

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Juraj Lajda - More Humanity in a Communist Prison than in S Korea

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Ph.D. Juraj Lajda, here in Prague, Czechia 18th April 2024

Former Czech political prisoner under communism asks whether Mother Han is being shown less humanity in long-term detention than he was under similar circumstances

The Voice of Conscience



Artistic impression of [Mother Han](#) in detention cell. Illustration: Grok xAI

Reflections by PhDr. Juraj Lajda (Doctor of Philosophy), lecturer and publisher, former political prisoner under the communist regime in [Czechoslovakia](#).

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Prague, 21st February 2026 - A few hours ago, we learned that Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#), the 83-year-old leader of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), has been [returned to her detention cell](#) after a brief ten-day release for urgent medical treatment in hospital. She remains detained on what, in my view, appears to be fabricated and circumstantial evidence.

[Dr. Han](#) suffers from multiple [serious health conditions](#): deteriorating eyesight, mobility limitations following knee surgery, and a severe cardiac condition - arrhythmia - for which she underwent surgery only five months ago. Given these circumstances, I am deeply disturbed by her return to detention. It is difficult to believe that her medical condition could have improved so dramatically in ten days that her life is no longer at risk.

I am profoundly shocked by the treatment of this elderly religious leader under the current South Korean administration. From my perspective - and I believe many share this concern - the decision to [return her to detention](#) raises urgent humanitarian and ethical questions.

My reaction is shaped in part by personal experience. I was myself detained long-term under a Communist regime in Eastern Europe. Even in that political system, I was treated more humanely than what now appears to be a life-threatening detention imposed on [Dr. Han](#) in a country that has been considered democratic since 1987.

Her situation brings back memories of my imprisonment in Czechoslovakia in the early 1970s. Ironically, I was arrested for following the teachings of the South Korean religious leader [Sun Myung Moon](#). Along with [17 other young people](#) - mostly students - I was sentenced to three years and two months for "subversion of the republic" after nearly ten months of investigation before trial.



The place where Dr. Lajda was imprisoned from 1973 to 1976 - the [Palace of Justice](#) in Bratislava, Slovakia

During the investigation phase, I was held in remand prison in Bratislava, where I was interrogated daily until the case file was closed and the indictment prepared. About six months into my detention, after prolonged confinement in a 2-by-3-meter cell - often shared with two or three other inmates - my longstanding atopic eczema worsened dramatically. The prison environment caused my condition to deteriorate severely.

When I reported this to the prison doctor, he acknowledged that he could not properly treat me under the limited conditions available. He therefore requested that I be transferred to another prison facility in Brno, where better medical care was available.



Mugshot of Juraj Lajda from 1973

I was transported there and remained for forty days until my condition stabilized and the acute phase of the illness was brought under control.

Although I was still deprived of liberty in Brno, the conditions were adapted to medical necessity. The cell was larger, I had a bed, and my daily routine was adjusted to facilitate treatment. Each day I was taken to the infirmary, where doctors worked diligently to restore my health.

The decision regarding my hospitalization and its duration was made by a physician. Whether formal authorization from an investigator or judge was required, I do not know; if it was, it was granted. The purpose of detention was not suspended - but it was carried out with recognition that I was first and foremost a patient in need of medical care.

The doctor treated me as a human being, not as a political offender. His duty was to preserve health and life. He acted according to the ethical obligations embodied in the Hippocratic Oath - that is, he would strive to preserve human life at all costs. Political considerations did not override medical judgment. Even in a Communist prison, the principle prevailed that an accused person remains a human being deserving of care.

I come from a family of physicians; my father was a well-known surgeon. I therefore understand the professional and ethical responsibilities that accompany medical practice. In my case, medical judgment determined the course of treatment - not prosecutorial or judicial discretion.

This occurred in 1974, under the Communist regime of former Czechoslovakia.

Today, I must ask: who determines Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#)'s medical fate? Is it the attending physician - or the prosecutor, investigator, or judge? If a doctor recommends continued hospitalization, what prevents the authorities from granting it? Legal procedure should not supersede the preservation of human life.

