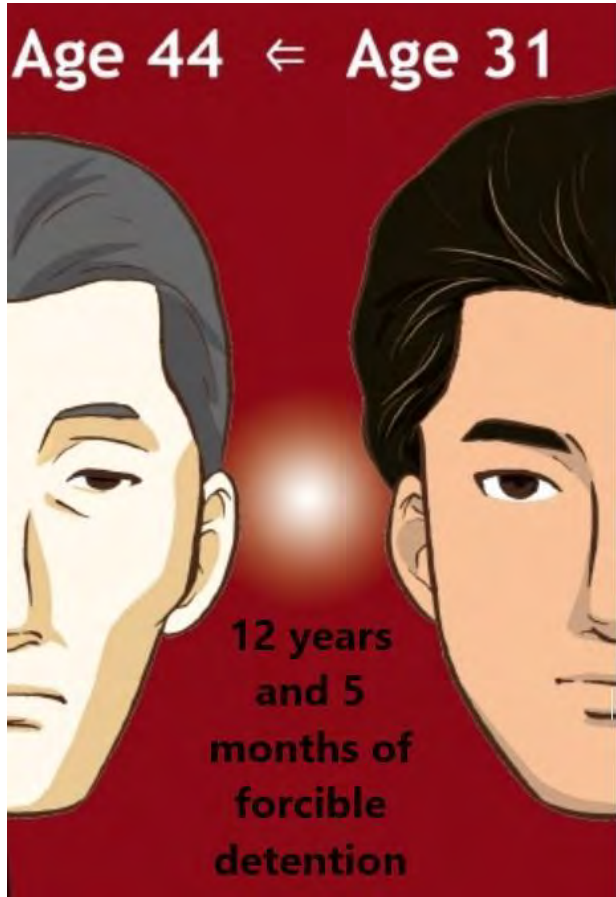


# FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Harsh Reality - Japan Forcibly Deprograms 4,300

Knut Holdhus  
January 31, 2024



*Toru Goto went through 12 years and 5 months of forcible detention*

Kishida administration pushing for many more to be forcibly deprogrammed

6th of six parts of large Monthly Seiron report - More on [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4](#), [part 5](#).



*Facsimile from page 53 of Monthly Seiron Dec. 2023.*

Seiron (正論), a Japanese monthly opinion magazine, carried in its December 2023 issue a large report on the vicious persecution of the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) in Japan.

Two parts of the report by Makiko Takita, well known journalist and editor-in-chief of the magazine, contain an interview with Toru Goto, victim of horrible abuse during more than a decade of forcible detention.



[Bitter Winter](#) published this part of the report of Seiron on 24th January 2024, as the sixth of six parts of the English version of the original Japanese large report. Read the [whole Bitter Winter article](#). More on [article 1](#), [article 2](#), [article 3](#), [article 4](#), [article 5](#).

In this article, headlined "The Unification Church Case in Japan: The Harsh Reality of Deprogramming, Part II", journalist and editor Makiko Takita continues her interview with Toru Goto, recounting his ordeal of being forcibly abducted from the [Unification Church](#). Goto describes being neglected by his family during a hunger strike until he was on the brink of death. Despite pleading for a normal diet after his strike, he was subjected to further food deprivation, leading to extreme physical deterioration.

Goto describes what he went through,

"My family completely ignored me. I did not fix a term to end the third hunger strike, but my consciousness began to fade, and my breathing became increasingly labored. My mother was concerned and said to me, 'It's time to end it,' but the confinement did not end. If I continued like this, I might die. Feeling that my life was in danger, I finally gave up after 30 days.

But it did not end there. In the past two hunger strikes, food was served at the end of the fasting. This time, however, I was cut off. It was unexpected. My family said, 'What is wrong with you that you fasted on your own and asked us to serve your food? Are you stupid?' 'Continue until you die!' My heart was completely broken."

