

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Victim Toro Goto, Wins Defamation Case

Knut Holdhus
February 2, 2025



Press conference January 31, 2025, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo, held after the verdict in the defamation case. From the right: Attorney Shinichi Tokunaga, Toru Goto, representative of the [National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Religious Conversion](#), and Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama



Activist journalist sentenced for condescending, defamatory remarks against victim of more than 12 years of inhuman confinement in defamation case

Tokyo, 1st February 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Eito Suzuki's Remarks Deemed Defamatory - Called Confined Follower a "Hikikomori" on Nippon TV's Miyaneya

Tokyo District Court

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



Activist journalist Eito Suzuki,
born as Kiyofumi Tanaka

On 31st January, the Tokyo District Court ruled in a lawsuit in which Toru Goto (後藤徹), the representative of the [National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion](#), sought ¥11 million in damages for defamation over statements by journalist Eito Suzuki (鈴木エイト) referring to Goto as a "hikikomori" (social recluse - see editor's note below). Presiding Judge Yasuhiro Ichiba (一場康宏) ruled that some of Suzuki's statements constituted defamation and ordered him to pay ¥110,000 [\$ 711].

Goto, a follower of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), was confined in a Tokyo apartment for [12 years and 5 months](#) (September 1995 - February 2008) by relatives seeking to force him to renounce his faith.

He had previously filed a civil lawsuit against the involved relatives, anti-cult activists, and a Christian pastor. In September 2015, Japan's Supreme Court upheld his victory, dismissing an appeal from the pastor and others.

According to the ruling on 31st January, two out of five statements made by Suzuki were deemed defamatory. Specifically:

An October 2015 article in the online media outlet Yaya Nikkan Cult Shimbun, where Suzuki described Goto's experience as a "12-year-long hikikomori lifestyle".



Shinichi Tokunaga

An 12th August 2022, appearance on Nippon TV's Miyaneya, where Suzuki stated that Goto was in an "almost hikikomori state."

The court determined these statements lowered Goto's social reputation and emphasized that since Suzuki made these remarks after the 2015 Supreme Court ruling, he had no reasonable grounds to believe Goto was merely a social recluse.

However, the court dismissed three other defamation claims, including an August 2023 post by Suzuki on X (formerly Twitter) that said, "It doesn't matter if antisocial groups play the victim."

Following the ruling, Shinichi Tokunaga (徳永信一), Goto's attorney, noted that three of Suzuki's five statements were not recognized as defamatory. Tokunaga argued,

"If we take a strict stance on human rights violations, the court should not have allowed these statements. Journalists and the judiciary must approach such issues with greater responsibility."



Toru Goto in 2008, barely able to move after being held in forcible detention by his own family in league with professional faith-breakers for [more than 12 years](#)

Goto highlighted the widespread issue of [forcible faith-breaking](#) through abduction and confinement, stating,

"[Thousands of people](#) have suffered, yet Japan has not fully recognized this issue. Through this ruling, I hope to raise awareness and prevent such incidents from happening again."

Both Goto and Suzuki have expressed their intention to appeal the ruling.

[Editor's note: The Japanese term "hikikomori" (引きこもり) refers to people who completely withdraw from social life, often isolating themselves at home for extended periods - sometimes years. It describes both the phenomenon and the individuals affected by it.

Hikikomori typically avoid school, work, and social interactions, often due to anxiety, social pressure, or mental health struggles such as depression. The term is sometimes used in a derogatory way but is also recognized as a serious social issue in Japan and other countries.]

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Rare Legal Victory For Family Federation Member

• January 31, 2025 • Knut Holdhus



Token compensation for member of persecuted minority the Family Federation in legal victory in defamation case against activist journalist



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

Tokyo, 31st January 2025 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article.*

Eito Suzuki Ordered to Pay 110,000 Yen in Damages by Tokyo District Court over “Hikikomori”-Comment

by the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

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Defamation Case

On 31st January 2025, the *Tokyo District Court* ruled in a lawsuit [\[See editor's note below\]](#) filed by Toru Goto (後藤徹), representative of the *National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion*, against journalist Eito Suzuki (鈴木エイト). Goto sought a total of 11 million yen [\$ 71,100] in damages, claiming that Suzuki's remarks, including a comment referring to Goto as a "hikikomori" [\[social recluse – see editor's note below\]](#), damaged his reputation.

The court recognized two of the five statements in question as defamatory and ordered Suzuki to pay a total of 110,000 yen [\$ 711] in damages.

Although there was no planned distribution of courtroom admission tickets for this trial, the courtroom was packed, and many people who could not enter were seen in the hallway.



Activist journalist Eito Suzuki, born as Kiyofumi Tanaka. Photo: Mikkabie / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int.](#) Cropped



Toru Goto, member of *Family Federation* held captive for 12 years and 5 months by his own family and professional faith-breakers who attempted to break his faith. Photo: [FOREF](#)

[Editor's note: According to the complaint, Suzuki criticized Goto on the news website *Yaya Nikkan Cult Shimbun*, where Suzuki is the main writer, as "a male believer who stayed in his flat and became a NEET [*Not in Education, Employment, or Training*] after recuperation, becoming just a 'recluse'."

On Nippon TV's *Information Live Miyaneya*, he repeatedly criticized Goto, such as commenting that he was a "recluse" (引きこもり – hikikomori). Furthermore, Suzuki also defamed Toru Goto at a symposium held in July this year. When Suzuki was asked about the fact that he referred to Goto as a "recluse" (hikikomori), Suzuki replied, "I don't care." He also posted on X (formerly Twitter) that Goto was a puppet forced to play the "role of a victim".]

[Editor's note: The Japanese term "hikikomori" (引きこもり) refers to people who completely withdraw from social life, often isolating themselves at home for extended periods – sometimes years. It describes both the phenomenon and the individuals affected by it.

Hikikomori typically avoid school, work, and social interactions, often due to anxiety, social pressure, or mental health struggles such as depression. The term is sometimes used in a derogatory way but is also recognized as a serious social issue in Japan and other countries.]

See also [Victim of Inhuman Detention Won Defamation Case](#)

Featured image above: After the verdict, Toru Goto (center – 後藤徹), representative of the *National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Conversion*, along with attorneys Shinichi Tokunaga (right – 徳永信一) and Tatsuki Nakayama (中山達樹), attend a press conference in Chiyoda, Tokyo, on 31st January 2025. Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

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