

## Japan High Court Landmark Ruling against Kidnapping and Deprogramming of Toru Goto

November 13, 2014



The Unification movement in Japan won a major victory on November 13, 2014, when Tokyo's High Court ruled in favor of Mr. Toru Goto in his civil suit against family members and "deprogrammers" who had held him captive for 12 years and five months (September 11, 1995 to February 10, 2008) in order to force him to abandon the Unification faith. The court ruled that this amounted to kidnapping and "an unlawful suppression of freedom of action." It ordered three family members to pay compensation of 22 million yen (2.2 million US\$). The lead deprogrammer was ordered to pay 11 million yen (1.1 million US\$) in compensation.

Over the past 45 years, more than 4,300 persons, mostly Unificationists and 80 percent of them women, have been kidnapped for the purpose of breaking their faith. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and the U.S. State Department previously filed reports critical of Japan for inaction on this human rights abuse. Mr. Goto's initial effort to press criminal charges was denied in 2009 by the Tokyo Prosecutors Office, which cited "insufficient evidence." He subsequently filed a civil lawsuit, which resulted in the 2014 decision. Japan's Supreme Court dismissed appeals by the defendants in the case and upheld the verdict by the Tokyo High Court on September 29, 2015. This concluded Mr. Goto's seven-year legal battle and put an end to kidnapping and deprogramming as a legal option in Japan.