Toru Goto explains how he was treated,

"Finally, food was served. However, the food sanctions in the name of a recovery diet continued. The only food I ate each day was some watery porridge and a sport drink. This continued for another seventy days. My body was emaciated, and I was on the verge of starvation."

Eventually, after enduring years of confinement and emotional abuse, he was abruptly expelled from the place where he was forcibly detained, leaving him physically injured and emotionally shattered.



*The end of Toru Goto's forcible detention 10th Feb. 2008*

He recalls the day he was finally set free on 10th February 2008,

"My brother and his wife, my mother, and my sister all came in and sat down in front of me. The first thing my brother said to me with a stern expression on his face was, 'Do you have any intention to admit the faults of the [Unification Church](#)?' Everyone was silent. 'No,' I said. As if to confirm, my brother said, 'Are you sure about that?' and I said 'Yes.' Then my brother stared at me, his words getting stronger and more vehement shouting, 'Then get out of here right now!'

I was so stunned by this sudden turn of events that for a moment I could not understand what my brother was saying. My brother suddenly grabbed me with a terrible look on his face. My brother-in-law, sister, and mother joined in, grabbing me by the torso, arms, and legs, lifting me, carrying me toward the front door, and forcibly pushing me outside."

Goto's story sheds light on the widespread practice of forcibly deprogramming [church](#) members, with an estimated 4,300 individuals subjected to such treatment. Many of those individuals were coerced into renouncing their beliefs and becoming plaintiffs

in legal cases against the [church](#).

Toru Goto details the immensity of the faith-breaking business of abducting and forcibly detaining members of the [Unification Church](#),

"The number of [Unification Church](#) believers abducted and imprisoned by the deprogrammers and their families is estimated to be 4,300. Of these, some 3,000 were forced to apostatize.

Many of those who have been forced to apostatize, as well as their brothers, sisters, and brothers and sisters-in-law, often harbor hatred toward the church and are driven to the next stage of forced apostasy or conversion by being directed to the lawyers of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (National Federation of Bar Associations) and become plaintiffs in court cases. More than half of the plaintiffs in the 22 civil lawsuits (increased to 32 at the time of the request) listed in the request for the dissolution order are former believers who were forced to apostatize."



*Toru Goto in 2008, barely able to move after being held in forcible detention by deprogrammers for more than 12 years*

However, Goto expresses frustration at the lack of media coverage on the experiences of those who were forced to go through dreadful faith-breaking sessions and the complicity of certain individuals, including his own family members, in perpetuating these abuses.

Despite legal victories against deprogrammers and a decline in lawsuits against the church in recent years, Goto criticizes the ongoing efforts by the Cultural Affairs Agency and the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales to pursue a dissolution order against the [Unification Church](#). He highlights the lack of transparency and fairness in these proceedings, which seem to be driven by political motives rather than genuine concerns for religious freedom.

The article concludes by urging readers to question the motives behind the dissolution order and to consider the broader implications for religious freedom in Japan. It raises concerns about the silence of other religious organizations and political leaders in the face of these attacks on freedom of belief, emphasizing the importance of defending this fundamental human right against authoritarian encroachments.

Editor of Monthly Seiron, Makiko Takita, points out, that the magazine has disclosed details that newspapers and TV stations are

aware of, but don't publish. She calls the whole process strange that led to the Kishida administration requesting the Tokyo District Court to issue an order to dissolve the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)).

In her concluding remarks, she says,

"To our horror, no objections have been raised by other religious organizations or religious people. The same is true in the political world. We wonder whether Soka Gakkai, the original parent body of the New Komeito Party, should not think that the dissolution order may create future risks for them too. Does all this mean that other religions are relieved because the government is targeting the [Unification Church](#)?"

Makiko Takita calls the steps taken by the Japanese authorities a violation of religious freedom,

"I feel a sense of crisis when I see that the whole of Japan is silent on a process trampling freedom of belief and freedom of religion without following the proper procedures and with a political agenda. What leaders of dictatorial regimes fear is people's inner feelings. That is why they focus their efforts on shattering freedom of religion or belief. Have we lost sight of the preciousness of freedom of belief?"

