

Japanese Unification Church Members sue deprogrammers for abducting them

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Following their ordeal, the couple met with figures in the FFWPU Japan Headquarters (left to right) Mr. Tokushige Kondo, chief of the Law Department; Mr. Shuya Fukumoto, a lawyer; and Mr. Mamoru Kamono, chief of the Public Information Department.

On May 16, a couple in the city of Hiroshima, members of our church, filed a ¥7,000,000 (about US \$70,000) damage suit in the Hiroshima district court against the "deprogrammers" and their own family members for abducting and confining them in an apartment in Osaka for the purpose of forced de-conversion, July 26–31, 2014.

Dual kidnappings

On July 26, 2014, family members of the husband (forty-three years old) told him that they were going to a hospital to see a relative of theirs and placed him in a van driven by a stranger. He was taken to an apartment in Yodogawa, Osaka, where he was confined. Subsequently, the wife (forty years old) who was visiting her parents' house in Hiroshima at their invitation with her two children, a daughter (eight years old) and a son (three years old) was suddenly attacked by her family members. They tied her arms and legs, wrapped her in a sleeping bag and banded the sleeping bag with string. Torn away from her children, she was conveyed into a van and taken to the same apartment in Osaka where her husband was being confined.

Confinement

Their abductors had tightly locked the front door with two types of padlocks and chains and had fixed the crescent lock on the sliding glass door leading to the veranda with wire so it would not open. Although the family members watched the couple during confinement, there was also a woman, unfamiliar to them, with keys to the padlocks dangling from her neck, who strictly watched over them. She would not allow anyone to leave the room without her permission.

The faith-breaker

From the second day of captivity, an evangelical minister, Mamoru Takawaza (now deceased) of Kobe Makoto Church visited the apartment each and every day, attempting to force the couple to leave the Unification Church by making slanderous statements to them about the church and making personally offensive statements. The couple suffered the direst distress not only from having been abducted and confined through violent means but also as a result of having been forcibly separated from their two small children.

Rescue

On July 31, at around 1:00 AM, the wife managed to make an emergency call to the police using one of

the perpetrators' mobile phones. Police officers who came to the rescue released the couple and were able to pick their children up safely at their relative's house by the end of the day. **Seeking justice**

Since this case of abduction and confinement for the purposes of forced de-conversion was conducted at the initiative of Takazawa, the couple offered to go for a private settlement with their family members, so they could leave them out of the criminal charge. The main points of the settlement proposed by the couple were (1) that they admit the facts concerning the case; (2) that they be perfectly honest in submitting all facts and evidence and (3) that they promise never to repeat such a deed again. However, because the family members refused this, the couple had to file criminal charge against all those involved in the case including their family members.



Left to right: Japanese books on the issue of “deprogramming” and abduction -- Protect Our Human Rights!, An Escape from Kidnappers, Forced Renunciation of Faith and A Complete Testimony of Two Hundred and Fifty Days in Confinement

Mr. Takazawa's end

Mamoru Takazawa had been involved in a few hundred vicious cases of forced de-conversion including a case involving serious injury to a male member of the Unification Church who was seriously injured after falling from the upper floor of an apartment building while attempting to escape from confinement. Takazawa had lost two civil cases and had already been under accusation in two criminal cases, though both criminal cases had been dropped due to suspension by the prosecution. Given that the prosecution had declined to prosecute earlier cases, this couple claimed that Takazawa dared to commit this abduction case out of sublime confidence that he could "get away with anything." Forced de-conversion by means of abduction and confinement against followers of the Unification Church started in the late 1960s and the number of victims adds up to more than 4,300. Last September, Mr. Toru Goto, who suffered forced de-conversion under confinement for twelve years and five months, finally won his case in the Supreme Court. Furthermore, in July 2012, when Mr. Goto's case was still on trial, the United Nations Human Rights Committee (in Geneva, Switzerland) expressed concern regarding "abductions and the forced confinement of converts to new religious movements" in Japan and urged the Japanese government to "take effective measures to guarantee the right of every person."

Translator's note

Since others involved in their abduction have not been held legally liable owing to Takazawa's death ending the criminal case last year, out of the lingering fear that abduction and confinement might recur, the couple decided to file a civil suit against them.