



Unificationists Expose Crisis of Faith-Breaking in Japan

To see 44-year-old Japanese Unificationist Toru Goto today, most Americans scarcely would believe that 18 months ago he looked like a survivor of Auschwitz, his body emaciated by starvation. Even harder to believe is that Toru was starved while being held captive in locked, closely guarded condos in Nigatta-Shi and Tokyo for 12 years and five months by misguided enemies of new religious movements and members of his own family, yet that is what Japanese prosecutors are investigating.

Toru Goto, who is speaking to journalists and concerned human-rights experts, is becoming the public face for as many as 4,000 Unificationists who have been abducted and subjected to coercive psychological torture intended to break their faith during the last 30 years, according to Unification Church sources. Toru and several other victims of kidnapping and psychological torture were quoted in a series of articles in *Sekai Nippo* during the last week of June 2009. Despite many cases in Japan having been reported to the police over the last decade or more, no cases have been prosecuted yet.



"The failure of the Japanese government to prosecute those responsible for Mr. Goto's 12-year illegal imprisonment constitutes a serious failure by Japan to fulfill its international commitment to protect freedom of religion," Dan Fefferman, president of the International Coalition for Religious Freedom, tells Familyfed.org. "Mr Goto's case has already been mentioned as a restriction of religious freedom in Japan in the State Department's annual International Religious Freedom Report, and we expect increased expressions of concern from other U.S. sources soon," he adds.

According to *Sekai Nippo*, a Japanese daily newspaper, church officials say the number of confinement cases peaked at 300 in 1999, yet there are still about 10 cases a year.

Toru Goto Endures Trial by Captivity

Toru was kidnapped and suffered faith-breaking efforts twice, first in 1987 and again in 1995, he told the newly formed Association to abolish Deprogramming in February. Alarmed by hateful accusations and claims against new religions, his parents had hired Mr. Shun Miyamura, a professional kidnapper who called himself a “deprogrammer.” In the first episode of kidnapping Toru pretended to recant his faith. Here is part of Toru's account:

"Miyamura, the deprogrammer who deprogrammed my older brother, came to bring in several former Unification Church members. They repeatedly cursed and denounced the Unification Church and Rev. Sun Myung Moon. Once after they had surrounded me, Miyamura asked one of the male former members a question, 'What does Sun Myung Moon mean to you now?' "

"After pausing to think for a while, without even saying a word, he pointed at the Miyamura's cigarette butts with an expression full of contempt. I figured that I would not be able to leave the room if I continued to show how much I believed in the Church, so against my will, I pretended that I had been deprogrammed. After that, once they started to ease their watch on me, I planned my getaway and was able to return to the Unification Church."



Police didn't help Soichiro Kobayashi, shown drawing map of confinement site.

Faith breakers again kidnapped him and imprisoned him in a private apartment in Niigata-shi on the west coast of Japan in 1995 and moved him to confinement rooms in the Tokyo area twice. In the second episode of kidnapping and confinement, Toru says he was beaten and humiliated by his brother and his wife, both of whom were former Unificationists who had joined forces with the deprogrammer organization. In 2001 he made a desperate attempt to break out of the condo where he was imprisoned, with the result that security measures were fortified.

In 2004 he tried three hunger strikes, two for 21 days and one for 30 days. These acts of defiance were met with a cruel response from his brother and his wife, who withheld food from him in an effort to break his will. Toru explains that he almost died of starvation: "Time would pass, and this life of confinement, that I resigned myself to would continue to my death, had finally come to an end. On the evening of February 10th, 2008, after 12 years and 5 months of confinement, my family told me, 'If you don't feel like admitting to the mistakes of the Unification Church, get the hell out of here at once!' With that, they suddenly ordered me to leave Room 804. They forcibly dragged me and threw me out of the front door. As I lay on the ground, they threw the pair of shoes that I had worn at the time of abduction at me and slammed and locked the front door."



Mr. Makito Nozoe escaped from his kidnapers by jumping from a third-floor balcony in 1992.

Emerging from imprisonment after 12 and a half years, Toru stumbled along the street, with no money and no idea how to get to a Unification Church Center. By miraculous coincidence, the second passer-by he stopped was a church member, who gave him taxi fare to the church headquarters. From there he was admitted to a hospital, where he was treated for severe malnutrition.

"I was taken to Isshin Hospital in Otsuka and received a night check-up," he writes. "They told me I was severely malnourished and because I couldn't walk, I was hospitalized. At that time, I weighed 39kg [86 lbs.] and at first, I had to be in a wheelchair, but after 50 days of being in the hospital, I was able to leave the hospital on March 31, 2008."

U.S.State Department Reports on Kidnapping Problem in Japan

Toru's horrific ordeal has been mentioned in an annual assessment of religious freedom in Japan by the U. S. State Department's Japan International Religious Freedom Report 2008 which reports that "A member (Mr. Toru Goto) of their congregation was abducted by his family and held in captivity for more than 12 years in an attempt to 'deprogram' him."

Toru and other victims of confinement are protesting the fact that Japanese police have refused to assist kidnapping victims who are being held and coerced by their parents and professional faith breakers. Soichiro Kobayashi, 37, says he was abducted and assaulted three times since he joined the church in 1992. He told *Sekai Nippo* that he was kidnapped and confined in 1992, 1995, and 1997. Kobayashi said that during the first confinement, sympathetic neighbors tipped off the police, who stormed the condo to rescue him. Kobayashi thought, "I'm saved," but was stunned when the police left after being told by his parents that it was "only a family matter."

Dr. Hirohisa Koide, 46, a physician, told *Sekai Nippo* how he had been abducted and held in confinement for two years, also by Miyamura, beginning in June 1992. His book, *Escaping the Kidnappers*, was published in 1999 but was shunned by book distributors influenced by intolerant critics of the church. Today Koide is the President of the Association to Eliminate Religious , and both he and Mr. Goto are leading an unprecedented public campaign to expose Japan's hidden history of religious intolerance and police neglect of deprogramming incidents.

Mr. Makito Nozoe, 49, told *Sekai Nippo* (June 26, 2009) that he escaped from his kidnappers by jumping from a third-floor balcony in 1992, permanently injuring his back and suffering partial paralysis. "During that time [of confinement] both my body and heart were completely confined," he told the paper, adding, "We need to make sure that no one else suffers the way I did."

Toru filed charges against the hired kidnapper and members of his family in June 2008. The case is currently under investigation by a Tokyo prosecutor. "For the prosecutors, I hope for a fair and strict criminal investigation and for strict judgment to be passed down," Toru has written. "On top of that, I wish from the bottom of my heart that these kinds of cruel criminal acts of abduction and confinement that I experienced, violation of human rights, and family breakdown can be rooted out of Japan, a democratic country in which freedom and human rights have been protected, so such an event would never happen again."



Escaping the Kidnappers, by Dr. Hirohisa Koide, was published in 1999.