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"Harsh Reality of 4300 Forcibly Deprogrammed" - text: Knut Holdhus

Read Toru Goto's own account of his ordeals: [Heroic Battle Against Evil Japanese Practise](#)

and [Gross Human Rights Violations in Japan](#)

More on [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4](#), [part 5](#) of the Seiron article.

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# Heroic Battle Against Evil Japanese Practise

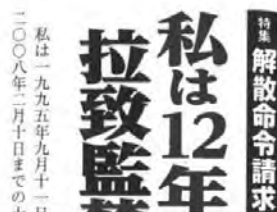
November 22, 2023 • Knut Holdhus



*Toru Goto recalls his horrendous ordeal fighting evil Japanese practise – part 1*

Read [part 2](#)

Toru Goto (後藤徹) is a victim of abduction, forcible detention for incredible 12 years and 5 months, during which time he was put under constant duress to give up



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his faith. He could tell his story in great detail in an 8-page feature article in the December 2023 issue of the Japanese monthly opinion magazine *Seiron* (正論), published by the *Sankei Shimbun*, one of the country's top 5 daily national newspapers.

Another recent event that threw Goto onto the main stage of the Japanese media world, was his 4<sup>th</sup> October defamation lawsuit against anti-religious activist journalist Eito Suzuki. See [Kidnapping Victim Sues Activist Journalist](#)

Today, we are able to bring you some glimpses into the extraordinary life of Toru Goto, told in his own words.

He shared his story at a special symposium on the theme "Abduction and Confinement – Who Destroys Families?" 10<sup>th</sup> 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.

Toru Goto was introduced by Nobuyuki Kaeriyama, a spokesperson for the [association of victims](#), with the words,

"I would like to move on to a testimony from a victim of abduction and confinement. First, the representative of our association, Toru Goto, will take the stage. The title of his speech is 'I learnt how precious freedom is through my 12 years and 5 months of abduction and confinement.'

Toru Goto was abducted and forcibly detained when he returned to his parents' home on the night of 11<sup>th</sup> September 1995. He was not released from his captivity at all until 10<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

Indeed, over a period of 12 years and 5 months, he was put under duress to renounce his faith and subjected to mental and physical abuse in a group setting, pushing him to the breaking point. However, he survived.

Today, he testifies to the existence of a living and working [God](#). Let's all welcome him with a big round of applause."

Here is part 1 of Toru Goto's keynote speech,

I was abducted and imprisoned for 12 years and five months, from the age of 31 to 44, because of my faith in the [Family Federation](#).



Toru Goto at the beginning of civil case in March 2011. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

unbelievable in today's Japan. However, in my case, in a civil lawsuit that I filed, the High Court ruling in favor of the plaintiff was finalized by the Supreme Court on September 29, 2015. In that ruling, the fact of my 12-year and 5-month abduction and



Facsimile from page 53 of *Monthly Seiron* Dec. 2023.

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Many people say that this is

...my 12-year and five-month imprisonment and confinement was recognized, and a total compensation order of 22 million yen was issued. So, at least, I hope you can understand that this is not entirely unfounded.

I would like to talk about my experience in the said confinement for 12 years and five months. It was my family that abducted me. First of all, I would like to tell you how I got to this point.

My older brother was the first member of my family to join the [Family Federation](#). I am the middle one of three siblings, with an older brother and younger sister.

My family was a most ordinary family. My father was a "corporate warrior" [salaryman loyal to his company] and had a habit of saying, "Study hard!"

My mother was kind and gentle, and she never complained even when I wet the bed and made the sheets soaking wet. She washed them every day without a word. My older brother worked in a construction company and was a talented guy, but he was a bit of a hothead.

Whenever I taught my sister maths, she would say, "I always get good marks thanks to you, big brother." She was really happy. We were a normal, close-knit family. In my family, the person I respected the most was my elder brother.



