

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Toru Goto Appeals Japanese Verdict Based on Mind Control Myth

Knut Holdhus
October 6, 2025



Toru Goto, representative of [National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced De-conversion](#), being interviewed September 16, 2025, Toshima Ward, Tokyo, Japan



[Sekai Nippo](#)

12 years of confinement, one Supreme Court victory, and now a new legal fight - Toru Goto is appealing 2025 court ruling built on bias and unscientific ideas

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Disregarding the Supreme Court's Recognition of "Confinement"

Defamation Trial Against Mr. Eito Suzuki (Part 1)

Victim Toru Goto Appeals

High Court Adopted Testimony "Lacking Credibility"



Militantly campaigning against the [Family Federation](#): Activist journalist Eito Suzuki, born as Kiyofumi Tanaka

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

Toru Goto (後藤徹), a member of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) and representative of [National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced De-conversion](#), [sued journalist Eito Suzuki](#) (鈴木エイト) for defamation. Goto argued that Suzuki's remarks about the [12 years and 5 months](#) Goto was [confined by his own family](#) in an attempt to make him renounce his faith - including calling Goto a "hikikomori" (social recluse) - constituted defamation. Goto sought 11 million yen (US \$ 74,000) in damages.

In the first trial at the Tokyo District Court, the court acknowledged Suzuki's unlawful conduct and [ruled in favor of Goto](#). However, the appeal court [overturned the ruling](#), resulting in Goto's loss. Dissatisfied with the decision, Goto appealed to the Supreme Court on 11th September. We asked him about the possible implications of the court's judgment.

- What are the problems with the appeal court's ruling, which overturned your victory?



*Professional faith-breaker
Takashi Miyamura responsible
for hundreds of
deprogrammings based on
abduction and forcible
detention. He is said to have
been advisor to the
Constitutional Democratic Party
(CDP)*

I was [abducted by my family](#) under the instigation of professional deprogrammers such as Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻). From September 1995 to February 2008 - a total of [12 years and 5 months](#) - I was confined in apartments and other locations in Tokyo and pressured to renounce my faith. After my release, I filed a civil lawsuit against the deprogrammers and won a complete victory, which was finalized by the Supreme Court in 2015 (the "Goto Case").

Eito Suzuki's remark calling me a "hikikomori" denies the reality of abduction and confinement and justifies coercion to make individuals renounce their faith. In order to prevent such abductions and confinements from becoming widespread, I decided to [file a civil lawsuit](#).

The [first-instance ruling](#) adopted the findings of facts from the Goto Case, judged that Suzuki's claim lacked any reasonable basis in truth, and recognized his unlawful conduct, ruling in my favor. Since Mr. Suzuki's side was unable to present new evidence denying the abduction and confinement, it could be said that the judgment was only natural (understandable).

However, the [appeal court](#) argued that Suzuki was not a party in the Goto Case, so it was not bound by its findings of fact. It made its own factual determinations, relying on testimony from the losing defendants in the Goto Case - testimony that had already been dismissed. On that basis, it judged that Suzuki's statement about "hikikomori" had truthfulness or at least reasonable grounds, and thus denied the existence of unlawful conduct.



The reality of faith-breaking: Toru Goto, a member of the [Family Federation](#), in 2008, barely able to move after being held in forcible detention by his own family in league with professional faith-breakers for more than 12 years

But the reason the Goto Case did not adopt those testimonies was precisely because they lacked credibility. To ignore the findings of facts finalized by the Supreme Court, and instead adopt discredited testimony from the losing side, strikes me as highly unreasonable.

- Wouldn't that imply the appeal court is effectively calling the Goto Case a "misjudgment"?

I believe that is the implication. However, in its [judgment](#), the appeal court also acknowledged the findings of the Goto Case, noting that my confinement by members of my own family could not be understood as "lawful".

Indeed, as a general principle of trials, there exists the "principle of free evaluation of evidence," which allows judges to freely determine the facts and assess the evidence.

However, when a court makes an unreasonable judgment that contradicts the common sense generally accepted in society or established scientific principles, it constitutes a "violation of the rules of experience" and becomes a valid reason for requesting the Supreme Court to accept an appeal.

Because the illegality arising from confinement and the 'hikikomori' state - where a person's freedom is guaranteed - cannot both exist at the same time, the factual findings of the two court rulings are completely contradictory. [See editor's note below] To accept previously

dismissed testimony without new supporting evidence amounts to "arbitrary cherry-picking". If judges render mutually contradictory rulings in separate cases, the credibility of the judicial system itself is at stake.

After spending so much time and effort gathering evidence, exposing the contradictions and falsehoods in

the opponent's testimony, and taking the case all the way to the Supreme Court to win a complete victory, I can't help but feel a sense of emptiness - wondering, "What was it all for?"

Departure from Neutrality - Prejudice in the Background

- *It looks like the ruling sided with your family, the "perpetrators".*



The English version of Toru Goto's new book: [Battle for Survival - 4536 Days in Captivity](#)

In the [appeal ruling](#) of the Goto Case, the court held:

"Even if one's religious beliefs differ from those of one's parents or siblings, it is illegal to go beyond voluntary persuasion, to use physical force, and to restrict free will and behavior in order to coerce de-conversion from the [Unification Church](#). Such acts cannot be tolerated in society, and it is appropriate to recognize them as confinement."

