

# FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: In The Clutches Of Abusive Deprogrammers

Knut Holdhus  
November 1, 2023



*Drawing depicting kidnapping of a member of the Family Federation in Japan*

## A victim's account of the world of abusive deprogrammers

### Part 2 of the amazing story of medical doctor Hirohisa Koide



*Pastor Yasutomo Matsunaga of the Niitsu Evangelical Christian Church*



*Professional deprogrammer Takashi Miyamura*

See [part 1](#)

And then, to my surprise, the next thing I knew, a claim for a writ of habeas corpus [legal writ that orders those holding a detainee to bring him before a court] had been filed by the hospital where I worked. My parents were notified of this, and it was delivered to the place where I was forcibly detained.

My father then consulted with Takashi Miyamura about it, and he suggested that we flee to someone he knew. That was pastor Yasutomo Matsunaga. We went where the pastor indicated, first to Niigata City, then to Kashiwazaki City and Joetsu City. We moved from one place to another, and finally to Niitsu City, where the church of pastor Matsunaga was located. There I was confined. (Those are all cities in Niigata Prefecture)

False confession

I think one of the main reasons for all this moving from one place to another was that a habeas corpus claim has been filed.

Then, in November in Joetsu City, I actually thought, "If I don't say that my faith was wrong, I won't be able to get out of this." So for about four months I kept saying that I was wrong. I kept saying it, but in Joetsu City, I was not let out even once.

What does it mean to keep a person locked up for four months even though he confessed he was wrong?

I wonder what the criteria for evaluation in my case were. There were no formal criteria for any diagnosis. We doctors do what we do based on certain evaluation criteria, but in my case, there were no diagnostic criteria. It was as if Miyamura was making choices based on a feeling of being God.

It's frightening. There are doctors, and even so-called "hair doctors" nowadays, but even those doctors hold conferences

and listen to everyone's opinions in the world of doctors. But when it comes to this abduction and

confinement, Miyamura is God.

Lately, people have been saying things like baseball player Murakami is God, but I feel like Miyamura really regards himself as God.



Four of the 4,300 Japanese members of the [Family Federation](#) who became victims of kidnapping, forcible detention and attempted deprogramming. Here at a conference in Tokyo 10th September 2023. Hirohisa Koide is second from left

### Our suffering

My father was quite distressed. After we moved to Niitsu City, he found out that I had in fact not abandoned my faith. So my father seemed to feel, "This guy doesn't give up his faith."

He felt that I had become just like him. While observing me like that, every night he made a phone call to Miyamura for reports.

When he reported to my father over the phone, Miyamura would say every day, "You damn old bastard, it's because you didn't love your son. It's because you raised him poorly. It's because you don't know how to communicate." He was blaming my father every day.



What the mountain lodge where Hirohisa Koide was forcibly detained, looked like

My father was hearing this every day for 11 months. It was driving him crazy. Then he spoke to me about Miyamura and Matsunaga, "You know too much about this group. That's why there's no way you can get out of here alive. I am a war veteran who used to be ready to die. I am ready to die now. You should be ready to die too."

Despite that, I was somehow lecturing him on the [Unification Principles](#) and thought I was quite good at it. Well, I think it was a bit bad the way I did it. It cornered my father even more. Then, when he came at me and tried to hit me, his eyes were abnormal. He thought, "This guy is going to die. I've had enough, let's just kill ourselves." Now that I think about it, I still think that if we had killed ourselves there, the kidnapping and confinement would have been over.

I sometimes wonder if my father's sacrifice was in vain, but I couldn't quite bring myself to decide to die or commit suicide with my family there. I said, "I just can't believe it anymore." I think everyone was

relieved.

After that, the degree of confinement decreased a little. The place was called a mountain lodge, but I don't know where it was. They wouldn't even show me a map. This is what it was like there. (Showing picture)

### **Shown off in the media**



*Yoshifu Arita in 2014*

Then, in July 1993, Miyamura contacted me and said, "Arita, that Yoshifu Arita [Born 1952, named Yoshifu after Joseph Stalin, journalist, writer, anti-religious activist and politician for Japanese Communist Party 1990-2007, elected to House of Councillors (Upper House) in the Diet 2010-2022 for Constitutional Democratic Party] and a reporter from the Weekly Bunshun are going to interview you, is that OK?" I thought, "If I say no, I will be in a position to be killed again." I had no choice but to say yes.

