

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Kidnapping Called Rescue - Was Imprisonment

Knut Holdhus
June 20, 2025



Attorney Patricia Duval speaking at the side event to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland on 16th June 2025. From left: Norishige Kondo, Attorney Patricia Duval, Heiner Handschin

They called it "rescue" - Paris attorney explains how families were pressured, freedoms stripped, and testimonies forced to enable activist lawyers to produce civil cases against religious minority Family Federation

Despite Japan's Obligations Under International Law, Systemic Rights Violations Were Carried Out with Impunity



Attorney Patricia Duval speaking at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland June 16, 2025

2nd part of a speech by Attorney Patricia Duval 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. Patricia Duval is a member of the Paris Bar Association, specializing in international human rights law. She has defended the rights of religious and faith minorities both in France and internationally.

See part 1: [4,300 Victims: Huge Ignored Deprogramming Scandal](#)

The last point I want to stress in [his \[Koide's\] testimony](#) is that at some point he realized he could not escape from the confinement because he had the whole family, a team of 12 people, watching him night and day.

The deprogrammers asked the parents to quit their jobs, and they spent a fortune for not having a job anymore and paying the deprogrammer.

They were there until the end. The father even said, "I have to kill you; I will kill you." It meant they were going to the end. This is what the deprogrammers asked the parents to do. They were pushing the parents to do full confinement.



Dr. Hirohisa Koide [speaking at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland June 16, 2025](#)

So he understood he could not escape. What happened is that he feigned. He pretended to have lost his faith, and the deprogrammers were really looking for those who were pretending. So he was put through a rehabilitation period where he had to prove that he actually had lost his faith.

This is why he was asked to do criticism in the media. He had media interviews where he was coached by the deprogrammer, and he had to be really strong against the [Church](#).

He had to visit other confined members to give them a lot of criticism against the [Church](#). And then finally he was taken to the lawyers to file a financial claim against the [Church](#). He had to do all that to prove his apostasy from the [Church](#).

This is something that we don't really understand here in the West because we think,



Working in league with faith-breakers forcing believers into lawsuits and exploiting them to fit narrative: One of the architects of new law and advisor to the Japanese authorities: Masaki Kito, one of the hostile lawyers of National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales and Nationwide Unification Church Damage Countermeasures Legal Team



Escape from Kidnapping by Hirohisa Koide, published in Japanese 2023 by Kogensha. This is a revised edition of his 1996-publication

"OK, they have decided to not believe in the [church](#) anymore. And they could just change their mind, and that's it."

But it's not the point. The point is, years later, even 20 years later, they thought they could be [abducted and confined](#) again. They still had the pressure.

The only thing that freed him, gave him freedom of speech and freedom of choice is that he wrote a book. He published a book before coming open again. So he was protected. He could not be confined again.

And this is why now he's testifying.

The thing is that all the cases that were built against the [Church](#) and serve as a dissolution basis, all those cases have been fabricated. They have been filed by people [under](#)

[coercion](#) who had no resentment against the [Church](#), and who did not consider themselves as victims.

They considered themselves as having a serious problem with family that they wanted to solve.

And this is the way they did it.

And so I really wanted to make this point clear because this is what I think is really striking in your [Hirohisa Koide's] [testimony](#).

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4,300 Victims: Huge Ignored Deprogramming Scandal

• June 19, 2025

• Knut Holdhus



Ignored: Over 4 decades, thousands of adults in Japan were abducted, confined, and subjected to coercive “deprogramming” – all under guise of family concern and with tacit legal and societal support

Despite Japan’s Obligations Under International Law, Systemic Rights Violations Were Carried Out with Impunity



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

1st part of a speech by **Attorney Patricia Duval** 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. Patricia Duval is a member of the Paris Bar Association, specializing in international human rights law. She has defended the rights of religious and faith minorities both in France and internationally.

See part 2: [Abduction Called Rescue – It Was Confinement](#)

After this appalling and very revealing [testimony](#), I will just make a few comments to explain the situation.



Family in Japan: daughter offering a full bow (dogeza (土下座) to her parents. Illustration: Chat GPT, 19th June 2025.

