

JAPAN: Severe Human Rights Abuses – Open Letter to the Prime Minister

Forum for Religious Freedom Europe

March 11, 2013

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Open letter from human rights organizations and NGOs to the Prime Minister, Members of Parliament, the Minister of Justice, Prosecutor and the National Police Agency

Call for Hearings about Japanese Citizens Abducted and Forced to Change Their Religion: 80% are Women



HRWF (06.03.2013) – **We, the undersigned independent human rights organizations and NGOs, are writing to express our shock that Japanese authorities do nothing while over the past decades thousands of citizens-primarily women-have been forcibly abducted, held against their will in private detention places, denied their freedom for months, sometimes years, physically abused and in some cases starved and tortured, in order to force them to change their religious belief.**

The failure to protect citizens from such crimes is a grave violation of their constitutionally guaranteed rights and their international human rights based on Japan's legal obligation under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Moreover, as 80% of victims are women, Japan is also in violation of its obligations under the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women signed and ratified by Japan. This matter has been raised with United Nations officials and by the United States government, and can seriously damage Japan's reputation.

Human Rights Without Frontiers International, an independent NGO based in Brussels, Belgium, has published a scientific study of this problem, proving beyond any doubt that human rights violations have occurred and continue to take place (*).

In its report, **“Abduction and Deprivation of Freedom for the Purpose of Religious Deconversion,”** *Human Rights Without Frontiers* documented that members of minority religions are being forcibly detained by their family members and subjected to coercion by their

families and professional ‘deprogrammers.’ The victims are usually young, educated women who have joined religions like the Unification Church or the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Over many years, victims have sought to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice. **To date, prosecutors have ignored clear evidence of crimes, and have not pursued a single criminal case. The result is continuing impunity for perpetrators and more crimes being committed.**



We ask you, authorities responsible for the protection of all Japanese, to take needed actions to stop the kidnappings and to address past crimes. We ask the Diet to hold public hearings to bring out the truth. We ask the Judiciary and National Police Agency to conduct an independent internal review, to follow up on cases that have been neglected. We ask that Police and Judicial authorities inform the public of what steps can and cannot be taken regarding the religious beliefs of children, based on the law and international human rights standards.

Willy Fautré, Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers Int’l (Belgium)

Peter Zoehrer, Director of Forum for Religious Freedom (Austria)

Jura Nanuk, Founder of Central European Religious Freedom Institute (Hungary)

Hans Noodt, Director of the Gerard Noodt Foundation for Freedom of Religion or Belief (Netherlands)

Antonio Stango, Director of the Italian Helsinki Committee (Italy)

Dr Aaron Rhodes, Former Director of the International Helsinki Federation (Germany)

Ion Manole, Executive Director of Promo-Lex (Moldova)

Joe Grieboski, Director of the Institute on Religion & Public Policy (USA)

Ichiko Sudo, Human Rights & Women’s Dignity Representative for Women’s Federation for World Peace (USA)

Kathryn Cameron Porter, President of the Leadership Council for Human Rights (USA)

(*) The report is available at www.hrwf.org