

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Extension of Holy Mother Han's Medical Release

Knut Holdhus
May 29, 2026



Mother Han January 9, 2022



South Korean court grants further extension of medical release to Mother Han as legal battle continues

On 29th May 2026, the South Korean news agency [News1](#) (뉴스1) reported that a Seoul court had extended by one month the suspension of detention granted to [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) - also called [Mother Han](#) - the co-founder and current leader of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) - in Korea often referred to simply as [Unificationism](#) (통일교).

[Mother Han](#), one of the most influential religious figures in modern South Korean history, is currently standing trial on charges pressed by special prosecutors appointed by the current left-leaning Lee Jae-myung (이재명) administration. They are investigating whether organizations connected to the [Family Federation](#) supported leading politicians or sought influence in legally prohibited ways.



*Seoul Central District Court.
Image: Grok xAI*

According to the [News 1 report](#), the decision was made by the 27th Criminal Division of the Seoul Central District Court. [Mother Han](#)'s temporary release from detention had originally been scheduled to end on 30th May, but the court extended it until 30th June 2026 at 2 p.m. According to the court's conditions, she may stay only at the hospital where she is receiving treatment and is forbidden from contacting witnesses or other people connected to the case, either directly or indirectly.

For readers unfamiliar with the South Korean legal system, a "suspension of detention" does not mean that charges are dropped or that a defendant is acquitted. Instead, it is a temporary release granted for humanitarian or medical reasons while the trial continues. South Korean courts may approve such requests in cases involving serious illness, medical treatment, childbirth, or urgent family matters. The decision takes effect immediately once approved by the court.

[Mother Han](#) (83) has repeatedly sought this form of release since being [taken into custody](#) in September 2025. Earlier requests were conditionally approved for [three days in November 2025](#) and [ten days in February 2026](#). News reports stated that she had been receiving treatment for injuries sustained in a fall, as well as eye-related medical care. On 27th March 2026, the court [approved another suspension request](#) connected to shoulder treatment. Since then, her temporary release from detention has been [prolonged](#) twice and will now altogether last roughly three months. Observers see this as a sign of a significant

worsening of [Mother Han's](#) medical condition.

After [Sun Myung Moon's](#) (문선명) death in 2012, [Mother Han](#) assumed the central leadership role within the [movement](#).



Yoon Yeong-ho (August 9, 2020)



Jeong Won-ju (January 19, 2025)

The [News1 article](#) by reporter Yu Su-yeon (유수연) points out that the special prosecutors allege that [Hak Ja Han](#) conspired with senior officials of the [Family Federation](#), including [Jeong Won-ju](#) (정원주), a vice director at Cheonmuwon - an administrative body within the [Federation](#) - and [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호), the former head of the world headquarters. According to the indictment, the group unlawfully delivered 100 million won (roughly US\$70,000 at current exchange rates) in cash to conservative lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) of the People Power Party in January 2022 as political funding.

The prosecution also claims that between March and April 2022, [Family Federation](#)-related funds totaling 144 million won were divided into smaller donations and distributed to several lawmakers affiliated with the People Power Party. This practice, often described in Korea as "split donations", is controversial because it can allegedly be used to conceal the true origin of political contributions or evade campaign finance restrictions.

Another major allegation involves luxury gifts reportedly given to Kim Keon-hee (김건희), the wife of former President Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열) and former First Lady of South Korea. Prosecutors claim that in July 2022 [Hak Ja Han](#) and [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호) arranged the delivery of expensive items worth around 80 million won, including a diamond necklace from the British luxury jewelry company Graff. Investigators further allege that funds from the [religious organization](#) were embezzled in the process of obtaining money and valuables used

for unlawful political activities and gifts.

[Mother Han](#) and the other defendants are now continuing to face trial while the court monitors compliance with the conditions attached to her temporary medical release.

The [religious movement](#) has traditionally maintained that its engagement in public life is educational and moral in nature rather than political. However, the current progressive administration of Lee Jae-myung has appointed special prosecutors to examine allegations that senior members of the [Family Federation](#) sought to influence South Korea's 2022 presidential election, raising questions about possible violations of political finance and lobbying regulations.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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reinterpretation of the law

In recent years, few legal controversies in Japan have attracted as much international attention as the government's effort to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), previously known as the [Unification Church](#). The issue has generated intense debate not only within Japan but also among scholars of religion, legal experts, and advocates of human rights and religious liberty around the world. At the center of this debate lies the question: can a religious organization be dissolved on the basis of civil judgments and allegations of manipulative fundraising, even in the absence of criminal convictions against the organization itself?



Logo of [Bitter Winter](#), the world's leading online magazine on religious liberty and human rights.

In an [article](#) published 28th March 2026, in [Bitter Winter](#), the leading global online magazine on religious liberty and human rights, sociologist of religion Dr. Massimo Introvigne examines the [Tokyo High Court's](#) reasoning in [affirming the dissolution](#) of the [Family Federation](#). His discussion

focuses especially on accusations involving so-called "spiritual sales" and excessive donations, which Japanese courts and critics have presented as evidence that the [organization](#) psychologically manipulated followers into giving large sums of money.

