

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Deprogramming Destroys Families and Minds, it is Evil

Knut Holdhus
June 26, 2025



Panel exhibition denouncing deprogramming through abduction and confinement - March 19, 2025, Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan



Some who got away speak out: Pure evil manipulation by professional faith-breakers in league with activist leftwing lawyers allowed to break thousands of families and individuals

Tokyo, 18th June 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

[Series] **The Never-Ending Deprogramming** (Part 2)

"Loyalty Tests" to Identify True Defectors

Encouraged to Betray Friends and View the Church as the Enemy

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



Professional deprogrammer (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)

See part 1: [Japan: Deprogrammed Believers Sent to Infiltrate](#)

Deprogramming [See editor's note below], involving [abduction](#), [confinement](#), and forced renunciation of faith, mainly targeting believers of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), does not end even after the believers declare they have abandoned their faith.

To determine whether a defection is genuine, individuals are often subjected to "loyalty tests", such as being forced to provide information about fellow believers or even assist in their [abduction and confinement](#). This practice is well-documented.

Such information, once gathered, is then used by lawyers and others cooperating with deprogrammers to encourage the parents of believers to engage in further [abduction and confinement](#). This cascading effect is one reason why deprogramming [See editor's note below] often spreads in chain-reaction fashion. It is also not uncommon for former members who have left the faith to approach

the parents of their former peers.

Saruhiko (pseudonym), a co-representative of the "Yachimata-no-Kai", a private organization that works to mend relationships between parents and children damaged by [abduction and confinement](#) - and himself a victim of such treatment - describes the loyalty test as a form of "rehabilitation" meant to prevent return to the [religious organization](#). He says,

"They're made to steal member lists and [church](#) info, or act as spies, to forcibly change their way of thinking."



Professional deprogrammer
Tamiya Taguchi in 1964

These loyalty tests not only weed out false defectors but also fracture relationships between believers. In one case, a confinement victim who pretended to defect was later coerced into cooperating in the abduction of another believer, incurring the wrath of members of the [religious organization](#) and causing emotional scars. Some ex-members have even become pastors engaged in anti-[Unification Church](#) activities. Saruhiko reflects,

"Maybe it's time we calmly reflect on what really happened through open dialogue."

Deprogrammer groups refer to this process as a "rescue" and encourage carrying it out not just on one person but in a chain-like manner. Tamiya Taguchi (田口民也), a former [Unification Church](#) believer and now a Christian, co-authored the 1992 book "Rescue from the Unification Church", in which he harshly criticizes the

[group](#) as one that tries to "turn people's eyes away from the Bible and Jesus Christ, the true Savior", emphasizing the need for "rescue". He states,

"Only through the cooperation of many people can the rescue from the [Unification Church](#) be truly complete."



Books by Tamiya Taguchi
detailing "rescues" from the
[Family Federation for World
Peace and Unification](#) - Tokyo

There is ample testimony from believers who say they have seen former comrades, once devout followers, become active opponents after defecting. A male believer in his 50s from Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, recalls that during the 1980s in Hokkaido, "I often received calls from former members who had left after being confined. It seemed they even held study sessions among themselves."

However, in his 1994 co-authored work "Rescue and Rehabilitation from the Unification Church", Taguchi also acknowledges the prevalence of PTSD among many former members, describing it as a common aftereffect. He refers to this as "flashing", where a

sudden, flash-like fear of the [church](#) overwhelms the mind. He gives an example of a former member becoming ill just from passing a [church](#) member on the street. Still, he confesses, "I don't know why this happens."



Protesting against the evil of deprogramming (faith-breaking) in Shinjuku, Tokyo December 8, 2024. Here, Toru Goto, representing the National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Religious De-Conversion (center), delivering a speech. The posters behind him carry pictures of Toru Goto hardly able to walk after more than 12 years of forcible confinement

Taguchi does not address the psychological trauma caused by forced confinement and coercion, instead claiming that these "flashing" symptoms are a sign of healing, a process by which "the heart is being restored." He promotes conversion to Christianity through church worship and Bible study, asserting that it's necessary to confront the [Family Federation](#) "head-on," and guides former members to adopt a hostile stance.

Parents of PTSD-affected children often receive no adequate care from the deprogrammers' side. Some are left with lingering guilt

over confining their child, lamenting, "I can't die before my child."

Amenouzume (pseudonym), a female co-representative of Yachimata-no-Kai and a fellow survivor of deprogramming [See editor's note below], describes her harrowing experience:

"Abduction and confinement are unimaginably painful. Even if it lasted just a day, if your heart is deeply wounded, PTSD can develop."

She strongly calls for the eradication of such practices.