*Toru Goto speaking with handheld loudspeaker at demonstration at Ogikubo Station in Tokyo 24th May 2009. Photo: FFWPU*

I decided to pursue a career in architecture at university because of the influence of my older brother, who graduated from the architecture department.

My brother introduced me to the [Family Federation](#). I was in my fourth year of university. He was deeply moved by the teachings of the [Family Federation](#) and enthusiastically preached to me. He also converted my sister. In this way, all three of us became members of [Family Federation](#). That was already 36 years ago.

My brother, who was the first to join the [Family Federation](#), was able to quit his job and explain to his parents how to become a devotee of the [Family Federation](#). My parents were surprised, but my brother spoke about it with so much passion that they eventually approved.

My brother told me that my father told him something like, "It's your life, so live it without regrets."

If it had not been for certain events in the Goto family, we would probably still be a close-knit family.

As the name suggests, the [Family Federation](#) is a religion that values the family above all else.

Let's say that three siblings had lived a life with God at the center, where they loved each other and practiced the faith of the [Family Federation](#). If all

three had continued like that, they would have got married, started their own family, and gathered together for a fun time during the New Year. We would probably have become a closer family than before we became religious.

However, due to a certain incident, our family was destroyed. That particular event was the intervention of a third party.

Who was the third party? He was a specialist in persuading members to quit their faith, called a faith-breaker ["exit counselor"].



*Satoshi Moriyama (森山諭 - 1908-1996), Japanese pastor and co-founder of Ogikubo Glory Church. Photo: [日本イエス・キリスト教団 荻窪栄光キリスト教会 / Wikimedia Commons](#). [Public domain image](#). Cropped*



*Professional deprogrammer Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻). Photo: [FFWPU](#)*

In the case of the Goto family, the faith-breaker was Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻). At that time, my parents began attending a study group run by Miyamura. He worked with Satoshi Moriyama (森山諭) of Ogikubo Glory Church.

The focus of the study group was "exit persuasion".

It was a study group to encourage members of the [Family Federation](#) to leave the group. What triggered it, seems to have been hearing bad rumors about the Family Federation from relatives and becoming anxious. Parents learnt how to get their children out of the group. The method was abduction and confinement.

A family abducts a son or daughter, isolates and confines him or her in an apartment or some other place. There, a third-party "exit counselor" meets the believer face to face, slowly destroys the person's faith, and does not release the believer until he or she quits the group. The "exit counselors" refer to this method as "protective persuasion".

At first it was my brother. After being summoned by our father to our parents' home in Tokyo, my brother disappeared without a trace. He was abducted by several men who were waiting for him on the street and taken away in a van.

My brother was forcibly detained in an apartment for about a month. Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻) destroyed his faith, making him quit our movement.

My older brother did not just leave the [Family Federation](#), but began being hostile and hateful towards it, due to the influence of Miyamura.

And then I was abducted and held captive. At that time, Miyamura persuaded me to leave the [Federation](#), but after just over a month, I was able to escape and went straight back to the [Family Federation](#). However, after that, my younger sister was abducted and forcibly detained and quit our group.

Eventually, I became the only one to remain in the [Family Federation](#). My parents and siblings became vehemently opposed to it.



I was forced to use a false name and quit my job out of fear that I might be abducted at any time and held captive again.

If a believer who spends time with other believers, is abducted, forcibly detained and then leaves the group, there is a risk that the whereabouts of the other believers will be known, and that they will be ambushed and abducted. Since my family knew where I worked, there was a risk that I would be ambushed, kidnapped and confined.

Originally, one's family should have been those you trust the most. But when they may be involved in kidnapping you again at any time, they have become a terrifying presence that you cannot trust even if you want to.

After that, I gradually built a certain level of trust with them over the course of eight years.

Continue to read: [Part 2](#).

Featured image above: Toru Goto speaking 10th September 2023 in Tokyo. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by the [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#).

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