Although people often talk about freedom of speech, if you are confined, it becomes forced speech. You are no longer free to speak and cannot appeal for freedom of speech. That's why Yoshifu Arita said, "You've been locked up for a year and you've endured it well."



*A block of flats in Niitsu where Hirohisa Koide was kept forcibly detained*

He knew that I had been forcibly detained. But he'd rather hear about what kind of medical treatment was being given at the hospital where there were many believers. They only interviewed me about that and didn't want to hear anything about my one year absence. I don't know whether the Shukan Bunshun reporter knew about that or not, but he didn't show any interest and didn't report about it. It was a completely biased reporting.

That's why I have to assume that they think that anyone who believes in the wrong religion deserves to be locked up and undergo thought reform.

And it didn't end there. This TBS [Tokyo Broadcasting System, known for leftwing bias] special report continues to run. The broadcast still exists. Miyamura had told me about two months earlier that he had prepared a suitable debut stage for me.

That's why Takashi Miyamura knew about TBS and their planned news report two months early. Therefore, the TBS director and staff came to Niigata. At that time, I was still locked up in an apartment in Niitsu City. I was forcibly detained and couldn't go out. I was always inside the house, in my room, with just my parents.

It was filmed on a riverbank, and at the time, the TBS director behaved like a lickspittle. "I want to make a number of special programs next time. Miyamura, you're amazing," he said. The TBS staff kept talking in the car, and when they arrived at the riverbank, it was as if they didn't know who the director was.



*Niitsu Evangelical Christian Church, where Yasutomo Matsunaga was pastor. Apparently, the church was renovated with money from huge kidnapping and deprogramming fees that relatives of members of the [Family Federation](#) had been tricked to pay by faith-breakers and lawyers telling horrendous lies about the [Family Federation](#)*

Miyamura was leaning back in his chair. As if he was the boss, he said arrogantly, "What you're saying there is a little strange. No [Unification Church](#) member would think such a thing." It was an interview with me, but he kept making corrections.

And that was broadcasted on TBS TV. I'm standing here saying this, but after the broadcast, eggs were thrown at the hospital where I worked.

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**To be continued. Part 3 coming soon. See [part 1](#)**

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# Father Tricked By Deprogrammers To Kidnap Son

October 30, 2023 • Knut Holdhus



**29 years old medical doctor kidnapped after father was tricked by deprogrammers in Japan**

Hirohisa Koide, a Japanese medical doctor and author, gave an amazing testimony of how he was kidnapped, forcibly detained for two years as profesional deprogrammers attempted to get him to give up his faith.

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He is the author of "Escape from Kidnapping", his 232-page story published in Japanese by Kogensha 20th September 2023 – a revised edition of 1996 publication.

He shared his story at a special symposium on the theme "Who destroy the family!" 10th September 2023 at the Shibuya, Tokyo headquarters of the [Family Federation of Japan](#). It was organised by the the [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#). At the symposium, several victims of horrendous deprogramming attempts spoke.



Front cover page of "Escape from Kidnapping" by Hirohisa Koide, published in Japanese 2023 by Kogensha.

Koide was introduced by Mamoru Kamono, a spokesperson for the [association of victims](#), with the words,

"The next presenter is Mr Hirohisa Koide. He was born in Tokyo in 1962. When he was a student at the School of Medicine at Jichi Medical University in the city of Shimotsuke, he encountered the [Unification Principles](#). He has been actively engaged in missionary work.

In June 1992, he was suddenly abducted and forcibly confined by members of a group of deprogrammers, including Takashi Miyamura. Over a period of two years, Koide was subjected to numerous brainwashing attempts, but he was able to escape.

Currently, while engaged in medical work, he also devotes himself to exposing the inhumane and criminal methods used by the group of deprogrammers. Today, he will deliver a speech titled 'Contempt for Belief in God and Buddha, and how National Network of Lawyers (Zenkoku Benren) believe themselves to be saviours'. Let us all welcome him with a big round of applause."