See part 1: [Japan: Deprogrammed Believers Sent to Infiltrate](#)

[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

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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Japan: Deprogrammed Believers Sent To Infiltrate

• June 16, 2025
• Knut Holdhus



The silent war on faith: Infiltration, coercion, and the erosion of religious freedom – How faith-breakers abducted thousands by using deprogrammed believers



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Family Federation Targeted

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

See part 2: [Evil: Deprogramming Destroys Families and Minds](#)



Protesting the organized persecution ignored by the authorities. Protesters gathering in East Ikebukuro Central Park, Tokyo on 8th June 2025 to call for the revocation of the dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#). Photo: [FFWPU](#)

“Deprogramming” [\[See editor’s note below\]](#), where believers are forcibly restrained and coerced into renouncing their religion, is internationally recognized as a violation of human rights. In Japan, some Christian pastors and others hostile to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) have carried out deprogramming [\[See editor’s note below\]](#) by using believers’ families. As former believers who had been deprogrammed [\[See editor’s note below\]](#) renounced their faith, a “chain reaction” of [abductions and confinements](#) of other members occurred. Testimonies from believers who were present at the time reveal how the damage from deprogramming [\[See editor’s note below\]](#) rapidly escalated.

“I was constantly filled with anger of having my faith stripped from me, and with anxiety because I didn’t know whom I could turn to.”



Protesting the organized persecution ignored by the authorities. Here, from a demonstration in the large southern city of Fukuoka 30th March 2025. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

So says 61 years old Shinichi Ishimura (石村信一), the head of a [Family Federation](#) church in Kita Ward, Tokyo. Around 30 years ago, he led youth believers at a church in Adachi Ward. At its peak, over 200 young believers were active there – not only in missionary work but also in events designed to build fellowship. He recalls,

“We have so many good memories – gathering around dinner while someone played guitar, holding monthly birthday parties where teams put on performances.”

But between 1992 and 2001, he laments, “Just from our church alone, close to 100 members may have been forcibly detained.”

Starting in 1998, new believers – those who had only just joined – began being abducted and confined in rapid succession. Over a period of less than two years, at least 18 individuals were victimized. Some were even [abducted](#) just steps away from church facilities.



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A reenactment of Yukie Kanamori (pseudonym) having been forced into a sleeping bag and abducted in a van by several men. Image provided by the person involved, partially edited. Published in Sekai Nippo 25th April 2025.

Upon investigating, a shocking possibility emerged: “A member list may have been stolen.” Testimony from believers who escaped from confinement revealed that a former male member, Mr. A, appeared at the site and said:

“I got my hands on the list of believers. More **abductions** are being planned.”

“They’ll fall away like dominoes,” he added, using the phrase “*imozuru-shiki*” (芋づる式 – dragged down in a chain reaction).

Mr. A had himself been **abducted and deprogrammed** [See editor’s note below] in July 1998. Then, one day in September, he seemingly entered the church while no one was around. Ishimura explains,

“We found a note from Mr. A in the staff room along with books he had borrowed.”

If he had indeed obtained a list of believers, “He could have easily copied down addresses from that room, either by hand or with a copier,” Ishimura sighs.

Friends who had shared dreams and ideals were **abducted and confined** one after another – and then renounced their faith without saying a word.

Ishimura’s expression became somber as he said,

“I was truly devastated – I couldn’t bear it.”

He says the pain of those events still lingers deep within him.

Similar chain abductions occurred in Osaka as well. Around 1992, Yoshio Shibata



Professional faith-breaker and victim. Illustration: Grok xAI, 20th April 2025

(pseudonym, 50s) served as a church leader in Osaka City. At that time, a female believer, Ms. B, returned after having been abducted.

While her safe return was initially a relief, strange incidents soon followed: Believers walking alone were abducted in broad daylight on the street. It seemed as though the routes and timings of their movements were fully known to the deprogrammers, and 7–8 members were eventually **abducted and forcibly confined**.

The truth came to light when another abducted believer managed to escape. That person later attended an anti-**Family Federation** meeting held by deprogrammers and saw Ms. B there. She was introduced as someone who had “helped in the rescue”.

“In other words, Ms. B was a spy,” Shibata says.

After this story spread among the congregation, Ms. B quickly disappeared. Shibata says the incident left lasting scars. In 1994, another female believer returned from where she’d been confined. But overcome with suspicion – wondering if she might be a spy – I even confronted her in front of the other members.

“I still wonder,” Shibata murmurs.

“Was she doing it willingly? Did she volunteer to help them? Or was she coerced into it as a kind of test of loyalty? Now, no one can really know.”

See part 2: **Evil: [Deprogramming Destroys Families and Minds](#)**

Featured image below: Passageway near the site where young [Family Federation](#) believers were abducted and confined – Adachi Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

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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

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