

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Escapee Details Harrowing Faith-Breaking Trauma

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Helped by nurse to escape. Illustration



Sekai Nippo

Woman escapee still haunted by psychological scars recounts details of forcible detention as she was held locked up for a month by her own family who had been "brainwashed" by cynic faith-breaker to use any means to de-convert her

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Abducted, Detained, and Driven to a Disturbed Mental State

The Dark World of Deprogramming Spreading Amid the Move to Dissolve the Family Federation (6)

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of [Sekai](#)

See [article 1](#), [article 2](#), [article 3](#), [article 4](#), [article 5](#)

Voices of victims shared on social media

"I am a current believer of the [Family Federation](#) ([Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), formerly the [Unification Church](#)). In the past, I was [abducted, confined, and forcibly pressured](#) to renounce my faith."

A woman in her 50s using the pseudonym "Murasakino Neko" on X (formerly Twitter) began this April sharing her experiences of [abduction](#) and [coercive faith-breaking](#) [See editor's note below]. She revealed to [our paper](#) her motivation for going public:

"I had prepared a written statement to oppose the [dissolution order](#), but my message didn't get through. I couldn't let things end like that."



\She criticizes the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology for submitting past court rulings as evidence in which testimony from former believers who left the [Family Federation](#) through [deprogramming](#) [See editor's note below] was heavily cited. She asserts,

"Statements from ex-believers who were forcibly brainwashed (to renounce their faith) while under [confinement](#) lack credibility."

In 1987, Murasakino says she was [detained](#) in a room in an apartment in Kyoto by her family. Her father threatened her,

"We can stay here for years until this is resolved."

Her parents bombarded her all day long with baseless slander about the [religious organization](#), saying

things like "There are people who had been killed, buried under the [church](#)."

She recounts,

"The psychological pain became so intense that I ran to the bathroom, but they used a spare key to open the door and drag me out."

After two weeks in this unimaginable situation, she and her family were pushed into an abnormal psychological state. She began to feel mentally cornered to the point of contemplating jumping out of the window.

Before this ordeal, her family had a good relationship - she often met them for meals. Her father, in particular, frequently visited the [church](#) and tried to understand her faith. So why did her parents suddenly change?



Illustration of professional faith-breaker and pastor Takeo Funada

The turning point was when an acquaintance critical of the [church](#) introduced them to the late Pastor Takeo Funada (船田武雄), whose church they began attending. Funada implanted false information such as "You'll stop caring about murder," and "You'll become a criminal," convincing the parents that the [church](#) was dangerous.

Later, the parents confessed how they felt at the time,

"We thought we had no choice but to 'protect' her (through [abduction and confinement](#)) to stop her from becoming a criminal."

They also told her, "The pastor scolded us."

When Pastor Funada visited the apartment, he found Murasakino resisting. She recalls:

"My father restrained me in a headlock, my mother grabbed my hair and forced my face upward, and sometimes my siblings kicked me in the stomach."

While she was being held down, Funada mocked, "Doesn't the [Unification Church](#) teach you to love everyone?" He shouted at her to make her renounce her faith.



In hospital, with nurses, supervised by her father. Illustration

The only way Murasakino could think to escape was by drinking detergent and be taken to hospital. After downing the liquid, she became violently ill and pleaded with her mother through tears to take her to the hospital. But her mother coldly replied, "The pastor told us things like this could happen." Even her cries, and she being prepared to risk her life, were anticipated in advance. It took an hour before she was hospitalized.

Even in the hospital, she was constantly supervised by her family, unable to escape. Discussions even began about transferring her to a psychiatric hospital.

She says she was only able to escape because of a "miracle". One of the nurses happened to be a member of the [religious organization](#). She contacted the [church](#) and helped her escape. Murasakino ran barefoot down the emergency stairs and finally gained her freedom after about a month.

However, she lived in fear of being [abducted](#) again and had to hide her real name and stay out of public view. She developed severe PTSD [Post-traumatic stress disorder] and was unable to live a normal life for years.

