

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Members Feel Japanese Government Seizures are Like Being Robbed

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The sanctuary of the [Family Federation's Koriyama Church](#), in Japan



Dissolution and liquidation mean the Japanese state steals properties members built with their own hands and years of investment to realize their dream

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[Series] Where Will the Believers Go? The Issue of the Family Federation's Dissolution and Its Corporate Facilities (Church Properties) (Part 1)

"Liquidation Is Just Like Being Robbed of Our Assets."

A Church Dedication That Finally Came True After 60 Years - in Koriyama

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



The [Family Federation's Koriyama, Japan Church](#)

The legal proceedings regarding the dissolution of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the Unification Church) have [moved to Tokyo High Court](#). If the High Court upholds the [dissolution order](#), liquidation of the organization's [assets](#) will begin immediately, even before a ruling from the Supreme Court. If that happens, the church facilities where believers conduct worship and other religious activities may be lost, causing growing concern among the faithful that they will lose their spiritual home.



Believers of the Koriyama Church speak about their feelings toward the church they built, amid the non-contentious lawsuit for the dissolution order of the [Family Federation](#)

On 24th November of last year, a new [Family Federation](#) facility was completed in Koriyama, a commercial city in the center of Fukushima Prefecture. About 10 minutes by car from Koriyama Station, the single-story "Koriyama Church" was built by repurposing a former hot spring facility. It has a large parking lot.

Jun'ya Hirokawa (廣川淳也) (54), a church staff member proudly guiding visitors through the facility, explained that it was designed so that elderly believers could enter without removing their shoes. Hirokawa said firmly,

"This new church was the dream of all the believers, a dream 60 years in the making. Please don't [rob us](#) of a church that's just been completed."

On 25th March, the Tokyo District Court issued a [dissolution order](#) based on the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's request. In the court's written decision, regarding freedom of religion, it states:

"Even if a religious corporation is dissolved by a dissolution order, believers are not prevented from continuing a religious group without legal status, or from forming a group or corporation anew in an appropriate manner. Nor are they hindered from conducting religious activities or preparing new facilities and items for religious purposes."

However, according to the Religious Corporations Act, during the liquidation process following dissolution, religious activities generally cannot take place on properties owned by the corporation. Furthermore, if the repayment of debts requires the sale of real estate held under the corporate name, there is a possibility the church facilities will be [seized](#). Although the court acknowledged that this may "interfere with" believers' religious practices, is this "interference" not a matter deeply connected to the core of religious freedom?

Whether it's Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples, Christian churches, or Islamic mosques, places of worship are essential for religious faith to function.

The Koriyama Church purchased the former hot spring facility in autumn 2023. Since the walls were damaged from years of hot spring use, they were all demolished, leaving only the steel framework. A full

renovation was carried out over the course of a year, making it effectively a new building.

Situated on a large site of over 1,500 square meters including the parking area, the church facility occupies about a quarter of the property.



The café space at the Koriyama Church, used for fellowship

It features a sanctuary/auditorium capable of seating 200 - 300 people and a café space with a nice view where about 30 people may gather and chat.

After completion, the Koriyama Church distributed 1,000 flyers reading, "Want to take a peek at the infamous Unification Church?" in an effort to gain understanding from the local community. They also held an open house event. Young believers commented,

"I'm so happy that it's become a church where I feel proud to bring people."



Believers of the [Family Federation](#)'s Koriyama Church tiling during construction of the new church facility

The previous facility was half the size and had only one bathroom. Nearly all the Koriyama Church members had hoped for a new building, and staff had been searching for real estate for years. Yet few real estate agents were willing to sell to the [Family Federation](#). When they finally secured the current property

and moved in last November, Hirokawa recalled, "All the believers were filled with joy."

During the renovation, simple tasks like laying floor tiles were carried out by the believers themselves. They laid them one by one, working together, and there are even a few spots where the tiles are slightly misaligned. The believers unanimously say that they feel a sense of attachment to the building because of the manual labor involved.

Takashi Ijuin (伊集院孝) (72), a believer who donated for the dedication of the church, expressed his feelings:

"Even if the building is in the name of the [corporation](#) and legally belongs to headquarters, for us on the ground, this is our church. Taking away a church we built with donations given through our hard work is no different than having our own [assets stolen](#). It's heartbreaking."

The court decision may say, "There is no obstacle to preparing a new facility," but the burden of once again investing time, money, and labor is no easy matter for the believers.

