

Toru Goto Opens Japan's Eyes to Religious Injustice

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The Asahi Shimbun runs the article: Follower of Unification Church wins case against relatives on their website

Japan has opened her eyes to the injustice of religious persecution, bringing the issue to public attention and reproaching the legal system for its past silent treatment toward similar cases.

On January 28, 2014, Toru Goto won a case against human rights and religious freedom violations perpetrated against him. The impact of this small victory didn't end there.

Various Japanese publications began to echo the story of a lawsuit “filed by a male follower of the Unification Church” for being kidnapped, confined and coerced to abandon his faith.

The Asahi Shimbun, Sankei Shimbun, Sankei News and Kobe Shimbun describe the victim’s conditions of detainment and release after 12 years, followed by his unsuccessful criminal case against his wrongdoers. Mr. Goto’s win in the subsequent civil lawsuit is clearly celebrated across these publications, which printed Judge Tetsu Aizawa’s statement that restricting an adult in order to coerce “deviates from the limits of conventional wisdom.”

Tokyo Sports reported more openly about Mr. Goto, identifying him by name, and the significance of this case, bringing the issue of religious freedom to the forefront with the evaluation of Mr. Goto’s lawyer that

this judgment was “a big step forward”, as well as a case participant’s quote that “Japan is supposed to be a law-abiding nation recognizing freedom of faith and fundamental human rights.” The article further comments on the unjust reality that has been playing out in Japan thus far: “The Unification Church has a negative social images owing to a variety of controversies. There is thus a tacit social tolerance towards any means of deprogramming of its followers. Also the police are rather passive in engaging in cases involving family affairs and religion.”



The Sankei Shimbun runs the article: Relatives persuading kin to leave the Unification Church ordered to compensate 4.8M yen.

Mr. Goto’s case against his captors and deprogrammers has not only resulted in his personal justice and a significant step forward for Unificationists but has also created a buzz in Japanese media, a public stirring that could begin to redress the stagnant attitude on coercive faith breaking in Japan for good.