Here is the first part of Koide's story

## *Contempt for Belief in God and Buddha, and how "National Network of Lawyers" believe themselves to be saviours*

As I was listening to Mrs. Nakajima's [another victim] story today, I thought that I myself have been in the position both of a victim, and at one point I was also in the position of a perpetrator. Therefore, I really want to make amends for my wrongdoings and seek redemption. I believe that it is for my own sake that I am able to stand up today and even publish this book.

### **My family**

I, myself, was raised by a father who was deeply devoted to the Tenrikyo faith. Growing up, I was immersed in a world of belief in [God](#) and prayer. On my mother's side, there were many educators and doctors and a tendency to be somewhat skeptical of new religious movements.

Therefore, since I was a child, I grew up knowing that there are two ways of thinking and perceiving things. And, if anything, I wanted to follow the path of religion, but I ended up entering medical school.

### **Kidnapping**

This is a photo of the



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*The apartment block in Ogikubo, Tokyo where Hirohisa Koide was forcibly detained in 1992.  
Photo: Hirohisa Koide*

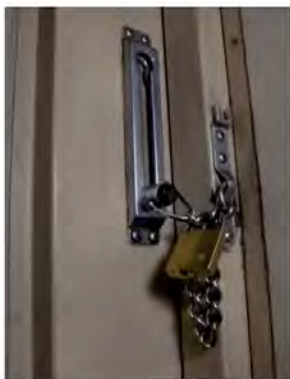
apartment in Ogikubo in Tokyo where I was first confined. (Photo shown) It is a very ordinary apartment. I was 29 years old and working at a general hospital in Tokyo.

It was a general hospital, but the director and the president were followers of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), and there were many working there who believed in [God](#) and Buddha. My parents did not agree with me working at that hospital. In fact, they had already obtained a lot of information that made them anxious. They had contact with a deprogrammer named Takashi Miyamura in Ogikubo. And they were preparing to pull me away from the [Family Federation](#) and have me meet a deprogrammer.

I myself was not aware of that at all. But I did notice that something was wrong with my parents. And then, in June 1992, when I returned to my parents' home, I was suddenly surrounded by about 20 relatives, and then my father said, 'I can't forgive you for joining and working for a criminal organization. I have prepared a place where we can talk calmly.' I thought, "Oh no".

Surrounded by about 10 people, including my relatives, I shouted, "Help me, I'm going to be killed!" But they forced me into a van and drove me to this flat. I have, however, no idea where it was.

I knew that it was a room in a flat somewhere. When I was brought into the flat, I felt I understood it all. I sensed this was the reason why my parents had been acting strangely.



*The door was chained.  
Photo: Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion*

There, I couldn't see out of the window, and the door was chained. It wasn't an environment where I could easily escape. To begin with, about ten relatives stayed together with me there.

I was forced to give up my profession as a doctor after just one night. After that, I was never able to contact the hospital. Overnight, I went from being someone who cared about the patients and the ward every day, and who carried a pager, to someone who had nothing to do with them.

Then, relatives and ex-members asked me, "Explain to us the absurdities of the doctrine and the activities of the [Family Federation](#)." Straightaway, I thought that it was not my responsibility to explain that to former believers.

At that time the [Family Federation](#) was called [Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity](#). So I said, "I'll introduce you to someone I know there, why don't you ask him." I said something like that, but they didn't take me seriously at all.

And so I made up my mind to say, "Please stop your violent religious persecution. It violates my basic human rights." From morning to night I kept shouting, "I want you to stop your violent religious persecution. It is in violation of my basic human rights." No matter what they said, I kept shouting.

Then the relatives of my mother's side, who don't really believe in religion, became more worried. Certainly, from a medical point of view, it was unpalatable.



Hiroshi Hirata, anti-religious activist lawyer. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

"No, this is



Takashi Miyamura professional Japanese deprogrammer. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

definitely a violation of basic human rights." That's what they said. Then this Takashi Miyamura came along with his lawyer, and with this, the *National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales* (Zenkoku Benren) made its appearance. This is Hiroshi Hirata. He looked like that. (Showing a photo) He was a bit younger then. He handed out his business cards.

