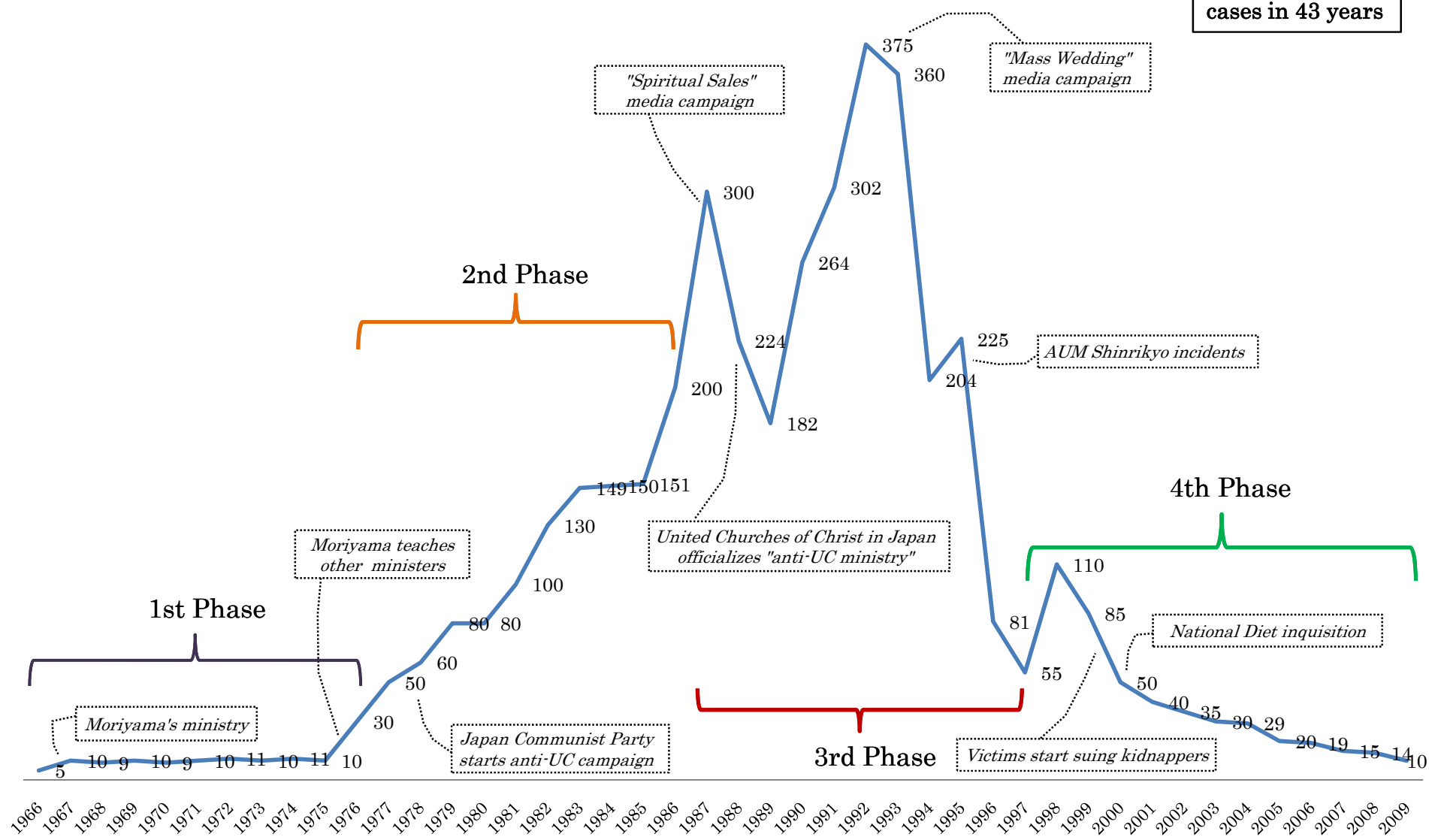


Religious Kidnapping & Forced Conversion in Japan

More than 4307 cases in 43 years



Annual estimates by UC-Japan (2009)

The history of religious kidnapping and forced conversion in Japan

The total number of religious kidnapping and forced conversion incidents of the Unification Church (UC) members in Japan adds up to more than 4300 in the past 43 years. There are four phases in the history of these incidents led by certain Christian ministers who oppose the UC.

