

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Korea Delays Decision on Holy Mother Han Bail

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South Korean judge delays bail decision. Illustration: Grok xAI



**Supporters decry continued detention of octogenarian Mother Han as South Korean court postpones bail decision claiming prosecutors need more time for evidence search**

News1, a major South Korean news agency and media outlet, published on 16th December a report which in English would be headlined "[Court Delays Ruling on Hak Ja Han's Bail Request, Saying 'Still Difficult to Judge if Grounds for Detention Have Disappeared'.](#)"

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The news that the bail [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) – also called [Mother Han](#) – had requested was not granted is hugely disappointing to all her supporters worldwide.



Elderly South Korean couple like the judge's parents.  
Illustration: Grok xAI

Presiding Judge Woo In-seong (우인성) acknowledged the sympathy the public might feel for [Mother Han](#) due to her age and health. According to News1, he said,

"[Hak Ja Han](#) is about the same age as my parents. Every time I proceed with the trial, I think of my elderly parents and feel sympathy for [President Han](#), now being detained."

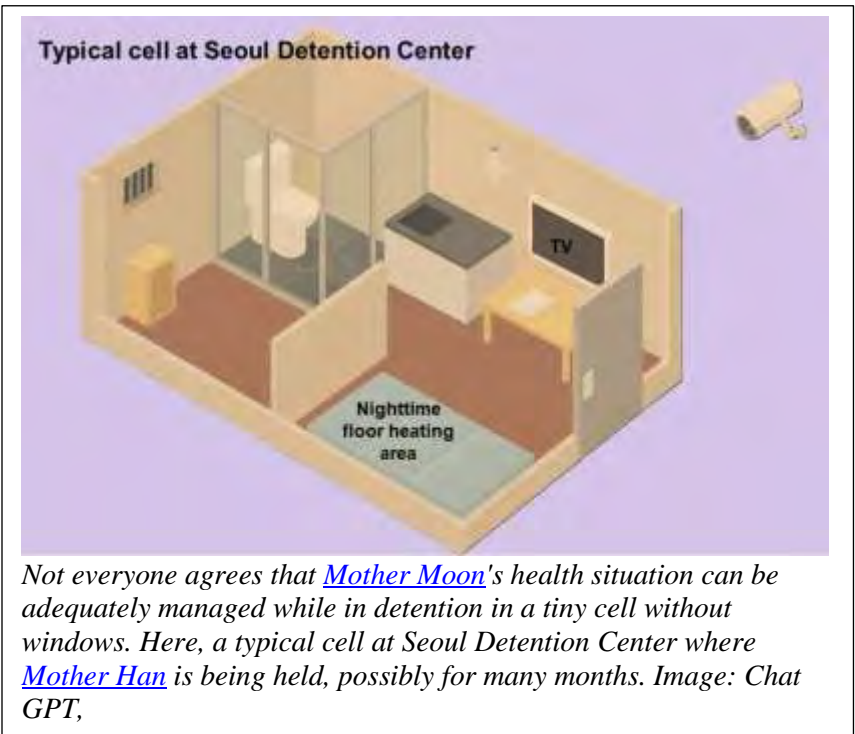
He stressed, however, that judicial decisions are guided by professional standards rather than personal feelings. Judge Woo noted that bail decisions require careful consideration of risks such as evidence destruction, flight, or potential for severe sentencing. Given that significant portions of the investigation remain incomplete, the court stated that it is too early to determine whether these risks have been mitigated. The presiding judge indicated that a decision on bail would be revisited once the evidence review progresses further.

To [Mother Han](#)'s followers, the judge's reasoning may translate to, "They haven't found any evidence!" For millions of believers, it seems most unreasonable and in fact dehumanizing to keep an octogenarian in

poor health behind bars indefinitely.

[Mother Han](#)'s legal team cites serious health concerns and claims that key accusations involve former [Family Federation](#) officials acting independently. Prosecutors maintain however that there is no change in the circumstances warranting her release. The court has, for the time being, deferred a decision, citing the complexity of the case and the early stage of the evidence review.

[Mother Han](#) has publicly asserted her innocence, describing herself as dedicated to her religious mission and disputing the portrayal presented by the special prosecutor. She invited observers to visit [Family Federation](#) sites to witness firsthand her activities, emphasizing her decades-long commitment to the [organization](#)'s spiritual mission.



