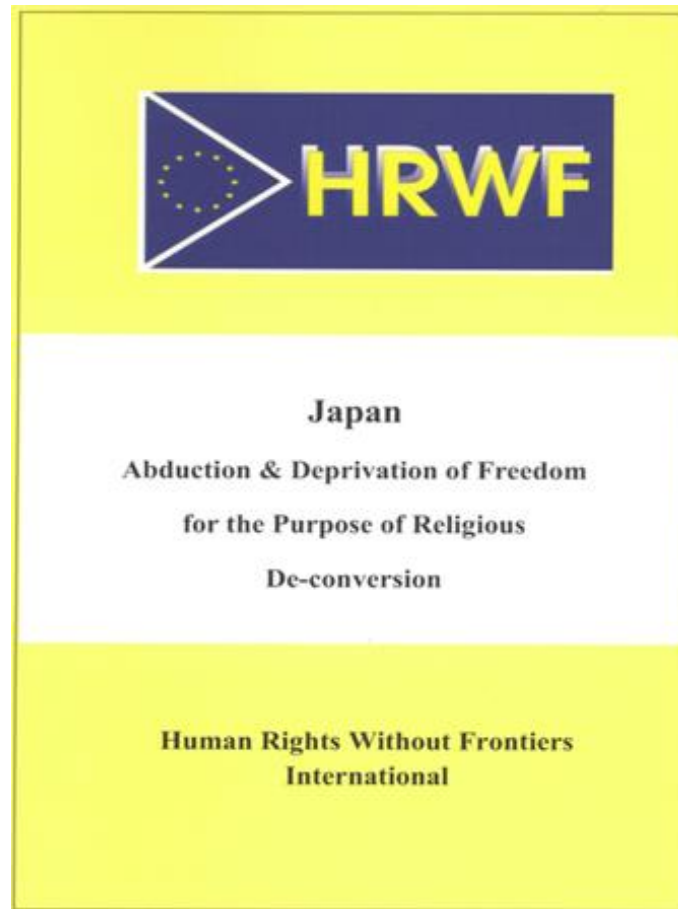


Japan: The end of forceful religious de-conversions (2013)



Over the course of about 40 years, thousands of Unification Church members in Japan were kidnapped by their own families and then confined for days, weeks, months and even years for the purpose of coercive religious de-conversion. These illegal activities were mainly organised by Protestant pastors and evangelists in the name of their fight against “heresies”. One victim, Toru Goto, was held in captivity for 12 years! The complaints of thousands of victims were ignored by the authorities and total impunity prevailed for four decades. The police, the judiciary, politicians and the media chose to turn a blind eye to this criminal activity under the argument that it was a private family matter.

In 2011 Willy Fautré, the director of HRWF, spent two weeks in Tokyo interviewing victims and then, during another fact-finding mission with Dr Aaron Rhodes (Forum For Religious Freedom Europe), he visited police stations, judicial authorities and members of the Japanese Parliament. The outcome was a 115-page report both in English and Japanese titled: [***“Japan: Abduction & Deprivation of Freedom for the***](#)

Purpose of Religious De-conversion”. Together with the French lawyer Patricia Duval, HRWF used this report for advocacy through various UN mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review of Japan and the Human Rights Committee at the UN in Geneva.

At the same time, HRWF supported Toru Goto through a civil lawsuit against members of his family, evangelists and pastors. It was successful. They were all sentenced to heavy fines, which is disproportionate to the damage caused but sent a clear message.

This multi-pronged advocacy dissuaded all Protestant activists from pursuing their crusade against so-called heretical movements under the guise of assisting families. Since then, there have been no more cases of coercive religious de-conversion attempts including kidnapping and confinement in Japan.

日本
棄教を目的とした
拉致と拘束



Japanese translation of HRWF report