

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Dr. Hirohisa Koide Kidnapped and Locked Up to Break His Faith

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Dr. Hirohisa Koide speaking at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland 16th June 16, 2025

A believer's two-year long ordeal at the hands of notorious deprogrammers in Japan: "They made my own family lock me away."

Inside Japan's Notorious Coercive Faith-Breaking Movement: "I Was Locked Up for My Faith"



The panel of speakers at the side event to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland on June 16, 2025. From left: Norishige Kondo, Attorney Patricia Duval, Heiner Handschin, Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Dr. Hirohisa Koide, Jacques Marion

1st part of a speech by Dr. Hirohisa Koide gave at a side event organized by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council, in hall 25 of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland 16th June 2025. Dr. Koide was introduced by the moderator Heiner Handschin as "a Japanese national, a medical doctor, and a victim of kidnapping and also so-called deprogramming, forced de-conversion, or forced renunciation of his belief. And this has happened based on non-state actors, but with the blessing of state and local authorities which turned a blind eye to it."

My name is Hirohisa Koide (小出浩久). I have worked as a medical doctor in Tokyo. I'm a believer of the [Unification Church](#) / the [Family Federation](#).

First of all, I'd like everyone to know that the act of [abduction and confinement](#) of members of the [Family](#)

[Federation](#) was supported not only by people who are money-oriented or anti-religious but also by mainstream Christian pastors.

When [adult] children [Dr. Koide used the word "children", but he speaks about adult men and women who are someone's children] join a new religion, many parents may find it difficult to understand their [adult] children's words and actions. Worried parents visited Christian churches seeking advice on how to deal with their [adult] children.



Niitsu Evangelical Christian Church, where faith-breaker Yasutomo Matsunaga was pastor. Apparently, the church was renovated with money from huge kidnapping and deprogramming fees that relatives of members of the [Family Federation](#) had been tricked to pay by faith-breakers and lawyers telling horrendous lies about the [Family Federation](#). Photo: [Japanese Victims' Association against Religious Kidnapping and Forced De-Conversion](#)

The pastors of the Christian churches were generally simple and honest, and the atmosphere in the churches was peaceful. But the pastors who engaged in "forced rescue" of believers had become extremely, extremely radical under the influence of leftwing activists. So the churches became such places where the terrible acts of [abduction and confinement](#) were recommended.

Without the loving atmosphere of the Christian churches, worried parents would not have been so easily convinced to resort to [abduction and confinement](#) for their own [adult] children. Two major groups of Christians, the United Church of Christ in Japan and Japan Alliance Christ Church, provided a strong foundation for anti-[Family Federation](#) groups.

Now I'm going to tell you about my own experience of [abduction and confinement](#). I

developed my faith in the [Family Federation](#) when I was a medical student. In 1990, I began working as a physician at a hospital in Tokyo.



Professional faith-breaker and advisor to the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP): Takashi Miyamura

The hospital was created by a female doctor who was a member of the [Family Federation](#), and many doctors who were believers gathered at the hospital. I was very satisfied to work there.

However, at that time, a lot of negative "information" against the [Family Federation](#) had been spread throughout Japan by the mass media. My parents got a lot of this "information" from my friends and teachers of my medical school. Some of them introduced my parents to an anti-[Family Federation](#) group. The leader was Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻), a professional deprogrammer.

The group's meetings were held at the Shinjuku West Church. At those meetings, they were taught how to prepare for the confinement, how to ask relatives for cooperation, and even how to get in shape mentally during the confinement.

Especially my mother was influenced by them, so she decided to lock me up and have me give up my faith. Due to her influence,

my father, brother, sister and many joined in the plan to confine me.

On 17th June 1992, when I went to my parents' house, I was surrounded by about 15 relatives. I was thrown into a car and brought to the apartment. In front of the building, about ten former believers were waiting.

The windows in that room were fitted with metal bars so they couldn't be opened. The view was also blocked.

The entrance door was locked with a chain, and a man sat there 24 hours a day. The room felt like it was on the 5th floor or higher.

About seven relatives stayed there with me. I was concerned about the negative effect on my patients' physical and mental health. For several days I pleaded with everyone to let me contact the hospital. My parents and relatives gave me permission to record information about my patients and send it to the hospital. However, Miyamura, the real leader of this action, rejected it.

Then my family demanded that I explain the absurdities of the teachings and the activities of the [Family](#)

[Federation](#). I continued to cry out for them to stop the violent religious persecution that disregarded my basic human rights.



Hiroshi Hirata, anti-religious activist lawyer

To my surprise, Hiroshi Hirata, a lawyer close to Miyamura, came to the room. The lawyer assured everyone that the situation was not illegal. My relatives accepted the lawyer's words.

I was forced to read the New and Old Testament and a book that teaches the "absurdities" of the doctrine of the [Family Federation](#). That night former believers and Miyamura came to the room to persuade me.

Miyamura thought violence was necessary to change the mind of believers. So I was beaten up quite a bit by both my father and my brother. A bruise around my eye caused by my father's knee kick wouldn't go away for over a week.

My colleagues at the hospital located the place where I was confined. The president of the hospital had petitioned for a writ of habeas corpus from the Tokyo High Court.