Are medical professionals in this case able to act independently according to their ethical obligations? The Hippocratic Oath is not conditional upon political context. Physicians are entrusted with safeguarding life, irrespective of the legal status of their patients.



Papyrus text: fragment of Hippocratic oath

If medical necessity is subordinated to political considerations, the situation ceases to be lawful detention and begins to resemble deliberate endangerment. The question is not merely legal - it is moral.

My conclusion is sobering. In my own experience as a political prisoner under Communism, medical care was ultimately respected. If an elderly detainee in contemporary South Korea is denied necessary hospitalization despite grave health risks, it compels serious reflection about the direction in which that system is moving.

I am deeply shocked and profoundly concerned.

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One of many couples who took part in a large international marriage blessing ceremony in Yong-in, South Korea, 30th October 1988, where 2,000 couples were Korean/Japanese. Photo: New Future Photos / FFWPU

Ms. Hanae Tanaka (タナカ・ハナエ), who lives in Suwon, Gyeonggi Province, married into Korea in 1992 and for over 20 years cared for her mother-in-law, who suffered from dementia, as if she were "her sixth child". Empathizing with her husband's filial devotion, she even obtained certification as a care worker and served her mother-in-law with utmost sincerity. Until her final moments, she held and cared for

her like a baby, even when her mother-in-law could no longer control her bodily functions or manage to eat on her own.

After her mother-in-law's passing, what overwhelmed her was not a sense of liberation but a heart-wrenching feeling of loss. To fill the longing that welled up inside her, she began once again visiting elderly people at a senior welfare center to volunteer and serve society. Her life is like an epic that transforms painful years into the fruits of a meaningful existence.

The life of Ms. Asuka Seki (セキ・アスカ), who lives in



Some of the many couples who took part in a large international marriage blessing ceremony in Yong-in, South Korea, 30th October 1988, where 2,000 couples were Korean/Japanese. Photo: New Future Photos / FFWPU

Chuncheon, Gangwon Province, is another testament to love. In a foreign land, she supported a four-generation extended family while serving her great-grandmother-in-law and parents-in-law. For her, the most difficult challenge was her relationship with her father-in-law, as there was a high emotional barrier between them. However, holding fast to the teaching of her faith that one must "let go of all attachments and become pure in heart," she gradually narrowed the distance between them through prayer.

One day, her father-in-law suddenly collapsed from a stroke. She stayed by his side, even tending to his most intimate needs without hesitation. Her devotion softened not only his paralyzed body but also his hardened heart, and reunited a once-divided family.

These are only a few examples. Behind the devoted lives of many Japanese brides lies a distinctive religious faith. The international mass weddings proposed by Reverend Sun Myung Moon (문선명) and Dr. Hak Ja Han (한학자) were an attempt to resolve the historical resentments (역사적 원한) between Korea and Japan at the smallest social unit: the family. Historical emotions that politics could not untangle were loosened by their hands – hands that prepared breakfast each morning and changed the diapers of ailing parents. Over 40 years, they have proven the conviction that becoming a "family that cannot fully hate one another" is the shortest path to peace.

Yet reality is harsh.



Image from an album known as the Illustrations of the Classic of Filial Piety. Unknown artist(s) from the Song dynasty (960-1279). Photo: Taipei: National Palace Museum / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain image

Recently, amid critical public opinion and strict scrutiny directed at religious

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recently, and a great pain of men and women living in religious organizations, insufficient light has been shed on the everyday lives and contributions of ordinary believers living within them. Approximately 8,000 Japanese brides residing in Korea have been among the most sincere practitioners of filial piety, caregiving, and community ethics – values that Korean society is gradually losing. They have served as neighborhood leaders and heads of women's associations, and as the "daughters of the village" (마을의 딸), have effectively **sustained rural communities that are disappearing due to aging populations.**

The stories they have shown through "caring for family" are among the most urgent assets we must recover. Drawing the teachings of *The Classic of Filial Piety* (효경) out from the pages of ancient books and bringing them into daily life, their recorded experiences represent a profound effort to mend the wounds between Korea and Japan through family love, and a meaningful achievement of Korea's multicultural society.

Featured image above: A South Korean landscape with rice fields. Illustration Grok xAI, February 2026

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