

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Lawmaker Brings Up Harm Done To Minority Faith By Japan's Government

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Satoshi Hamada in Dec. 2023

Lawmaker points out to Japanese parliament the severe harm inflicted on members of minority faith.



Sekai Nippo

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A request to disclose the minutes of the Council of Religious Corporations was made by Senator Satoshi Hamada during a meeting of the General Affairs Committee of the House of Councillors.

by the Editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)

In response to a question in a meeting of the General Affairs Committee of the House of Councillors on 12th March, Councillor Satoshi Hamada (浜田聡) expressed concerns regarding the non-disclosure of the minutes of the Council of Religious Corporations, which led to the decision of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and

Technology (MEXT) to request the dissolution of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) at the Tokyo District Court. He stated that this non-disclosure is problematic from the perspective of religious freedom and demanded the disclosure of the minutes.



Toru Goto, member of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan, who got his life destroyed by criminal persecutors who held him captive for more than 12 years in order to break his faith

In response to this, Mariko Kobayashi (小林万里子), Deputy Director General of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, replied that "it was unanimously decided not to release the minutes of the meeting" until the court's decision was finalized.

Furthermore, Hamada pointed out that there have been cases where believers of the former [Unification Church](#) were abducted and confined by their families and "exit counselors", and forcibly coerced to renounce their faith. He noted that according to the [church's](#) announcement, the number of victims has [exceeded 4,300](#).

Referring to the case of Toru Goto (後藤徹), who was locked up for 12 years and 5 months and subjected to coercion to leave the [church](#), Satoshi Hamada mentioned that the family and the "exit counselor" [faith-breaker] Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻) were defeated in a civil lawsuit filed by Toru Goto, and the ruling was upheld by the Supreme Court. He emphasized that the government's ought to recognize that kind of harm caused to members of the [religious organisation](#).

In response, Parliamentary Vice-Minister Akiko Honda (本

田顯子) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) said that she would "refrain from answering" because of the ongoing dissolution case and the fact that it was an individual case.



Akiko Honda (LDP), Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Here on 26th Oct. 2023

Hamada argued, "Considering the possibility that religious freedom may be unjustly threatened by politicians distancing themselves en masse, politicians should now listen to the voices of the followers of the [Family Federation](#) and take action."

In addition, he questioned whether it was inappropriate for members of the Diet to attend gatherings of an [organization](#) that the Liberal Democratic Party had declared it had severed ties with. In response, Akiko Honda, the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for the Ministry, stated, "We are not in a position to comment on the activities of individual members of the Diet or their participation in meetings with specific organizations."

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Part 2 of Norishige Kondo's speech 10th Sep. 2023

Norishige Kondo (近藤徳茂), author and Deputy Director of the Legal Affairs Department of the Family Federation of Japan,



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spoke at a special symposium on the theme "Abduction and Confinement – Who Destroys Families?" 10th September 2023 at the Shibuya, Tokyo headquarters of the [Family Federation of Japan](#). It was organised by the [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#). His speech was titled, "Response of Public Institutions to the Abduction and Confinement Issue".



Norishige Kondo addressing symposium in Tokyo 10th Sept. 2023. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion](#)

See [part 1](#), [part 3](#)

On the other hand, I would like to explain how public institutions have responded to this kind of abduction, confinement, and forced de-conversion.

First of all, the police. A scene of a conflict may be when a believer is about to be abducted, and other believers try to help him or her. This can lead to scuffles with those trying to de-convert someone. If the police were to come to such a scene, they would first have the two sides separated. After hearing the circumstances from both sides, they would eventually hand over the believer to his parents or relatives.

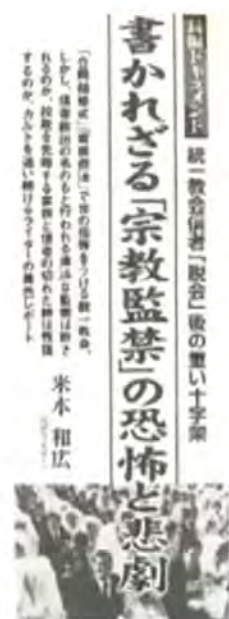
Alternatively, what would happen if a believer forcibly detained managed to call the police? Even if the police did come to the scene, they would only listen to what the relatives had to say, leave them alone, and then withdraw.

