

Toru Goto, Missing Japanese Man Victim of Kidnapping and Faith-Breaking

Anne-Marie Mylar
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The 32-year-old man from the Nagoya, Japan has not been seen by fellow Unification Church members since September 5. Both the church and his place of work have reported his disappearance to the police.

GREENBELT, MD, October 02, 2011 /24-7 Press Release/ -- Religious freedom activists expressed concern over a new case of a suspected kidnapping and secret confinement of a Unification Church member in Japan. The International Coalition for Religious Freedom (ICRF) announced the disappearance of the 32-year-old man from the city of Nagoya in Japan's Aichi Prefecture. Mr. Toru Goto has not been seen by fellow church members since September 5. His place of work as a caregiver also reported him absent, and colleagues from the local Okazaki Unification Church, with which he is affiliated, found his residence empty.

Local church leaders plan to report Mr. Toru Goto as a missing person to the police. However, Japanese police routinely reject such reports on the grounds that a church pastor is not a relative. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that in hundreds of such cases, it is the victim's relatives who kidnap and confine him, with the intent to force him or her out of the church.

The practice of kidnapping religious believers for "deprogramming" was widespread in the U.S. in the 1970s and 80s, but came to an end after courts made it clear that such actions were illegal, even when committed by family members. Scientologists, Krishna devotees, Pentecostal Christians and Unificationists were among the victims. Today, the Unification Church remains highly controversial in Japan, and the nation's traditional values hold that "family matters"--such as spousal abuse, rape, incest and forcing an adult relative to renounce his religion--should be kept private.

The issue of religious kidnapping in Japan has recently gained international attention as the result of the case of Mr. Toru Goto (Photo on the left), who was held against his will in a secret location in Tokyo for 12 years because he refused to renounce his Unificationist faith. He sued the alleged perpetrators, who include relatives and a Christian minister, and the case is currently being tried in a Tokyo court.

Out of respect for his privacy the church is not releasing the current victim's full name, but accredited researchers may learn additional details by contacting ICRF.

The International Coalition for Religious Freedom is a non-profit, non-sectarian, educational organization dedicated to defending the religious freedom of all, regardless of creed, gender or ethnic origin.

Website: www.religiousfreedom.com

Note: The picture above is of Mr. Goto, from Japan. He was held in captivity for twelve and half years. He was finally released by his captors because they could not break his faith. The picture above was taken shortly after his release.