "quit her job" to help her sibling leave the [church](#), a common tactic used by deprogrammers (faith-breakers) to make it harder for family members to back out once the [process](#) had begun.

After deciding to leave the [church](#), Funabashi was introduced to lawyer Hiroshi Yamaguchi (山口広) in Tokyo by the "supporter". There, she negotiated a refund with the former [Unification Church](#) and had a "notice of quitting the [religious organization](#)" sent on her behalf. The refutation also states that afterward, Funabashi helped the same "supporter" de-convert the three people she had previously introduced to the [church](#).

Another testimony: Parents deconvert daughter through confinement

Another statement describes how parents [abducted and confined](#) their daughter, a believer, to force her to leave the [church](#). According to this couple who lived in Tokyo, they first learned of their daughter's involvement with the [church](#) in 1988 after being contacted by Pastor Noriko Kawasaki (川崎経子), based on information from a former believer.

The parents had multiple people watch over their daughter to make sure she did not escape from a hotel room in Tokyo and then forced her to leave the [church](#). The pastor had told them, "You can't undo the brainwashing just by talking, so proceed carefully." The father sacrificed his job to "make sure he had enough time." He was told, "This is the parents' responsibility." He even spent over half a year attending [church](#)-related events to get his daughter to leave the [church](#).

A year after she left the [religious organization](#), the daughter was encouraged by the pastor to "provide advice to people who want to get their family members who have joined the [Unification Church](#) to leave and consult with people who try to leave the [church](#)." She came to play a "significant role" in such activities.

Testimony of a man who deconverted his mother

Included among the documents is a written statement from a man who [abducted and confined](#) his own mother in an attempt to make her leave the [religious organization](#). With the help of relatives, he forcibly

took his mother - who was a devoted follower - and [confined](#) her in a hotel for three months in an effort to get her to leave the [organization](#).

However, before this coercive "[faith-breaking](#)" attempt, the mother had actually encouraged her daughter as well - the man's younger sister - to join the [religious organization](#). The sister eventually did join, following her mother's recommendation.



*Pastor and faith-breaker
Mamoru Takazawa of the
Christian Truth Church of Kobe,
Japan*

Upset by his wife's involvement in the [group](#), the sister's husband sought help. Through a relative in Kobe, he was introduced to a pastor who conducted "[exit counseling](#)", and he succeeded in getting his wife to leave the [organization](#).

Soon after, under the pretext of reuniting the now-unreachable sister with her mother, the man forcibly brought his resistant mother from Tokyo to Osaka. There, she was [confined](#) in a business hotel and supervised by multiple people for about two weeks to prevent her from escaping. After returning to Tokyo, she underwent "[counseling](#)", left the [religious organization](#), and was later baptized as a Christian.

In all these cases, after leaving the [Unification Church](#), the individuals either became believers in the pastor's church or turned into "apostates" who began to participate in activities to force active members to leave the [religious organization](#).

Apostate testimonies used as basis for dissolution

The statements of such apostates - who were turned against the [church](#) through "[deprogramming](#)" - have become the basis for the [dissolution order](#). However, religious scholar Toshihiro Ota pointed out in an interview with [this paper](#) that globally, such statements are widely considered unreliable and inadmissible in court because they come from individuals [coerced into apostasy](#) and harboring hostility toward their former religion.

A staff member of the [Family Federation](#) lamented, "It's outrageous that MEXT staff did not see [abduction and confinement](#) as violations of our religious freedom but instead treated them as evidence for [dissolution](#)."

Deprogramming (Definition)

The term refers to "removing the mental programming instilled in believers by cults." Professional deprogrammers argue that since "cult members are brainwashed," they must be "[de-brainwashed](#)".

[Editor's note: 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. 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: The illustration to the right depicts a fumi-e (踏み絵), which literally means "stepping-on picture" - typically an image of the Cross, Jesus Christ, or the Virgin Mary. The Tokugawa Shogunate used this practice to identify hidden Christians (known as Kirishitan) and their sympathizers during a time when Christianity was banned in Japan. While the act of stepping on these images was originally called efumi (絵踏), the term fumi-e is now commonly used to refer to both the practice and the object itself.



This print shows Fumi-e (踏み絵: fumi "stepping-on" + e "picture"); step on a picture with the likeness of e.g. the Cross of Jesus or the Virgin Mary

Those who hesitated or refused to step on the images were suspected of being Christians. They were taken to Nagasaki and ordered to renounce their faith. If they refused, they faced torture - and if they continued to resist, execution, often by burning at the stake.

This systematic persecution began in 1614 and was enforced by regional authorities. By the mid-17th century, the Tokugawa Shogunate had escalated its crackdown, ordering the expulsion of all European missionaries and the execution of Japanese converts. The suppression of Christianity continued for more than two centuries.]

