

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Japanese Media Stereotypes and Misinformation Tyrannizes FFWPU

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Michihito Tamaki (second from the right) speaks about his impression of the [Family Federation](#) - March 20, 2025, Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture, Japan



Public urged to see the real situation behind the media misinformation as believers share their stories at conference with religious leaders

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Understanding the Real Situation

Family Federation Believers Hold Religious Freedom Conference in Takasaki

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

The Gunma Conference to Protect Fundamental Human Rights and Freedom of Religion (organized by the Gunma Citizens' Association) was held on 20th March 2025 in Takasaki City. Followers of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) called for the public to understand the true nature of the [Family Federation](#), which they claim is not accurately portrayed in the media.



A [Family Federation](#) believer speaks in Takasaki 20th March 20, 2025

At the conference, five believers took the stage to share their experiences. Miyuki Kowata (木幡美由紀), a [Family Federation](#) believer who was [abducted and confined](#) by her parents in 2005 for the purpose of [coercive faith-breaking](#), spoke about her ordeal. Although she never lost her faith despite being deprived of her physical and mental freedom, she recalled struggling with interpersonal relationships even after reintegrating into society due to the trauma of her confinement. She emphasized,

"Misinformation has even led to the justification of confinement. At the very least, [abduction, confinement](#), and [coercive faith-breaking](#) must be recognized as human rights violations."

Michihito Tamaki (玉木道人), a believer of Sukyo Mahikari [See editor's note below], shared his impression that [Family Federation](#) members he had met were completely different from the image portrayed by the media.

"Every single one of them was a good person," he said, encouraging them to "continue practicing their

faith with confidence."



The headquarters of Sukyo Mahikari, and World Shrine of Sukyo Mahikari in Takayama, Gifu, Japan

[**Editor's note:** Sukyo Mahikari (崇教真光) is a Japanese new religious movement that was founded in 1959 by Yoshikazu Okada (岡田 良一), who later became known as Kōtama Okada (岡田 光玉). The religion is part of the broader Mahikari movement, which centers around the practice of spiritual purification through the transmission of "divine light" (ōki or true light). It claims to help cleanse spiritual impurities and improve physical, emotional, and societal well-being.

Yoshikazu Okada originally had connections to Sekai Kyūsei Kyō (Church of World

Messianity) before founding Sūkyō Mahikari in 1959. After his death in 1974, leadership disputes led to a split in the movement. His daughter, Keishu Okada, continued Sūkyō Mahikari, while other factions, such as Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan, emerged.

Sūkyō Mahikari has spread internationally. It operates training centers and dojos where members receive teachings and practice Mahikari no Waza.

Their teachings emphasize a monotheistic belief in a supreme deity and reverence for a Supreme God (Sujin). Practitioners believe in transmission of Light (Mahikari no Waza) and that they can channel divine energy through their hands to purify others. The religion teaches that misfortunes and illnesses stem from spiritual impurities. Past actions influence present conditions, and followers are encouraged to purify their spiritual debts.]

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Protesting the coercive faith-breaking business in Japan. Toru Goto (second from the right, front row) and others from the [National Association of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion Victims](#) participating in a protest march, 10th February 2025, Suginami Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

A panel exhibition shedding light on the experiences of [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification \(FFWPU\)](#), formerly the [Unification Church](#) followers who were allegedly [abducted and confined](#) to force them to renounce their faith is being held in Yokohama from 19th to 20th March 2025.

The exhibition explains how, under the guidance of so-called “faith-breakers” (professional deprogrammers), parents of believers and Christian pastors have carried out abduction and coercive faith-breaking. The exhibition claims that these individuals were confined for extended periods, subjected to physical and psychological abuse, and coerced into renouncing their faith, violating their fundamental human rights as guaranteed by the Constitution.

A section of the exhibition, occupying about one-third of the space, introduces the activities of *Ame no Yachimata no Kai* (Heaven's Eight Crossroads Association) [\[See editor's note below\]](#), a group working to restore parent-child relationships that were severed due to abduction and confinement.

Two women in their twenties who attended the exhibition commented,

“We had heard about this issue before, but listening to the detailed explanations today was truly heartbreaking.”

They emphasized the importance of raising awareness through lawsuits and other means but also noted,

“Legal action alone won't resolve the conflict with opposing parents and pastors. Efforts like those of *Ame no Yachimata no Kai* [\[See editor's note below\]](#), which seek [resolution through reconciliation](#), are also necessary.”

The exhibition is organized by the *Yokohama Citizens' Association for the Protection of Freedom of Religion and Fundamental Human Rights*, a group consisting of [Family Federation](#) followers. On 20th March, Toru Goto, a [Family Federation](#) member who was allegedly confined and abused for [12 years and five months](#), is scheduled to give a lecture.

[\[Editor's note: The Japanese expression Yachimata \(八衢\) refers to a crossroads or intersection where multiple paths converge. It is often used in a metaphorical sense to symbolize choices, encounters, or the meeting of different fates.](#)

In mythology and classical literature, 八衢 (Yachimata) can also evoke a mystical or sacred space where important decisions or transformations occur. It appears in the name of the deity [Ame no Yachihoko \(天の八衢\)](#), associated with crossroads and divine encounters in Japanese folklore.

As for the above-mentioned association *Ame no Yachimata no Kai* (天の八衢の会), the term symbolizes a place for reconciliation, dialogue, and resolution – a meeting point where estranged families can reconnect.]



Toru Goto, here at the [official launch 10th February 2025](#), of his book “*Deadly Struggle: Surviving 4,536 Days of Confinement*”. Photo: Screenshot from [videorecording of the event](#).

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Featured image above: A panel exhibition raising awareness about [abduction and confinement](#) victims – 19th March 2025, Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan. Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

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