First, the power of family in Japan.

All the [kidnapped and confined](#) so-called deprogrammed members were adults. Still, even if they were 50 years old – I don't know what age – they had to follow the tradition, follow their parents' advice and choices for them.

It's just a factor that I wanted to mention to explain the situation and how deprogramming [\[See editor's note below\]](#) was raging in Japan in the 1980s and 90s mostly. Even if the tradition and family authority are a bit less strong with the young people now, in the 80s and 90s, it was really very, very strict.

And his father [\[the father of Hirohisa Koide\]](#) had been trained in the military, and he was influenced also by that.

But I wanted to stress the power of family because this is one thing I was wondering about in my report to the UN: Is there freedom of religion or belief for adults – overage – in Japan?

I mean, if there is no choice, if they have no choice as regards their religions, it's a big problem.

Japan is committed to protect freedom of religion or belief by signing the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#). And it should follow and respect its commitments. This is one big point that has to be changed and evolved in Japan.



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

But anyway, this situation did not happen by chance. There was a group of lawyers, like [Koide](#) mentioned, and a group of pastors. They had converging interests.



Politically motivated leftwing lawyers from National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (NNLASS) at press conference after [dissolution verdict](#) 25th March 2025. From left: Katsuomi Abe, Hiroshi Yamaguchi, Masaki Kito. Photo: Screenshot from [Bitter Winter](#)

This group of lawyers was close to the Communist Party. They fought the [Unification Church](#) because it opposed the expansion of communism in Asia after World War II. Communism was therefore threatening spirituality in the area because communism was atheistic

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and eliminating religions.

The [Unification Church](#) and its founder [Reverend Moon](#) started to oppose communism and started to have enemies in this regard.

The group of lawyers who were politically motivated started to attack the [Church](#) and openly state they were going for the destruction of the [Unification Church](#).

They are the same who are still operating today and pushing for dissolution of the [religious corporation](#), which they [obtained in the first instance](#) at the District Court. Now the decision [is appealed](#) to the High Court.

It is still the same lawyers, and they are still with their agenda to this day.

Pastors had also started deprogramming on their own because they saw the [Unification Church](#) as a competing religion. I think it's an important point to know that at some point the pastors and the lawyers started to announce a common agenda and a common practice. They called it "rescue of believers".



Illustration of **professional faith-breaker and pastor Takeo Funada (船田武雄)**.
Image: Grok xAI, 2025.

It was actually deprogramming [See [editor's note below](#)]. They didn't say openly that it was [confinement and](#)



Being [kidnapped to be held in detention](#) in order to one'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](#)

[abduction](#), but this is what it was. And coerced persuasion to leave the faith.

The parents who had been made anxious about their children's choice to join the [Unification Church](#) started to look around for solutions. They turned to the pastors because they were proposing their "help", so-called "help", which was actually coercive "rescue".

And the lawyers recommended the deprogrammers to the parents. They

recommended to the parents to use the "rescue services" of the pastors.

This is how it became a nationwide activity. It's from the testimonies of the deprogramming [See [editor's note below](#)] pastors themselves in court we know it became a nationwide activity. They admitted it. It was a nationwide activity to deprogram the believers of the [Unification Church](#).

And this is how we come to the figure of [4,300 believers](#) who've been subjected to that very violent practice successfully or unsuccessfully.

Fortunately, most of it was unsuccessful because they only have 32 civil court cases that they rely on to ask for the dissolution of the [Church](#) – 32 court cases over 40 years, and [4,300 deprogrammed members](#).

So you see, the results are very few. But anyhow, they relied on these very old cases to now ask for a dissolution of the [Church](#), using the same campaigns – media campaigns saying the [Church](#) has made lots of victims and so on.

But where are the victims? The victims are victims of deprogramming! [See [editor's note below](#)]

Edited version.

Continued in [part 2](#).

See [part 2: Abduction Called Rescue – It Was Confinement](#)

Featured image above: Attorney Patricia Duval speaking at the

Featured image above: Attorney Patricia Davar speaking at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland 16th June 2025. Photo: Screenshot from video recording by UPF.

[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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