He even gave me one, and then said, "If it's done by relatives, it's not illegal." Then he left. He walked out with a smile on his face. He is a terrible person. I think he probably forgot all about what happened to me and how much my father suffered.

It was a terrible thing to do, to take advantage of his status as a lawyer. My relatives were only social studies teachers, since the lawyer told them that it was not illegal, they thought, "Oh, he must have his reasons." From that point on, it seemed like they stopped thinking and were no longer worried about the kidnapping and forcible confinement.

Read the amazing continuation in [part 2](#) of the story.

Featured image above: Hirohisa Koide, victim of kidnapping, a 2 year long forcible detention, and attempted deprogramming. Photo: Screenshot from YouTube video by [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#).

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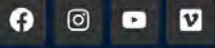
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# Japan: 4300 Abductions And Forcible Detentions

February 1, 2023 • Knut Holdhus

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## Unification Church in Japan suffered 4300 abductions and forcible detentions for faith-breaking purposes

Willy Fautré, CEO and director of Human Rights Without Frontiers, presented grim facts about Japan's bad human rights and religious freedom records. The Belgian human rights expert told the audience at the UN Office in Geneva 31<sup>st</sup> January, of 4300 abductions and forcible detentions, how 4 300 members of the Unification Church, over a period of 45

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4,500 members of the **Unification Church**, over a period of 40 years, had been forcibly abducted and held in confinement for faith-breaking purposes.

Fautré also explained about the more than 400 violent attacks on churches and members of the **Unification Church / Family Federation** during the two months after the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in July. The Japanese authorities are actually worsening the hate speech situation by seeking the removal of the movement's Religious Corporation Status, forbidding church members to contact members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party in the national parliament and not mentioning any of the good works of the **Family Federation** and its members.



Willy Fautré

Here is Willy Fautré's address:

## The right to retain one's religious beliefs and the **Unification Church** in Japan

*An address by Willy Fautré, CEO and Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers, at an information meeting on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in Japan at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the UPR Working Group at the UN Office in Geneva (Palais des Nations), Switzerland 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023.*

"No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice," says Art. 18.2 of the ICCPR [International Convention on Civil and Political Rights].

Freedom of religion or belief includes the right to have, not to have, to change but also to retain one's religious beliefs.

This last aspect of the individual right to keep one's religious or non-religious beliefs despite forceful attempts to change this choice, whether the individual belonging is new or not, is usually underreported and is therefore insufficiently defended.

Several actors can threaten this right:

- a state exclusively supporting and promoting one official religion or non-religious worldview such as atheism
- state and non-state actors creating a hierarchy of religious and belief groups with unequal rights, especially in the lowest category including non-traditional or non-historical movements usually of foreign origin and recently established in a country
- families and the broader social environment of converts
- extremist groups or mobs incited by political parties or nationalist movements

The objectives of these actors are

- either to create unity and uniformity in the national population
- or to preserve the existing identity of a social or ethnic group
- or to protect the existing cohesion of a family
- or to forcefully deconvert individuals or groups who changed their religion.

A few concrete examples.

In China, the official ideology is atheism and violent policies, including in school education, have been put in place to make the current and future generations of Buddhist, Muslim and Christian Chinese citizens more and more atheist.

Other states having Islam as the official religion imprison converts to another religion and sentence them to prison terms if they do not recant their new religion.

In India attacks against tribal and Dalit converts to Buddhism



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and Christianity have increased since radical Hindu groups launched a campaign in 2020 to stop the mass conversion wave of those populations and to forcefully deconvert them.

Most tribals do not identify as Hindus because they have diverse religious practices and many worship nature, but Hindu extremists believe that all Indians should be Hindus and that the country should be rid of foreign religions. They use extensive violence to achieve this goal, particularly targeting Christians from a Hindu background accused of following a 'foreign faith.'