Intervention by hostile forces leads to family breakdown

After her escape from the hospital, her parents frantically searched for her. Under Funada's guidance, they were urged to try [confinement](#) again. A journalist from a news agency introduced by Funada kept feeding them information on Murasakino's whereabouts. The details were so precise that she suspected they had a

special collaborator.

In notebooks kept by her parents, who documented Funada's instructions, there were notes such as:

"Just send letters, items, or cash."

"The [church](#) members have little personal money, so she will definitely accept it."

"If we keep sending things, there may be a mistake in forwarding that reveals her address."

This shows how the [deprogramming](#) [See editor's note below] of the believers had been ingeniously systematized and was methodically instructed.



From a [Family Federation](#) seong-hwa ceremony (funeral) in 2015

Reconciliation with her parents came only after her eldest son died in an accident, and the [Family Federation](#) held a "Seonghwa" ceremony (a funeral service). Her parents, seeing the sincerity of the members preparing the event, were moved.

As for why a second abduction never happened, her parents said, "We gradually realized that it's hard to change someone's mind through force." Reflecting on Funada, they said, "His determination was incredible, almost obsessive. Regardless of right or wrong, the will of someone with faith is powerful."

In her interview, Murasakino said,

"Because of the intervention of groups opposed to the [Family Federation](#), many families have been destroyed and are suffering. The 4,300 victims of [abduction and confinement](#) experienced hellish suffering, and the families who carried it out are burdened with guilt."

She also criticized recent media coverage, saying,

"Terms like 'cult', 'brainwashing group', and 'mind control' have taken on a life of their own, making believers seem like some kind of terrifying 'monsters.'"

See [article 1](#), [article 2](#), [article 3](#), [article 4](#), [article 5](#)

[Editor's note: Coercive faith-breaking ("deprogramming") in Japan refers to the practice of coercively attempting to separate individuals from their religious affiliations or beliefs, typically through intervention by family members, professional faith-breakers (deprogrammers) or organizations hostile to new religious movements (NRMs). This phenomenon often targets members of such movements, e.g. relatively large faiths like the [Family Federation](#) or Jehovah's Witnesses, but also smaller groups like Happy Science (Kōfuku no Kagaku) and other newer religious movements.

However, also Soka Gakkai, a Buddhist-based lay organization with more than 8 million Japanese members, and affiliated with Nichiren Buddhism, has occasionally been subject to faith-breaking

attempts.



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of Soka Gakkai. Here students belonging to the faith in 2001

The practice gained attention in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Parents or concerned family members often hired faith-breakers who taught them how to abduct and forcibly detain believers. Almost all such cases involved confining the individual believer and cutting him or her off from the religious community. During the confinement, the believer was subjected to intense questioning or indoctrination designed to break his or her faith. The aim was to "rescue" the person from what the family often had been tricked by faith-breakers or lawyers to regard as harmful influence from the religious organization.

Critics of forced de-conversion argue that it violates fundamental human rights, including freedom of thought, religion, and association. Reports of psychological trauma and accusations of unlawful detention have sparked debates over its ethical and legal implications. In response, some religious groups, particularly NRMs, have lobbied for greater protections against such practices.

Japanese courts have been inconsistent in addressing cases of coercive faith-breaking. While some verdicts have condemned the practice as illegal detention, others have been more lenient, citing family concerns about "mental health" or alleged "exploitation" as mitigating factors.]

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Reclaiming Bonds Severed by Confinement

Uzume (pseudonym, a woman in her 50s), a believer of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), experienced [abduction and confinement](#) by relatives in her 20s. She now serves as co-representative of the private organization *Ame no Yachimata no Kai* [\[See editor's note below\]](#), which works on parent-child reconciliation.

When she was confined in a condominium room, Uzume believed to the very end,

“My parents would never [kidnap and confine](#) me.”