In other words, even parents and siblings commit unlawful acts if they confine someone for coercive religious de-conversion.

However, this latest [appeal ruling](#) deliberately resurrected the defendants' false testimony that had been rejected in the Goto Case. This suggests that the judges empathized more with the families trying to make believers leave the [Unification Church](#) than with the [Family Federation](#) believers whose human rights were violated through confinement. Otherwise, they would not have made factual determinations overturning a Supreme Court-confirmed ruling.



Shunsuke Uotani

The background seems to be the judges' perception of [Family Federation](#) believers as "mind-controlled victims". Indeed, the [ruling](#) uncritically used the term "mind control" as equivalent to "psychological coercion". Yet, as explained in the book (2025) - which may be translated into English as "The Many Mistakes in 'Mind Control' Theory" or "Everything Wrong with 'Mind Control' Theory" - by Shunsuke Uotani, the discourse of "mind control" is a politically charged and scientifically indefinable concept. It should not be used as a basis for judicial decisions.

I still want to believe in the neutrality and fairness of the courts. However, there is no doubt that this wholly unexpected [appeal ruling](#) is biased in line with public opinion and the current movement toward issuing a [dissolution order](#) against the [Family Federation](#).

[**Editor's note:** Toru Goto is arguing that "confinement" (involuntary, illegal) and "hikikomori" (voluntary, free withdrawal) are mutually exclusive. Therefore, if one judgment describes the situation as confinement and another as "hikikomori," their factual conclusions cannot logically coexist - hence the claim of contradiction.]

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- A man with glasses and a blue and white striped shirt is speaking into a microphone. He is outdoors, and a large crowd of people is visible in the background.

Arbitrary Detention Of Mother Han, Pastor Son

October 7, 2025



Appealing Verdict Based On Mind Control Myth

October 6, 2025



1,800 March In Osaka Calling For Fair Trial

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Tomihiro Tanaka with demonstrators protesting against the [dissolution order](#) in Fukuoka on 15th September 2025. Photo: [FFWPU](#)



The logo of Kyodo News

The 5th October 2025 [Kyodo News report](#) marks a significant development in the ongoing legal proceedings concerning the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU), formerly known as the [Unification Church](#). **For the first time, the Tokyo High Court has scheduled the testimony of current, active members** of the movement – a **crucial step toward a fair and balanced evaluation of the organization**. This represents a clear departure from the earlier *Tokyo District Court* process, which **relied heavily on statements from former members**, many of whom had undergone so-called “deprogramming” [[See editor’s note below](#)] and later expressed hostility toward their former faith.

The inclusion of present members’ voices – those who continue to live by the teachings of the [Family Federation](#) and actively serve their communities – signals a recognition that genuine religious perspectives must be heard in court. It is, in effect, a long-awaited acknowledgment that freedom of religion and fairness in legal proceedings require hearing from those who actually practice the faith being judged.



In Katashina Village, Gunma Prefecture: Oze Cemetery, owned by the [Family Federation](#). Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

During his 5th October remarks to reporters in Katashina Village, Gunma Prefecture, Tomihiro Tanaka (田中富広), President of [Family Federation](#) in Japan, expressed confidence in the judicial process. He noted that the High Court’s decision on the government’s dissolution request is expected around January or February 2026, with witness examinations set for late October and final written submissions from both sides due in late November. Tanaka’s calm and transparent approach underscores the [organization’s](#) determination to confront misunderstanding with truth, patience, and respect for due process.

The article also referenced the situation surrounding [Hak Ja Han](#), the worldwide leader of the [movement](#), who was recently detained by South Korean authorities. Tanaka voiced concern about her health while reaffirming the movement’s trust in her integrity – words that reflect both deep loyalty and moral strength in the face of adversity. His response conveys a quiet conviction: that faith, when sincere and principled, remains unshaken even under scrutiny.

When asked about the recent election of Sanae Takaichi (高市早苗) as the new president of Japan’s *Liberal Democratic Party*, Tanaka simply replied,

“I have no message, as it is a political matter.”



Demonstration in Japan in September 2025 against the [dissolution order](#). Screenshot from video by [FFWPU](#)

This clear boundary between religion and politics demonstrates a mature and responsible stance – an important reminder that the [Family Federation](#) is committed to its spiritual mission, not political ambition.

Overall, the developments reported by [Kyodo News](#) signal a moment of cautious optimism for the [Family Federation](#). For the first time in

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this long process, voices of living faith will be heard directly by the court, helping to correct one-sided narratives and paving the way for genuine understanding. President Tanaka's leadership – marked by composure, transparency, and compassion – embodies the [organization's](#) resolve to uphold truth and spiritual freedom while contributing positively to society.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Tomihiro Tanaka being interviewed by Japanese media 30th July 2025. Screenshot from video by [FFWPU](#)

[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.



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: [Members of Soka Gakkai](#). Here students belonging to the faith in 2001. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp](#). Cropped

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.]

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