See also [The Return of Labeling Faith as](#)



Faithful believer offering donation, termed "spiritual sales" by hostile activist lawyers. Illustration by Microsoft Designer Image Creator 14th July 2024.

Manipulation

See also: [Law Expert: Too Weak Legal Basis for Dissolution](#)

The [article](#) explores how the High Court in line with a negative narrative repeated for decades by hostile lawyers, portrayed the [Family Federation](#) as an organization driven less by spiritual concerns than by financial interests. According to the court's interpretation, believers were allegedly pressured into making donations or purchasing religiously associated objects at inflated prices because they feared spiritual misfortune or hoped for blessings and protection.

Activist critics even coined a special expression – "spiritual sales" – to describe these practices. Originally, the term referred to the sale of items such as seals, miniature pagodas, marble vases, and similar objects said to possess spiritual significance. Over time, however, a network of hostile activist lawyers expanded the concept to include donations themselves, even when no physical goods were involved.

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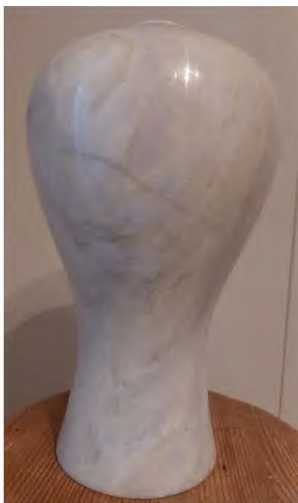
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Dr. Introvigne notes that the court relied in part on several criminal cases from the late 2000s involving individuals connected to businesses operated by members of the faith then called the [Unification Church](#). One of the most important of these cases involved Shinsei Ltd., where executives received suspended prison sentences in addition to financial penalties. Yet the High Court did not formally treat these convictions as direct grounds for dissolving the [religious organization](#) itself. Instead, the judgments were presented more as background material intended to create an image of the [movement](#) as socially harmful.

This distinction is significant. The [article](#) stresses that crimes committed by individual members of a religious organization do not justify dissolving the organization as a whole. Dr. Introvigne argues that if such logic were applied consistently, many major religious institutions would face dissolution whenever some members committed criminal acts. He uses the example of abuse scandals involving Catholic clergy to illustrate the point that wrongdoing by individuals cannot automatically be equated with institutional criminality.



Marble vase, one of the products sold by Happy World Co. Photo: Knut Holdhus

A substantial portion of the High Court's argument focused on the activities of a company known eventually as Happy World Co., Ltd. Founded by followers of the [Unification Church](#) in the early 1970s, the company sold products including ginseng, seals, marble items, and decorative religious objects. Although criminal charges against company executives had earlier resulted in acquittals in the *Kobe District Court*, the High Court nevertheless treated Happy World as a central actor in the phenomenon of "spiritual sales".

Dr. Introvigne acknowledges that some of Happy World's marketing methods were aggressive and objectionable. Even scholars associated with the [Family Federation](#) have admitted this point. However, he also emphasizes that the [religious organization](#) attempted to restrict such practices decades ago. As early as 1987, according to the court's own findings, Happy World informed Japanese authorities and consumer protection agencies that it had prohibited sales methods likely to create misunderstandings connected to "spiritual sales". Eventually, the company ceased operating altogether.

The [article](#) argues that these historical incidents, many of which occurred more than twenty years ago, were revived primarily to cast the [Family Federation](#) in a negative light rather than to establish present misconduct. The actual legal basis for dissolution, Dr. Introvigne explains, rested mainly on twenty-six civil court judgments and numerous settlements reached either in court or outside of court.

This raises what the author sees as the central legal problem in the case: whether civil decisions alone are sufficient grounds for dissolving a religious organization. Historically, Japanese legal interpretation answered this question negatively. Previous governments repeatedly maintained that criminal convictions against the religious corporation itself were necessary before dissolution could be pursued.

The [article](#) recounts that in both 1994 and 1998, Japanese



authorities resisted demands from “anti-cult” lawyers seeking dissolution of the [Unification Church](#). In 2012, those lawyers even sued the government for refusing to initiate dissolution proceedings, but the government prevailed.

Following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) in 2022, however, the political atmosphere changed dramatically. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (岸田文雄) initially stated that dissolution would not be legally possible without criminal convictions against the [religious organization](#). Yet within a day, he reversed his position and declared that civil judgments could provide adequate grounds.



Former prime minister Fumio Kishida deliverin a speech at the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26) 2nd Nov. 2021. Photo: [首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

According to Dr. Introvigne, the High Court attempted to justify this shift by referring to a 2025 Supreme Court ruling concerning a fine imposed on [Family Federation](#) president Tomihiro Tanaka (田中富広) for failing to fully answer questions from the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*. In that decision, the Supreme Court indicated that civil torts could indeed support dissolution proceedings against a religious organization.

To be continued. Part 2 coming soon

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Dr. Massimo Introvigne, an Italian scholar specializing in the sociology of religion. He founded and serves as managing director of the Center for Studies on New Religions, an international network of academics focused on the study of new religious movements. He has authored around 70 books and over 100 scholarly articles in this field. Here, speaking in Geneva, Switzerland 16th June 2025. Screenshot from video by UPF.

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