

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Huge Ignored Deprogramming Scandal With 4,300 Victims

Knut Holdhus
June 19, 2025



Attorney Patricia Duval speaking at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland June 16, 2025

Ignored: Over 4 decades, thousands of adults in Japan were abducted, confined, and subjected to coercive "deprogramming" - all under guise of family concern and with tacit legal and societal support

Despite Japan's Obligations Under International Law, Systemic Rights Violations Were Carried Out with Impunity



The panel of speakers at the side event to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland on June 16, 2025. From left: Norishige Kondo, Attorney Patricia Duval, Heiner Handschin, Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Dr. Hirohisa Koide

1st part of a speech by Attorney Patricia Duval at a side event organized by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council, in hall 25 of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland June 16, 2025. Patricia Duval is a member of the Paris Bar Association, specializing in international human rights law. She has defended the rights of religious and faith minorities both in France and internationally.

After this appalling and very revealing [testimony](#), I will just make a few comments to explain the situation.

First, the power of family in Japan.



Family in Japan: daughter offering a full bow to her parents. Illustration

All the [kidnapped and confined](#) so-called deprogrammed members were adults. Still, even if they were 50 years old - I don't know what age - they had to follow the tradition, follow their parents' advice and choices for them.

It's just a factor that I wanted to mention to explain the situation and how deprogramming [See editor's note below] was raging in Japan in the 1980s and 90s mostly. Even if the tradition and family authority are a bit less strong with the young people now, in the 80s and 90s, it was really very, very strict.

And his father [the father of [Hirohisa Koide](#)] had been trained in the military, and he was influenced also by that.

But I wanted to stress the power of family because this is one thing I was wondering about

in my report to the UN: Is there freedom of religion or belief for adults - overage - in Japan?



I mean, if there is no choice, if they have no choice as regards their religions, it's a big problem.

Japan is committed to protect freedom of religion or belief by signing the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#). And it should follow and respect its commitments. This is one big point that has to be changed and evolved in Japan.

But anyway, this situation did not happen by chance. There was a group of lawyers, like [Koide](#) mentioned, and a group of pastors. They had converging interests.



Politically motivated leftwing lawyers from National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS) at press conference after [dissolution verdict](#) 25th March 2025. From left: Katsuomi Abe, Hiroshi Yamaguchi, Masaki Kito

This group of lawyers was close to the Communist Party. They fought the [Unification Church](#) because it opposed the expansion of communism in Asia after World War II. Communism was therefore threatening spirituality in the area because communism was atheistic and eliminating religions.

The [Unification Church](#) and its founder [Reverend Moon](#) started to oppose communism and started to have enemies in this regard.

The group of lawyers who were politically motivated started to attack the [Church](#) and openly state they were going for the destruction of the [Unification Church](#).

They are the same who are still operating today and pushing for dissolution of the [religious corporation](#), which they [obtained in the first instance](#) at the District Court. Now the decision [is appealed](#) to the High

Court.



Illustration of professional faith-breaker and pastor Takeo Funada

It is still the same lawyers, and they are still with their agenda to this day.

Pastors had also started deprogramming on their own because they saw the [Unification Church](#) as a competing religion. I think it's an important point to know that at some point the pastors and the lawyers started to announce a common agenda and a common practice. They called it "rescue of believers".

It was actually deprogramming [See editor's note below]. They didn't say openly that it was [confinement and abduction](#), but this is what it was. And coerced persuasion to leave the faith.

The parents who had been made anxious about their children's choice to join the [Unification Church](#) started to look around for solutions. They turned to the pastors because they were proposing their "help", so-called "help", which was actually coercive "rescue".



Being [kidnapped to be held in detention](#) in order to one's [faith coercively broken](#). The illustration is from the case of Toru Goto, who was held in captivity by his own family and faith-breakers for 12 years and 5 months

And the lawyers recommended the deprogrammers to the parents. They recommended to the parents to use the "rescue services" of the pastors.

This is how it became a nationwide activity. It's from the testimonies of the deprogramming [See editor's note below] pastors themselves in court we know it became a nationwide activity. They admitted it. It was a nationwide activity to deprogram the believers of the [Unification Church](#).

And this is how we come to the figure of [4,300 believers](#) who've been subjected to that very violent practice successfully or unsuccessfully.

Fortunately, most of it was unsuccessful because they only have 32 civil court cases that they rely on to ask for the dissolution of the [Church](#) - 32 court cases over 40 years, and [4,300 deprogrammed members](#).

So you see, the results are very few. But anyhow, they relied on these very old cases to now ask for a dissolution of the [Church](#), using the same campaigns - media campaigns saying the [Church](#) has made lots of victims and so on.

But where are the victims? The victims are victims of deprogramming! [See editor's note below]

Edited version.

To be continued. Part 2 coming soon.

[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.

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.



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of Soka Gakkai. Here students belonging to the faith in 2001

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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Parents Wasted \$200,000 On Failed Faith-Breaking

- June 18, 2025
- Knut Holdhus

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Dr. Hirohisa Koide speaking at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland 16th June 2025. Photo: Screenshot from video recording by UPF.

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2nd part (final) of a speech by **Dr. Hirohisa Koide** (小出浩久) at a side event organized by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council, in hall 25 of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland 16th June 2025. Dr. Koide was introduced by the moderator Heiner Handschin as "a Japanese national, a medical doctor, and a victim of kidnapping and also so-called deprogramming, forced de-conversion, or forced renunciation of his belief. And this has happened based on non-state actors, but with the blessing of state and local authorities which turned a blind eye to it."

