

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: BBC, Racism and Weaponization of Language

Knut Holdhus
September 4, 2026



BBC Broadcasting house studio 80A



On 31st August, the BBC - the world's oldest national broadcaster and self-professed standard of global journalistic integrity - published a [news report](#) on the [sentencing](#) of [Hak Ja Han](#) by a Seoul court. Co-authored by Seoul correspondent Jake Kwon and Singapore-based journalist Fan Wang, the article quickly abandoned objective reporting in favor of biased, derogatory framing.



Responsible media outlets have long recognized this; the [Reuters handbook for journalists](#) explicitly states: "'Moonie' is a pejorative term for members of the [Unification Church](#). We should not use it in copy and avoid it when possible in direct quotations." (p321)



The New York Times

How the BBC's coverage of the Family Federation exposes the toxic weaponization of pejorative terms and biased narratives in mainstream coverage of minority religions

The slurs begin in the headline itself, which prominently features the derogatory term "Moonies". The [text](#) goes on to repeat the word twice more, pairing it with the weaponized descriptor "cult-like". Labels like "Moonies" are deeply offensive to members of the [Family Federation](#), carrying a derogatory weight comparable to racial slurs used against people of color. This terminology is frequently used by left-wing and anti-religious activists to denigrate and ridicule the [Family Federation](#) and its followers.

Also the New York Times states in its "[Manual of Style and Usage](#)" of 2015, "Do not use the disparaging Moonie(s)." (p466)

Why did the BBC ignore this standard? Because it is remarkably easy to apply a "cult" label to a minority faith that lacks the numerical defense of mainstream religions. As Massimo Introvigne, a leading sociologist of religion and expert on new religious movements, observed:

"But what is a 'cult'? A large majority of scholars of religion agree that there are no cults. 'Cult' is just a label used to discriminate against groups that powerful lobbies, for whatever reasons, do not like." ([The Abe Assassination. The Word "Cult" Is A Tool for Discrimination, Bitter Winter](#) 2nd Sept. 2022)

The BBC's reliance on biased framing deepens when it highlights allegations made by unnamed "lawyers" against the [Family Federation](#). In the interest of fairness, the broadcaster should have identified these individuals. They belong to the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales - an organization established by far-left activists from Japan's Communist and Socialist parties. The explicit, ongoing goal of this network has always been to destroy the [Family Federation](#)

due to the faith's vocal opposition to totalitarian, materialistic communist ideology. By presenting a politically motivated lobby group as neutral legal experts, the BBC fundamentally misled its audience.

This pattern of suspicion-by-association continues when the [article](#) claims the [Family Federation](#) "boasted extensive links to politicians in Seoul, Tokyo, and even in Washington." By embedding this statement in a

narrative of alleged wrongdoing, the BBC casts standard political engagement in a sinister light. In reality, these "links" primarily consisted of international statesmen or parliamentarians sending or delivering in person routine congratulatory messages to large-scale global peace summits, particularly those focusing on the Korean peninsula.



Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Italian sociologist of religion, founder of [CESNUR](#), specializing in new religious movements and religious liberty. A prolific author, he has advised governments and international bodies, and served as OSCE Representative on combating racism, xenophobia, and intolerance against Christians worldwide and comments on contemporary religious controversies. Here speaking at the UN Office at Geneva on 16th June 2025



Not so close ties with the [Family Federation](#): Shinzo Abe here in March 2022, few months before he was assassinated. He introduced policies that significantly disadvantaged the [Federation](#)

Politicians have never granted the [Family Federation](#) special favors or undue benefits. In fact, far from rewarding the organization, the government led by Shinzo Abe introduced policies that significantly disadvantaged the movement.

Finally, the BBC attempts to isolate the faith globally by asserting that "The group is banned in parts of the world, including Singapore." What the broadcaster conveniently omits is the authoritarian nature of Singapore's governance. To maintain strict "social stability", Singapore enforces a highly restrictive regulatory blanket over all social, political, and religious associations - the Jehovah's Witnesses face the same ban. While the BBC only names Singapore, its use of the plural phrase "parts of the world" is technically accurate for a disturbing reason: the [Family Federation](#) is also banned in communist China, alongside numerous other religious groups.

By echoing the vocabulary of anti-religious activists and filtering facts through a highly selective lens, the BBC did not just report the news - it participated in a campaign of religious discrimination.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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The key issue for the appeal court is whether responsibility for specific unlawful acts can be attributed personally to Mother Han

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How Many More
Cases Against
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August 29, 2026

세계일보

The logo of the *Segye Ilbo*

Federation for World Peace and Unification, to two years in prison, *Segye Ilbo* religious affairs correspondent *Jeong Seong-su* (정성수) raises a broader question: **what exactly should the appellate court be weighing when it reviews the case?**

In his 31st August column, "*13-Year Demand, 2-Year Sentence: The Balance of the Appeal*", Jeong does not simply argue that *Hak Ja Han* – also called *Mother Han* – should be acquitted. His central concern is more fundamental. He questions whether the enormous gap between the **13-year sentence requested by the special prosecutor** and the **two-year sentence actually imposed by the court** reveals that the prosecution initially portrayed the case as considerably more serious than what the evidence ultimately established.