#### Hate speech against the Unification Church

In Japan, thousands of converts to the Unification Church and about 200 to the movement of Jehovah's Witnesses have during four decades been victims of abduction and attempts of forced deconversion in long-term confinement conditions: weeks, months and sometimes years. The Japanese media outlets always kept silent about these massive violations of human rights but were very prolific in their politically motivated campaigns stigmatizing the Unification Church as a dangerous cult. This is again the case with the current intense campaign against the Unification Church in the Shinzo Abe case.



Japan. License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp. Cropped

Hate speech is at the heart of the current stigmatization of the Unification Church by the media.

In the period from Abe's assassination to the end of August 2022, the Unification Church in Japan documented more than 400 hate incidents against its churches, organizations, and individual members. But they continue, and the number is probably higher now, since not all local incidents are necessarily reported to the headquarters. The human rights magazine Bitter Winter investigated the issue and revealed it is mainly a group of lawyers and leftist media outlets sharing the Communist ideology that is behind this campaign of hate speech.

The Japanese government, of course, did not instigate the hate speech but it has gone along with it and acted in so many ways to exacerbate it and to take what can only be described as "hate-filled actions", including seeking the removal of its Religious Corporation Status and forbidding its members to associate with LDP Diet members, etc.



Akiko Hozan. Photo: WFWP

One concrete consequence of this hate speech was the Foreign Ministry's cancellation of an award given many years ago to Mrs. Hozan [Akiko Hozan]. This Japanese lady, a member of the Church was working for The Women's Federation for World Peace-Japan in

Mozambique. Under that organization's auspices, she set up a school for hundreds of local children who would not otherwise have had access to any schooling. This fostered considerable goodwill towards Japan and the Ambassador there gave her the award.

The confiscation of that award is the kind of mean, petty, and spiteful action that the Japanese government has stooped to while not denying either the great benefit of the project to the local children or to Japan's reputation in Africa. But trying to artificially blacken the name and reputation of a group, one must also deny or suppress any evidence that they may have

must also deny or suppress any evidence that they may have done good for people in Japan and around the world. This is part of the stigmatization campaign against the **Unification Church**.

On the other hand, when thousands of people converted to the **Unification Church** were victims of family abduction, forced confinement for long periods and violent attempts to deconvert them in such conditions, the media, the Japanese government and relevant state institutions kept silent and passive, turning a deaf ear to their complaints and privileging impunity.

### **The deconversion campaign of Unification Church members**

In 2011, I spent two weeks in Tokyo to meet and interview 20 members of the **Unification Church** and a few Jehovah's Witnesses who had been victims of parental abduction and attempted forceful deconversion in confinement conditions.

On another fact-finding mission, I also met a dozen members of the Japanese Diet, lawyers and journalists and I discussed with the authorities of a police station confronted with the abduction of a member of the **Unification Church**.

Parental abductions and forced deconversion attempts under confinement conditions concerned 4300 adult members of the **Unification Church**. They were perpetrated by the family, usually one or both parents, at the instigation of and with the help of Protestant pastors, from the mid-1960s to about 2010.

During that long period, both the police and the judiciary failed to follow up with these massive violations of human rights and to put an end to them. All cases of criminal complaints filed by the victims were dismissed, 24 in total. All civil cases were dismissed, 5 in total.

It is already difficult for the victims to file a complaint against a close family member, as in all the cases of domestic violence. An overwhelming majority of them had psychologically not managed to take this decisive non-return step against a father or a mother. Last but not least, the passivity of the police and the judiciary finally discouraged other victims to try to go to court. Moreover, the successive Japanese governments kept silent and passive, the Japanese media kept silent, the Japanese human rights NGOs kept silent and inactive. Consequently, the international community was not aware of this situation in Japan.

Such a situation is hardly understandable for a Westerner. That is why it is important to stress two points related to the Japanese culture.

First, parents keep their moral authority over their children, whether they are adult, more intelligent or in a superior social position, and they expect them to be obedient in return for giving them access to education or other facilities.

Second, there are many parental abductions in the context of marital separation or divorces in Japan, and ... there is no law criminalizing such acts. They are considered private family matters and so are family abductions for deconverting one of their members. Bringing back a lost sheep to the flock.