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April 18, 2025

Categories

22nd April concerning the [appeal](#) to the Tokyo High Court of the [dissolution order](#) case lost in Tokyo District Court. See [original article](#) in Japanese.

On 21st April, we submitted a “Statement of Reasons for Appeal” (over 200 pages) and supporting evidence to the *Tokyo High Court* regarding the [dissolution order](#) case.

The
main



Sign outside Tokyo District Court. Photo: Screenshot from [FFWPU](#) video.

contents of the statement include:

1. A detailed rebuttal to the *Tokyo District Court's* [ruling](#) (dated 25th March this year), which inferred that [our organization's](#) unlawful activities have continued “uninterrupted until recently” since the issuance of the Compliance Declaration (in 2009) [[See editor's note below](#)].
2. A detailed rebuttal to the court's assessment that the Compliance Declaration was merely a stopgap measure (we have submitted additional evidence demonstrating the thorough implementation and effectiveness of the declaration).

The *Tokyo District Court* significantly inflated the estimated amount of damages by inferring unlawful conduct by our organization from post-2010 settlement cases, both in and out of court. Therefore, in rebuttal 1, we examined each post-Compliance Declaration [[See editor's note below](#)] settlement case in detail, explaining the factual circumstances and the reasons for the settlement with evidence, in order to demonstrate the errors in the court's inference.



Norishige Kondo (近藤徳茂)– left – Deputy Director of the Legal Affairs Bureau of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), responds to questions from the media after handing in appeal documents to Tokyo High Court on the morning of 7th April in Kasumigaseki, Tokyo. Photo: Keizo Mori (森啓造)

For example, among the eight cases involving nine individuals that were settled in court after the Compliance Declaration [[See editor's note below](#)](i.e., cases that went to trial but were settled between the two parties during the proceedings), which the [initial court ruling](#) cited as one of the grounds for the above inference, there were:

- (A) Cases where [our organization](#) won completely in the first trial and the plaintiff's side – represented by lawyers from the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* – was found to have [fabricated evidence](#),
- (B) Cases where contradictions in the plaintiff's statements were exposed during trial, resulting in settlements for only about 2.29% of the original claim amount, and
- (C) Cases in which the complaints did not allege any unlawful conduct at all.

These examples illustrate how unreasonable and unjust it is to infer unlawful activity based solely on complaints and settlement records submitted by the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology* (MEXT). Similarly, for out-of-court settlements (those resolved privately without trial), we provided detailed explanations and evidence, demonstrating the unreasonable and unjust nature of the court's inferences.

Regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the Compliance Declaration [[See editor's note below](#)], we pointed out the ministry's improper exclusion of many submitted materials – especially visually

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compelling documents demonstrating effectiveness – on the grounds that they were unfavorable to their case. We have now re-submitted these materials with detailed explanations.

In addition to the above, we have included numerous other claims such as [violations of international law](#), as detailed in the attached file. We intend to continue presenting specific rebuttals to the initial court ruling from now on.

Featured image above: *Demonstration against unjust and xenophobic [verdict](#) against the [Family Federation](#) in Japan. Here members in Karatsu City on the southern island of Kyushu protesting 30th March 2025. Photo: [FFWPU](#)*

[Editor's note: The **2009 compliance declaration** of the Unification Church of Japan (now the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)) was a formal commitment by the organization to reform its practices in response to longstanding public criticism and legal challenges.

The [Unification Church](#) in Japan had faced numerous allegations related to recruitment tactics and donation solicitation, termed “spiritual sales” ([霊感商法](#)) by a hostile network of activist lawyers who had declared the [religious organization](#) an enemy. These issues led to multiple lawsuits orchestrated by the activist lawyers and significant media backlash. This prompted the [organization](#) to take measures to restore its reputation and demonstrate compliance with legal and ethical standards.

The [religious organization](#) pledged to stop possibly unethical donation practices, including what the hostile network of lawyers claimed amounted to “pressuring members into making large financial contributions under spiritual pretexts.”

This was in response to accusations from the same activist lawyers that followers “were being manipulated into giving away substantial amounts of money or property.”

The [Unification Church](#) stated it would enhance internal oversight to ensure compliance with ethical and legal standards. Measures included better training for leaders and stricter guidelines for evangelization and solicitation of donations.

After this compliance declaration, there was a significant decrease in the number of lawsuits against the [Unification Church](#) – since 2015 called the [Family Federation](#). The [religious organization](#) has used this as evidence that it has improved its practices and should not be subject to dissolution.]

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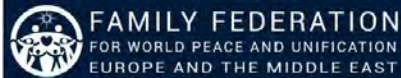
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