More importantly, *Jeong* argues that the appeal should not be determined by political considerations, the reputation of the special prosecutor, or public attitudes toward the *Family Federation*. It should instead focus strictly on **evidence, criminal responsibility and the legal standards for proving that *Mother Han* personally knew about and approved specific unlawful acts.**

From a 13-year demand to a two-year sentence

Jeong begins by emphasizing the striking circumstances surrounding the **verdict**. *Mother Han*, 83, heard the **sentence** while wearing a hospital gown and sitting in a wheelchair. The court imposed **two years in prison**: one year for violating the *Political Funds Act* and another year for violations involving improper solicitation and occupational embezzlement.

For *Family Federation* members who had expected an acquittal, the **decision** was devastating.

Yet the **sentence** was dramatically lower than the **13 years sought by the special prosecutor**. The prosecution had requested five years for the political-funds violations and another eight years for the other charges.

Jeong considers the request unusually severe, particularly because *Mother Han* is elderly, has no previous criminal record, and the case does not concern a violent crime. He also draws attention to the disparity between the sentences sought for the various defendants.

The



Prosecution requested 3 years and 6 months for Yoon Yeong-ho, former director general of the international headquarters of the *Family Federation*, here 11th February 2022. Screenshot from live transmission by *FFWPU*



Prosecution requested 4 years for former People Power Party lawmaker **Kweon Seong-dong** (권성동), here 23rd Dec. 2024. Photo: 국민의힘TV / Wikimedia Commons. License: *CC Attr 3.0 Unp.* Cropped

prosecution requested four years for former lawmaker **Kweon Seong-dong** (권성동), who was accused of receiving 100 million won (in 2022, ca \$77,000 USD) from the *Family*



Religious affairs reporter Jeong Seong-su (정성수). Photo (2025): *Segye Ilbo*

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Federation side. It requested three years and six months for former World Headquarters Director-General **Yoon Yeong-ho** (윤영호), whom prosecutors portrayed as the person who directly planned and executed the overall activities.



Prosecution requested 13 years for **Hak Ja Han**, aka. **Mother Han**, far more than **Yoon**, whom the prosecutors portrayed as the person who directly planned and executed the overall activities. Here, Mother Han in ca. 2016. Photo: **FFWPU**

Yet the prosecution sought 13 years for **Mother Han**.

That raises, Jeong suggests, a legitimate question: **was her position as the supreme leader of the religious organization, and the symbolic significance attached to her as the alleged “peak” of religion-politics collusion, effectively being reflected in the severity of the requested punishment?**

What the first-instance court actually found

The **first-instance judgment** was considerably narrower than the prosecution's case.

The court acquitted **Mother Han** on some of the alleged “split donation” charges. It also dismissed certain charges concerning alleged destruction of evidence and embezzlement connected with funds allegedly provided to politicians overseas, concluding that these matters fell outside the special prosecutor's legally defined investigative mandate.

The court further rejected the argument that transferring church funds to prepare split political donations automatically constituted embezzlement.

For **Jeong**, this is significant because it demonstrates that the court imposed **legal limits on the special prosecutor's investigative authority**. The Constitution's principle of due process, he stresses, means that the statutory mandate of a special prosecutor cannot simply be expanded whenever investigators encounter additional allegations.

At the same time, **Jeong** is careful not to characterize the **two-year sentence** as equivalent to an acquittal. The court did find **Mother Han** responsible, together with others, for important parts of the prosecution's case. In particular, it recognized her participation in and approval of the 100 million won (in 2022, ca \$77,000 USD) payment to Kweon, most of the split political donations, and the provision of luxury items such as a handbag and necklace to former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희).



The building housing Seoul High Court, where **Mother Han's** appeal case will be tried, and where also Seoul Central District Court is located. Image: Grok xAI, Nov. 2025.

Nevertheless, the enormous reduction from 13 years to two is important. It suggests, in **Jeong's view**, that **the scale of criminality initially presented by the special prosecutor and Mother Han's**

personal responsibility for it were substantially reduced during the trial.

The crucial question: what did [Mother Han](#) actually know?

This becomes the central issue [Jeong](#) wants the appeals court to examine.

There is an important distinction, he argues, between a religious leader approving the **general direction of an organization's external activities** and that same leader knowingly approving the **specific unlawful methods allegedly used to pursue those activities**.

In other words, even if [Mother Han](#) approved contacts with politicians or broader political engagement by people around her, does that necessarily establish that she personally knew about and approved:

- the delivery of 100 million won (in 2022, ca \$77,000 USD) in cash,
- political donations made using other people's names,
- or the provision of expensive gifts to a political figure's spouse?

Those are not necessarily the same thing.

[Jeong](#) therefore asks what evidence exists beyond the testimony of Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호). Are there documents, financial records, correspondence or other objective evidence demonstrating that [Mother Han](#) was informed about the specific transactions and knowingly approved them?

And, crucially, **have contradictions between testimony and objective records actually been resolved?**

This is especially important because the court treated Yoon as the person who played the leading role in planning the overall activities. If Yoon was the principal organizer, the prosecution still needs to establish the separate proposition that [Mother Han](#) possessed the specific knowledge of a crime and the criminal intent required to make her a **joint principal offender**.

That distinction is at the heart of the appeal.

To be continued. Part 2 coming soon

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Evidence on the scales. Illustration: ChatGPT, 3rd September 2026

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