An order was issued for my parents to appear before the High Court. The notice was sent to the apartment, but Miyamura ignored the notice and instructed my relatives to move to another place.



Faith-breaker: pastor Yasutomo Matsunaga of the Niitsu Evangelical Christian Church

We all were moved to Niigata City in the middle of the night. It is more than 250 kilometers from Tokyo. As soon as we arrived, Matsunaga (松永康智), pastor of Niitsu Evangelical Christian Church, visited us. He was in a cooperative relationship with Miyamura, and they used the same methods - lock believers up, use biblical language, confuse them and make them give up their faith.

However, their beliefs were quite different. Miyamura had no Christian faith. Pastor Matsunaga was a so-called Calvinist.

Edited version.

To be continued. Part 2 coming soon.

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Family Federation Targeted

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



Protesting the organized persecution ignored by the authorities. Protesters gathering in East Ikebukuro Central Park, Tokyo on 8th June 2025 to call for the revocation of the dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#). Photo: [FFWPU](#)

“Deprogramming” [\[See editor's note below\]](#), where believers are forcibly restrained and coerced into renouncing their religion, is internationally recognized as a violation of human rights. In Japan, some Christian pastors and others hostile to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) have carried out deprogramming [\[See editor's note below\]](#) by using believers’ families. As former believers who had been deprogrammed [\[See editor's note below\]](#) renounced their faith, a “chain reaction” of [abductions and confinements](#) of other members occurred. Testimonies from believers who were present at the time reveal how the damage from deprogramming [\[See editor's note below\]](#) rapidly escalated.

“I was constantly filled with anger of having my faith stripped from me, and with anxiety because I didn’t know whom I could turn to.”



Protesting the organized persecution ignored by the authorities. Here, from a demonstration in the large southern city of Fukuoka 30th March 2025. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

So says 61 years old Shinichi Ishimura (石村信一), the head of a [Family Federation](#) church in Kita Ward, Tokyo. Around 30 years ago, he led youth believers at a church in Adachi Ward. At its peak, over 200 young believers were active there – not only in missionary work but also in events designed to build fellowship. He recalls,

“We have so many good memories – gathering around dinner while someone played guitar, holding monthly birthday parties where teams put on performances.”

But between 1992 and 2001, he laments, “Just from our church alone, close to 100 members may have been forcibly detained.”

Starting in 1998, new believers – those who had only just joined – began being abducted and confined in rapid succession. Over a period of less than two years, at least 18 individuals were victimized. Some were even [abducted](#) just steps away from church facilities.



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A reenactment of Yukie Kanamori (pseudonym) having been forced into a sleeping bag and abducted in a van by several men. Image provided by the person involved, partially edited. Published in *Sekai Nippo* 25th April 2025.

Upon investigating, a shocking possibility emerged: “A member list may have been stolen.” Testimony from believers who escaped from confinement revealed that a former male member, *Mr. A*, appeared at the site and said:

“I got my hands on the list of believers. More **abductions** are being planned.”

“They’ll fall away like dominoes,” he added, using the phrase “*imozuru-shiki*” (芋づる式 – dragged down in a chain reaction).

Mr. A had himself been **abducted and deprogrammed** [See editor’s note below] in July 1998. Then, one day in September, he seemingly entered the church while no one was around. Ishimura explains,

“We found a note from Mr. A in the staff room along with books he had borrowed.”

If he had indeed obtained a list of believers, “He could have easily copied down addresses from that room, either by hand or with a copier,” Ishimura sighs.

Friends who had shared dreams and ideals were **abducted and confined** one after another – and then renounced their faith without saying a word.

Ishimura’s expression became somber as he said,

“I was truly devastated – I couldn’t bear it.”

He says the pain of those events still lingers deep within him.

Similar chain abductions occurred in Osaka as well. Around 1992, Yoshio Shibata



Professional faith-breaker and victim. Illustration: Grok xAI, 20th April 2025

(pseudonym, 50s) served as a church leader in Osaka City. At that time, a female believer, *Ms. B*, returned after having been abducted.

While her safe return was initially a relief, strange incidents soon followed: Believers walking alone were abducted in broad daylight on the street. It seemed as though the routes and timings of their movements were fully known to the deprogrammers, and 7–8 members were eventually **abducted and forcibly confined**.

The truth came to light when another abducted believer managed to escape. That person later attended an anti-**Family Federation** meeting held by deprogrammers and saw *Ms. B* there. She was introduced as someone who had “helped in the rescue”.

“In other words, *Ms. B* was a spy,” Shibata says.

After this story spread among the congregation, *Ms. B* quickly disappeared. Shibata says the incident left lasting scars. In 1994, another female believer returned from where she’d been confined. But overcome with suspicion – wondering if she might be a spy – I even confronted her in front of the other members.

“I still wonder,” Shibata murmurs.

“Was she doing it willingly? Did she volunteer to help them? Or was she coerced into it as a kind of test of loyalty? Now, no one can really know.”

Featured image below: Passageway near the site where young **Family Federation** believers were abducted and confined – Adachi Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

[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.



Also subject to faith-breaking attempts: Members of [Soka Gakkai](#). Here students belonging to the faith in 2001. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp](#). Cropped

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.

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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