Also, let's say a believer reports the incident to the police immediately after escaping. Even if the police came, the police would eventually take the believer to the police station. Then they would call the relatives to come there and hand the believer over to them.

The public prosecutor's office also dismissed all criminal charges filed by believers released from confinement.

Of course, in the past, there have been cases where female believers who were victims of rape [during forcible detention], filed criminal charges. But unless the case was extreme, the public prosecutor's office would generally dismiss all such charges.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice has a Human Rights Bureau (人権擁護局), but it did nothing at all in response to inquiries from our [church](#) headquarters.



Facsimile from *Monthly Gendai* Nov. 2004.

This is the November 2004 issue of the monthly magazine *Gendai* (月刊現代) published by Kodansha (講談社). It carried a feature-length article by

Kazuhiro Yonemoto (米本和弘) titled "The Untold Story of the Horror and Tragedy of Religious Confinement" (書かれざる宗教監禁の恐怖と悲劇).



Front cover page of *Monthly Gendai* Nov. 2004

As a result of the abduction, confinement, and forced de-conversion, there have been several cases where de-converted believers suffer from severe PTSD due to long-term forcible detention. Among them, is the case of Mrs. Nakajima (中島) mentioned earlier today.

First Name *	Last Name
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Email *	
<input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="Email Address"/>	
Your Message *	
<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>	
<input style="width: 100%; border: none; background-color: #008080; color: white; font-weight: bold;" type="button" value="Submit"/>	

There is also the case when another female believer, who was introduced to the church at the same time as Nakajima, was abducted and held captive.

On 25th November 1995, the relatives of this female member attempted to abduct her on the streets of Takadanobaba (高田馬場) [in Shinjuku, Tokyo]. A scuffle ensued with members of the church.

At that time, a police car came, and an investigation was conducted at the police station. However, when the police realized that it was a Unification Church issue, they ended up handing the person over to her parents.

After leaving the church due to her abduction, she ended up suffering from severe PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder]. For this reason, her family deeply regrets their involvement in the abduction.

Therefore, in a sense, the police thought it was a good thing and turned a blind eye to the abduction and confinement. They ended up handing the believer over to the parents. However, as a result, even the parents were left with a situation that they regretted.

This is an incident involving a female believer named S.A. She was abducted on 22nd October 1997 and held captive in a sixth-floor apartment in Koto-ku (江東区) in Tokyo. She was unable to open or close the door to her room and the windows, which all faced the balcony.



Apartments similar to the one where S.A. was held in forcible detention in 1997. Photo: Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion

However, on 1st November she somehow managed to get out onto the balcony and was able to escape to the adjoining flat. She then borrowed the landline phone of the person next door and called the police.

The police arrived at the scene and took her to the police station. They then called her relatives to come and tried to convince her to return with her relatives.

She refused, so the police ended up putting her in a police car and took her to the entrance of an expressway. When a car carrying her relatives arrived, the police handed her over to them.



Her relatives took her to

Guesthouse similar to the one where S.A. was held in forcible detention in 1997 in Yamanashi. Photo: Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced Conversion

Yamanashi Prefecture (山梨県) and detained her in a guesthouse like the one shown here.

Then, on 8th November, she was able to get out through the bathroom window and escape through the bushes.

There was also an incident involving a female believer named A.M. She was abducted from her apartment in Akishima City (昭島市) on 16th May 1998 and held captive in an apartment in

(捕縛) on 10 May 1998 and held captive in an apartment in Saitama (埼玉).

She succeeded to escape through the window while pretending to have left the [church](#). But after the escape, she discovered that her father had made a plan to abduct and forcibly detain her.

The plan included a passage with instructions to notify the police in advance. At that time, the opposition group was instructing relatives who were trying to abduct and forcibly detain a believer, to contact the police beforehand.

Featured image above: Tokyo Metropolitan Police Officer, Shinjuku Station, Tokyo, Japan 16th May 2009. Photo: Stanistani / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp.](#) Cropped

Continued, see [part 3](#).

See [part 1](#)

“Police Turns Blind Eye to Forcible Detention” – text: Norishige Kondo

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