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Friends and View the Church as the Enemy

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

See part 1: *Japan: Deprogrammed Believers Sent to Infiltrate*

Deprogramming [See editor's note below], involving abduction, confinement, and forced renunciation of faith, mainly targeting believers of the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (formerly the *Unification Church*), does not end even after the believers declare they have abandoned their faith.

To determine whether a defection is genuine, individuals are often subjected to "loyalty tests", such as being forced to provide information about fellow believers or even assist in their abduction and confinement. This practice is well-documented.

Such information, once gathered, is then used by lawyers and others cooperating with deprogrammers to encourage the parents of believers to engage in further abduction and confinement. This cascading effect is one reason why deprogramming [See editor's note below] often spreads in chain-reaction fashion. It is also not uncommon for former members who have left the faith to approach the parents of their former peers.

Saruhiko (pseudonym), a co-representative of the "Yachimata-no-Kai", a private organization that works to mend relationships between parents and children damaged by abduction and confinement – and himself a victim of such treatment – describes the loyalty test as a form of "rehabilitation" meant to prevent return to the religious organization. He says,

"They're made to steal member lists and church info, or act as spies, to forcibly change their way of thinking."

These loyalty tests not only weed out false defectors but also fracture relationships between believers. In one case, a confinement victim who pretended to defect was later coerced into cooperating in the abduction of another believer, incurring the wrath of members of the religious organization and causing emotional scars. Some ex-members have even become pastors engaged in anti-Unification Church activities. Saruhiko reflects,

"Maybe it's time we calmly reflect on what really happened through open dialogue."

Deprogrammer groups refer to this process as a "rescue" and encourage carrying it out not just on one person but in a chain-like manner. Tamiya Taguchi (田口民也), a former Unification Church believer and now a Christian, co-authored the 1992 book "Rescue from the Unification Church", in which he harshly criticizes the group as one that tries to "turn people's eyes away from the Bible and Jesus Christ, the true Savior", emphasizing the need for "rescue". He states,

"Only through the cooperation of many people can the rescue from the Unification Church be truly complete."

There is ample testimony from believers who say they have seen former comrades, once devout followers, become active opponents after defecting. A male believer in his 50s from Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, recalls that during the 1980s in Hokkaido, "I often received calls from former members who had left after being confined. It seemed they even held study sessions among themselves"



Professional deprogrammer (faith-breaker) Takashi Miyamura (宮村峻), responsible for hundreds of deprogrammings based on abduction and forcible detention. He is said to have been advisor to the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP). Photo: FFWPU. Photo: FFWPU



Professional deprogrammer Tamiya Taguchi (田口民也) in 1964. Photo: FFWPU

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learned they could not study because of their Christian faith.



Books by Tamiya Taguchi detailing “rescues” from the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) – Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

However, in his 1994 co-authored work “*Rescue and Rehabilitation from the Unification Church*”, Taguchi also acknowledges the prevalence of PTSD among many former members, describing it as a common

aftereffect. He refers to this as “flashing”, where a sudden, flash-like fear of the [church](#) overwhelms the mind. He gives an example of a former member becoming ill just from passing a [church](#) member on the street. Still, he confesses, “I don’t know why this happens.”

Taguchi does not address the psychological trauma caused by forced confinement and coercion, instead claiming that these “flashing” symptoms are a sign of healing, a process by which “the heart is being restored.” He promotes conversion to Christianity through church worship and Bible study, asserting that it’s necessary to confront the [Family Federation](#) “head-on,” and guides former members to adopt a hostile stance.

Parents of PTSD-affected children often receive no adequate care from the deprogrammers’ side. Some are left with lingering guilt over confining their child, lamenting, “I can’t die before my child.”



Protesting against the evil of deprogramming (faith-breaking) in Shinjuku, Tokyo 8th December 2024. Here, Toru Goto (後藤徹), representing the National Association of Victims of Abduction, Confinement, and Forced Religious De-Conversion (center), delivering a speech. The posters behind him carry pictures of Toru Goto hardly able to walk after more than 12 years of forcible confinement. Photo: Reiwa Kato (加藤玲和)

Amenouzume (pseudonym), a female co-representative of Yachimata-no-Kai and a fellow survivor of deprogramming [See [editor’s note below](#)], describes her harrowing experience:

“Abduction and confinement are unimaginably painful. Even if it lasted just a day, if your heart is deeply wounded, PTSD can develop.”

She strongly calls for the eradication of such practices.

See part 1: [Japan: Deprogrammed Believers Sent to Infiltrate](#)

Featured image above: Panel exhibition denouncing deprogramming through abduction and confinement – 19th March 2025, Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture. Photo: Yasuhiro Uno (宇野泰弘)

[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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