The US Department of State was the first to mention this sort of forced change of religion in its annual report in the first decade of this century. This was the very beginning of a process which led to a solution of the **Unification Church** problem. Instrumental was the famous case of Toru Goto, who was kidnapped and confined for 12 years and 5 months.

### **The case of Toru Goto**

In 1986, Toru Goto, then twenty-three years old, became a member of the **Unification Church**.

In 1987, the first attempt of abduction and confinement by his father and other relatives was unsuccessful, as he managed to escape about a month later. In order to avoid another similar experience, he cut off all the links with his family.



*Toru Goto after more than 12 years of forcible confinement.*

September 1995, Mr. Goto's parents, his elder brother and his sister-in-law kidnapped him from their home in Hoya City (currently West Tokyo City). They carried out his abduction under the instructions of a deprogrammer, Takashi Miyamura, and an Evangelical minister, Pastor Yasutomo Matsunaga, as they called themselves. Mr. Goto was then confined in an apartment in Niigata City for approximately one year and nine

months. During this period, Pastor Matsunaga regularly came to this apartment to urge him to leave the [Church](#).

Between 1997 and 2007, Mr. Goto was confined in several apartments in Tokyo where a so-called exit counselor regularly visited him together with former members of the [Unification Church](#) (UC) in order to forcibly convince him to leave the [Church](#).

During his confinement, Mr. Goto attempted to escape several times but every time he was caught and held by his relatives. He also held three hunger strikes of three to four weeks. To no avail.

Around November 2007, it seemed as though the family members had started arguing about whether to continue his confinement or not, due to the financial burdens it imposed.

On 10 February 2008, at around 4:00 PM, his brother, sister-in-law, mother, and sister suddenly ordered him to leave the apartment. He was then emaciated and suffering from a serious state of starvation. Dressed in his lounge wear, he was thrown down on the floor of the concrete corridor in front of the entrance without any belongings or identification documents.

On his way to the [Unification Church](#) headquarters, he came across a member of his church who gave him money so that he could take a taxi to reach a safe haven. That evening, he was diagnosed with malnutrition and admitted to a hospital. For a while, he could barely stand on his feet.

### **The legal battle of Toru Goto**

After his release in 2008, Toru Goto filed complaints against his family members, his kidnappers and unwelcome exit counselors. His criminal complaint was rejected but six years later, he won a civil lawsuit against them at the Tokyo High Court.

All the accused but one had to pay financial compensation for damages:

- 150,000 EUR for the brother and sister-in-law
- 75,000 EUR for the exit counselor Takashi Miyamura
- 30,000 EUR for the Evangelical Pastor Yasumoto.

There was no media coverage of this landmark victory in Japan but this decision had a deterrent effect on the actors making financial and spiritual benefits from the exploitation of parents' concerns and fears intensified by media hype about so-called heretical movements labeled 'dangerous cults'.

After Toru Goto's victory in court, the sole lawsuit accepted by the judiciary in 50 years in Japan, the Protestant pastors and other actors abusing the psychological weakness of vulnerable

families quickly put an end to their lucrative business. According to some testimonies I collected from the victims, their parents paid between 40,000 EUR and 100,000 EUR for a so-called 'rescue operation'."

Featured image above: Willy Fautré at the UN Office in Geneva 31st Jan. 2023. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission.

More about 4300 abductions: [Father Tricked by Deprogrammers to Kidnap Son](#)

Mr. Willy Fautré is CEO and Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers. He is a member of the International Consortium on Law and Religious Studies. He was chargé de mission at the Cabinet of the Belgian Ministry of Education and at the Belgian Parliament.

He started defending religious freedom of Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox in communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe during the Cold War in the mid-70s.

In December 1988, he founded Human Rights Without Frontiers. He is a lecturer in the field of human rights and religious freedom. He develops advocacy in international institutions, UN, OSCE, EU. He has published many academic articles.

Mr. Fautré is also press correspondent and member of the editorial board of the European Times in Brussels, a member of the Press Club and contributor to various media in Brussels, and associate editor on the editorial board of Bitter Winter, a magazine on religious liberty and human rights.

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