Prosecutors, however, countered that her health can be adequately managed while in detention and that there has been no substantive change in circumstances to justify release. They also highlighted documents indicating that some decisions attributed to [Mother Han](#) may have been formalized after [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호) had stepped down from his leadership position, underscoring the ongoing debate over her direct involvement in the alleged misconduct.

It looks like [Mother Han](#), longtime leader of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) – also known

as the [Unification Church](#) – will be kept detained for an [unknown length of time](#). News1 writes that she requested bail on 13th November to allow her to face ongoing criminal charges without remaining in detention. Her request comes as South Korean authorities continue a sprawling investigation into allegations of organized bribery and embezzlement tied to the [religious organization](#), which has been accused of providing unlawful political support to lawmakers across party lines.

The investigation has intensified after South Korean police 15th December executed comprehensive raids on multiple [Family Federation](#) facilities, including the [organization](#)'s headquarters and ceremonial sites in Gyeonggi Province. Police documents and warrants revealed that [Mother Han](#) is being treated as the ultimate authority behind the alleged distribution of money and gifts to politicians. Such a characterization frames the case as an organized bribery scandal rather than the isolated misconduct of a subordinate.



Authorities pointed specifically to the role of former World Headquarters Director [Yoon Yeong-ho](#), who claimed during a special prosecutor investigation that he acted under [Mother Han](#)'s direction in providing funds to lawmakers. Police also cited internal [Federation](#) documents prepared by [Yoon](#) that appear to indicate direct meetings and plans involving [Mother Han](#).

The charges against her involve alleged violations of South Korea's Act on the Aggravated Punishment of Specific Economic Crimes, which governs embezzlement and other financial misconduct. Her defense team has argued that [Yoon](#) acted independently and falsified testimony to cover up his actions. [Mother Han](#)'s lawyers emphasize that she has serious medical conditions – including ophthalmic disease causing legal blindness, arrhythmia, and hyperthyroidism – and is over 80 years old.

Additionally – according to News1 – organizations claimed to be victims of the alleged embezzlement – the [Family Federation](#) and the Hyojeong World Peace Foundation – reportedly do not seek her punishment, a point [Mother Han](#)'s lawyers have used to underscore her claims of innocence.

The case has captured widespread attention in South Korea, not only because of the high-profile nature of the [Family Federation](#) but also because of its implications for political and financial accountability. The special prosecutors appointed by the current left-leaning Lee administration continue to search for evidence to determine whether the [Federation](#)'s top leadership orchestrated a coordinated effort to influence lawmakers. The outcome of [Mother Han](#)'s bail request – and the broader investigation – will likely have significant ramifications for both the [religious organization](#) and the South Korean political landscape.

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Participants in the press conference included the *General Korean Christian Federation* [한국기독교총연합회 – a known major Protestant umbrella group in South Korea] and other Christian groups from around the country. They issued a statement asserting that “the president’s remarks on dissolving religious organizations constitute a serious challenge to the Constitution and to freedom of religion,” and demanded an official declaration that there would be no future attempts to legislate “the dissolution of religious organizations” or “religious control”.

The statement noted that countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France do not have systems for dissolving religious organizations at all and emphasized that “the Japanese model for dissolving religious corporations referenced by the president has raised concerns at the *United Nations Human Rights Council* and elsewhere.” It criticized that introducing the Japanese approach into South Korea would cause the country to “degenerate into the most powerful state of religious control among OECD members.”

Regarding President Lee’s call for legal measures to enable dissolution under the banner of the “principle of separation of religion and state”, the groups countered that “the separation of religion and state exists to prevent state power from interfering in religion”. They expressed alarm, warning,

“Even if intervention begins on a small scale, there is a risk that state power will eventually come to occupy the religious sphere.”



Portrait of Cho Bae-sook  
7th September 2023.  
Photo: Goodnessman / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#). Cropped

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One of the religious organizations being cracked down on in South Korea: **Yoido Full Gospel Church**, here 4th Dec. 2016. Photo: Striker9498 / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#)

In South Korea, tensions between the administration and religious circles have continued, including raids by a special prosecutor on facilities belonging to Yoido Full Gospel Church, the Protestant broadcaster *Far East Broadcasting Company*, and the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (formerly the *Unification Church*).

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**Featured image** above: South Korean Christian leaders protesting President Lee Jae-myung’s initiative to dissolve religious organizations. Korean text partly translated to English. Illustration: Grok xAI, 15th December 2025, edited.

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