See part 1: [Doctor's Ordeal of Abduction and Faith-Breaking](#)

The confinement and persuasion continued for over ten months.

During that time, my parents could hardly ever leave that room. Furthermore, my father kept calling Miyamura (宮村峻) almost every night to report our situation. My father would be cursed [by Miyamura],

"Because of your bad attitude your son can't abandon that strange religion!"

One night, my father said to me,

"If I let you go, and the activities of the anti-**Family Federation** movement become known publicly, they could not continue such activities anymore. I can't let you out alive, I will kill you and then I will die too."

Shouting that, he grabbed me by the neck and pushed me down. I realized that he was mentally exhausted. I had no choice but to lie and say that I had renounced my face.

He had been trained in the Japanese army when he was young, and he had said,

"Through that training, I am prepared to die for the purpose."

For fear of being killed by my father I was forced to act as an anti-**Family Federation** person.

That was the beginning of my father's mental suffering. His pain lasted for one year.



Professional faith-breaker **Takashi Miyamura** (宮村峻), responsible for hundreds of deprogrammings based on abduction and forcible detention. He is said to have been advisor to the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP). Photo: [FFWPU](#)



Long-time communist and activist campaigning against the **Family Federation, member of the National Diet for the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) until 2022: Yoshiifu Arita (有田芳生) here giving a speech on the street in front of Hachioji Station in Tokyo 14th October 2024. Photo: Noukei314 / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int. Cropped](#)**

On Miyamura's order, I was moved to a mountain villa. There, I was interviewed by a journalist, Yoshiifu Arita (有田芳生), and a reporter from the popular weekly magazine named Bunshun.

The contents were used to criticize the **Family Federation**. Arita is currently a member of the Japanese Diet.

Then I was forced to appear on a TV program called the *Special Report* made by TBS, Tokyo Broadcasting System.

I was taken out from the room to the biggest riverbank in Niigata and filmed by TV camera. My father and several former believers surrounded me.

When filming, it seemed that Miyamura, the deprogrammer, was the leading person there. When my comments didn't match his thoughts, he immediately interrupted me. He then said that the **Family Federation** was a group of crazy people who lacked human love.

The parts of my remarks were used by the anti-**Family Federation** media.

After exposing myself to such an extent, I was allowed to leave my apartment and walk to Matsunaga's (松永康智) church while my father was watching.

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There were about 10 people attending church who were in the same position as me, forced to give up their faith.

Only one month after attending the church, accompanied by my parents, I was brought together with Miyamura to two lawyers, Yamaguchi (山口広) and Kito (紀藤正樹). They had come with much violent criticism of the [Family Federation](#) on TV. I had to speak according to the instructions of my father and Miyamura.

The lawyers knew I was not free. Attorney Kito said,

“I think it's time to let you go, don't you? But I'll have to let Miyamura make that decision.”

I couldn't tell them of my basic human rights. I was forced to sign a legal contract to sue the [Family Federation](#) and the hospital.

I was not the only one in such a situation. At Matsunaga's church, believers who had just been released from confinement were encouraged to meet such lawyers. I had learned that there was a group of lawyers who used people to achieve their own political purpose.

These former believers had been harmed by being confined by their own parents, and they still felt the fear of being locked up again. For that reason, they had no choice but to file a lawsuit as advised to by their lawyer.

And as soon as I had filed the lawsuit, I was supposed to engage in even more traumatic behavior. I was forced to go to the apartment where believers were confined, and I had to talk with them. I still regret my visit to the rooms of innocent believers. They were definitely suffering.

Matsunaga's church held consultations and seminars for parents of believers every weekend. The pastor and the former believers convinced the parents that the only way to help the members was to confine them.

The pastor also explained the specific steps parents should take to lock their son or daughter up. It was also emphasized that only parents and siblings could do it.

In doing this, by recommending confinement, I had become a core member of the group. I felt that I was like a living dead.

By the way, I started to work in a hospital near the church as an assistant physician. I got the pleasure of being able to help others.

After two months of work at the hospital I got some money in my own bank account. I was then able to get out of the group, and I ran away to Tokyo.

I knew that my parents would be shocked. For the next two years, I could not tell my parents where I was. I thought that they were still interacting with Miyamura's group and might have imprisoned me again.

In fact, following Miyamura's advice, my father donated \$20,000 to Matsunaga's church for the construction of a new building.

After I wrote about this two-year experience in a book which made the anti-[Family Federation](#) activities publicly known, I could safely communicate with my parents and siblings.

My mother got Alzheimer's disease and forgot all her resentment toward the [Family Federation](#). I finally began to feel her original warm love for me.



Working in league with faith-breakers forcing believers into lawsuits and exploiting them to fit narrative: Hiroshi Yamaguchi (山口広), activist leftwing lawyer and founder and leading member of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS).
Photo: Screenshot / [Bitter Winter](#)



Working in league with faith-breakers forcing believers into lawsuits and exploiting them to fit narrative: One of the architects of new law and advisor to the Japanese authorities: Masaki Kito (紀藤正樹), one of the hostile lawyers of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (全国靈感商法被害対策弁護団) and Nationwide Unification Church Damage Countermeasures Legal Team (全国統一教会被害対策弁護団).
Photo: Screenshot / [Bitter Winter](#)

My father said he had spent \$200,000 for the kidnapping of me.

Thank you.

See part 1: [Doctor's Ordeal of Abduction and Faith-Breaking](#)

Featured image above: Some of the speakers at the side event to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland on 16th June 2025. From left: Attorney Patricia Duval, Heiner Handschin, Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Dr. Hirohisa Koide. Photo: Screenshot from video recording by UPF.

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