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**Promotion and protection of all human rights,
civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

**Joint written statement* submitted by the Women's
Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI), a non-
governmental organization in general consultative status, the
Universal Peace Federation, a non-governmental
organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 May 2010]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Abduction and Secret Detention for Forced Conversion in Japan*

At the time of the consideration of the joint global study by four mandate holders on secret detention in the context of terrorism, the Universal Peace Federation submits this joint statement calling for a similar transparency and recognition by the Council of the damage being done by the practice of abduction, secret detention and degrading treatment of religious minorities in Japan for the sake of forcing conversion. The study concludes that “no jurisdiction should allow for individuals to be deprived of their liberty in secret for potentially indefinite periods, held outside the reach of the law, without the possibility of resorting to (appropriate) legal procedures”. It also states that this practice of secret detention leaves “an indelible mark on (its) victims and families as well”.

The Universal Peace Federation affirms the essential value and significance of religion, and hence religious freedom, for the achievement of global peace. As such, we appeal to the United Nations Human Rights Council to influence the government of Japan to take action urgently to halt the impunity related to the long-term and persistent use of these methods on and by its citizens.

It has been reported that in the Unification Church alone more than 4,300 members have been victimized to date. During the past four decades, over 1,300 adherents have managed to escape their captors, sometimes at great personal risk, and return to their religious communities. They report human rights violations such as long-term confinement, mental and physical abuse, and psychological manipulation designed to force them to recant their faith. Despite numerous complaints to police, not one indictment has been brought against the perpetrators.

The Case of Toru Goto

One recent shocking example of religious intolerance in Japan is the case of Mr. Toru Goto, who was confined for over 12 years and 5 months against his will in an apartment in Tokyo. Already in his 30s at the beginning of this confinement (his second), Mr. Goto was imprisoned in one small room, guarded day and night, just blocks away from the municipal authorities. He was not allowed to leave the apartment even to exercise and was not permitted communication with the outside world during these 12 years. He was at times constrained by force and required to listen to his captors’ indoctrination and ridiculing in an attempt to make him convert from Unificationism to mainline Protestant Christianity. The ringleaders in this case were the Christian minister, Yasutomo Matsunaga and professional “deprogrammer” Takashi Miyamura in collusion with members of Mr. Goto’s family.

When, after 12 years of imprisonment, the captors were forced to admit that Mr. Goto was not succumbing to their brainwashing techniques, they cruelly threw him into the street in February 2008, a tall man but weighing only 39 kilo and barely able to walk. He went directly to the police station to report the crime, but was refused help. He finally reached the church headquarters in Tokyo and was then taken to the hospital for a prolonged rehabilitation. He filed charges against the perpetrators in 2008, and yet on December 9, 2009, Tokyo prosecutors refused to indict them. Their claim of “insufficient evidence” is a travesty of justice and the government’s action of turning a blind eye allows those responsible to continue their activities with impunity.

* Human Rights without Frontiers (HRWF) and the Forum for Religious Freedom (FOREF), NGOs without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

Here are just a few of many documented testimonies showing how severely human lives have been affected:

Ms. Hiroko Tomizawa

In June 1997, a group of about twenty thugs, including an ex-policeman and private detectives, armed with an electric stun gun, iron chains and an iron pipe, attacked a UC local church in the Tottori district. They injured four church members and forcibly abducted Ms. Tomizawa. The following day, when a church officer tried to file a criminal complaint at Tottori police station, the officer on duty refused to receive it, telling him: "We are busy. You should not bring such a case." Ms. Tomizawa was confined in three apartments over the next fifteen months. She eventually escaped and brought criminal charges against her relatives and the "deprogrammer," a Protestant minister named Mamoru Takazawa. However, in 2000, the Tottori prosecutor's office refused to indict the perpetrators.

Mrs. Takako Fujita

Mrs. Fujita, married to a Korean church member, was kidnapped during a visit home to Japan. In profound despair brought on by protracted psychological and physical abuse, she committed suicide in the bathroom of the apartment where she was forcibly detained with no hope of escape. Her husband came to Japan in an attempt to attend her funeral ceremony, but the family refused to admit him. The police were made aware of the situation but did not treat it as a criminal case. In the end, despite substantial evidence that she had been illegally confined, no one was arrested or indicted.

Dr. Hirohisa Koide

On June 13, 1992, Hirohisa Koide, a medical doctor, was kidnapped while he was busy taking care of patients at a hospital. He was confined for almost two years. During his confinement an anti-UC lawyer, Hiroshi Hirata, visited the confinement place and told Koide's parents and relatives that the confinement was not illegal. Consequently, Koide's period of confinement was prolonged. His deprogrammer was a Christian minister named Yasutomo Matsunaga. Dr. Koide was forced to make public statements against the Unification Church before his captors would relax security measures enough that he could safely escape and return to the church. Koide describes his experience in his book "Hitosarai Karano Dasshutsu" (Tokyo: Kogensha, 1996).

Violation of human rights standards

The above cases represent only a few of literally thousands of cases. These practices are clearly in violation of international human rights instruments guaranteeing the right to freedom of religion and belief (UDHR, Art. 18) and freedom of movement (UDHR, Art.13) as well as UDHR Art. 9 on arbitrary detention.

Japan is bound to uphold these standards as a member of the international community and is indeed usually seen as exemplary.

However, it appears to lack transparency and consistency in the area of freedom of religion, creating a reaction in blatant denial of the indivisibility of all human rights. Much of this results from the fact that these cases of attempted forced conversion, usually instigated by relatives of the victim at the behest of a network of professional "deprogrammers," are viewed by authorities as "family matters." Since these cases invariably involve adult victims, this cannot serve as a justification for violating a believer's right to practice their religion.

Article 20 of the Japanese Constitution guarantees freedom of religion all .Moreover, false imprisonment is a crime in Japan under Article 220 of the Japanese Penal Code.

See also, Article 11 of the Japanese Constitution which claims that all fundamental human rights that are, “guaranteed to the people by this Constitution shall be conferred upon the people of this and future generations as eternal and inviolate rights”.

Article 223, of Japanese Penal Code calls for “imprisonment with work” for “threat to another's life, body, freedom, reputation or property or by use of assault, causes the other to perform an act which the other person has no obligation to perform, or hinders the other from exercising his or her rights”.

It is incomprehensible that all of the above-mentioned rights written in the Japanese Constitution and the Penal Code have been repeatedly violated throughout more than 40 years without legal consequences to the perpetrators of these crimes. Hundreds of young adult lives have been ruined and families destroyed. The perpetrators must be brought to justice and the victims vindicated. After exhausting multiple legal and other channels to secure a more rigorous and coordinated commitment from the government to put an end to kidnapping and forced religious conversion in Japan, the victims of these crimes have now decided to appeal to the international community.

Appeal to the HRC

With this, we appeal to the Human Rights Council for action. Still a beacon of hope to many unrepresented victims, we urge you to investigate and recognize these crimes that lay before you as a dangerous precedent that threatens the very essence and foundation of human dignity.

On behalf of the victims we seek the following:

1. That if any member of the Unification Church or other minority religion becomes a victim of kidnapping and confinement, the Japanese government must immediately intervene and rescue the victim.
 2. That the Japanese police must promptly search for anyone who has been kidnapped or confined and bring the victim to a safe place where the person may freely decide whom he or she chooses to associate with.
 3. That in order to eliminate such incidents from this country once and for all, the Japanese police investigate all those who have been involved in past cases of kidnapping and confinement and, where appropriate, bring charges against them. The case of Toru Goto in particular should be immediately re-opened and the perpetrators of those crimes should be brought to justice.
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