But upon seeing the appearance of Pastor Takeo Funada (船田武雄) – now deceased – she realized she had been deceived and became convinced she had become a victim. A few days after escaping, her parents contacted her, saying, “We want to talk again,” but fear of being kidnapped again kept her from meeting them.



Illustration of pastor **Takeo Funada** (船田武雄). Image: Grok xAI, 2025.

Since then, attempts to visit her parents ended in rejection at the door. After her family moved, their whereabouts became unknown. About 20 years later, she was suddenly contacted and informed that her father had already passed away. Uzume reflected, “I wanted to reconcile with my father, but he passed before that could happen. I hope others won’t have to live with that same regret.”

Co-representative Sarutahiko (pseudonym, 53-year-old man) pointed out that “families often expect the pastors who instructed the [faith-breaking](#) to continue supporting the parent-child relationship afterward,” but in reality, they do nothing. He explained,

“The cooperation of pastors and deprogrammers is bought with large sums of money, but once that financial exchange ends, so does their involvement.”

The group receives many consultations, such as “I can’t go home to see my parents” or “I can’t even talk to them on the phone.” Some parents have admitted tearfully, “I now believe the abduction and confinement was wrong, but during that time I was brainwashed with negative and questionable information about the [church](#). I can’t see my daughter as my daughter anymore.”

Sarutahiko, who began working on resolving [abduction and confinement](#) issues around 2012, said that after reconciling with his own parents, he became more committed to helping others achieve reconciliation.



Not always easy to create reconciliation after having been [kidnapped, held in detention](#) in order to have a family member's [faith coercively broken](#). The illustration is from the case of Toru Goto, who was held in captivity by his own family and faith-breakers for 12 years and 5 months. Image: [National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Deconversion](#)

The turning point came when his father was hospitalized. He said,

“By facing my mother, who was rethinking her life, she gradually began to open up about what happened during the confinement.”

His mother explained the situation at the time,

“A pastor from the United Church of Christ in Japan scolded me, saying, “Your son joined a bad religion because you

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failed as a parent. You must lock him up quickly, or things will get worse.' I didn't know what to do and just lost the ability to think rationally."

Many who have undergone **faith-breaking** through **abduction and confinement** suffer long-term mental health issues, including PTSD. Sarutahiko's mother said,

"If I had known my child might develop PTSD, I never would have gone through with it."

On the lack of support for parent-child relationships after such incidents, his mother said, "I wish the child would reach out first. As a parent who did something like that, I could never bring myself to say it." Now reconciled with her son, she actively asks him to "help other estranged families reconnect" or "visit families I'm concerned about," and together they work to mend broken relationships.

About *Ten no Yachimata no Kai*



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)

The name "Yachimata" refers to the mythological "crossroads" where the god Sarutahiko appears as a guide. As a believer of the **Family Federation**, Sarutahiko established the group to help reconcile parent-child relationships shattered by **abduction and confinement**. The group provides consultations and also visits the graves of parents or believers who took their own lives due to such trauma, offering memorial services.

Doubts About Dishonest Pastors

Sarutahiko said,

"I've had chances to speak not just with the parents who did the abducting, but also with the Christian pastors who guided them. Seeing pastors lie to the point of severing family bonds, and encouraging parents to do so – something far from their real mission – made me question their roles."

He continued,

"Behind this is a dark, well-structured, and networked system of **faith-breaking**."

He emphasized,

"Even now, many families remain broken, with victims and parents still estranged. It is the mission of *Yachimata no Kai* to heal these families."

See [article 1](#), [article 2](#), [article 3](#), [article 4](#), [article 6](#)

Featured image above: Members of "*Ame no Yachimata no Kai*" during an interview 16th April 2025 in Tokyo. Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

[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*

yachinoko (大の八衛), associated with crossroads and divine encounters in Japanese folklore.

As for the above-mentioned association *Ame no Yachimata no Kai* (天の八衛の会), the term symbolizes a place for reconciliation, dialogue, and resolution – a meeting point where estranged families can reconnect.]

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