First Phase: 1966 to 1976. In 1966, Satoshi Moriyama, an evangelical clergy started forced conversion on the members of the UC, naming the religion as a heresy. After *Asahi Shimbun's* article on UC (July 7, 1967) titled "Principle movement breaking parents' heart", many parents and relatives of UC members became anxious and consulted Moriyama, which increased the number of kidnapping incidents. From March 4th to 6th 1976, Moriyama held a "Seminar on countering UC problem" in Hachioji University Seminar House and taught other ministers the method of forced conversion by confinement.

Second Phase: 1976 to 1987. Many evangelical clergies joined Moriyama's crusade, namely Takeo Funada, Mamoru Takazawa, Shinya Waga, and Mitsuru Murakami, increasing the number of victims. The Japan Communist Party (JCP) also turned hostile against UC, after its defeat in the Kyoto prefecture governor's election. Kenji Miyamoto, the then chairman of JCP proclaimed war against UC saying "the fight against Victory-over-Communism (VOC: a friend organization of UC) is significantly important. We must work together and fight with them in every field, i.e., mass struggle, ideology, National Diet, and law. Spearheading the elimination of VOC will be a "holy war" that will be written in history." (*Akahata*, JCP newsletter meaning *Red Flag*, June 8, 1978) Following this, on November 3 same year, professors, journalists, lawyers, ministers, and Diet members collaborated to found "Association concerned of Principle Movement." Using that as the platform, Sadao Asami, a theologian, and Kyoko Kawasaki, a clergy, both of the United Churches of Christ in Japan (UCC-J), and with communist backgrounds, started to persecute UC.

From 1978 and 1986, there were many cases where a UC member would be coercively put into (JPC related) mental hospitals for the purpose of de-conversion. After one of the victims won a civil case in February 1986, use of mental hospitals ended. However, since the police did not crack down on other forms of religious kidnapping and forced conversion conspired by the anti-UC clergies and parents, the number of incidents increased every year.

Third Phase: 1987 to 97. The leftist camp fearing the establishment of the *Spy Prevention Act*, which was actively campaigned by UC and VOC, starts the "Spiritual Sales" media campaign trying to destroy UC and VOC. (*Asahi Shimbun*, February 14, 1987) Anxious parents of UC members start calling the anti-UC clergy for help, which created rapid increase of religious kidnappings. UCC-J made a resolution on March 1988 (proposed by Pastor Shigeo Kuwabara) to make anti-UC operations an official ministry. (*Christ Shimbun*, April 9, 1988). Kidnapping cases of UC members climaxed to 375 a year. The victims of forced conversions ended up collaborating with not only with anti-UC clergies but also with the lawyers to sue UC with "return-my-youth" lawsuits for compensation on their voluntary services and lost income, and "invalidate marriage registration" lawsuits to annul their church sanctified marriages.

Fourth Phase: 1997 to present day. The victims of severe cases such as the Tottori church assault, and violent abduction started making court cases. Hiroko Tomizawa suffered 15 months of confinement after the kidnapers attacked the church in Tottori to abduct her. Rie Imari was attacked in a Denny's parking lot and kidnapped. Both sued the Christian ministers who led the operation. Tomizawa won her civil case after the minister admitted confinement. On the other hand, Imari lost her case because the minister denied the fact. The supreme court advised Imari to come to a settlement. On February 10, 2008, Toru Goto comes out of 12 years and 5 months of confinement. Goto filed criminal charges against the kidnapers, and is presently waiting for prosecution. The number of kidnappings decreased, but many UC members still fear that they may be the next victims, and hence, some hide their faith or their whereabouts from their family members.