



[Issue] The Scandal Between Yoon Young-ho, Monk Geon Jin, and First Lady Kim Gun-hee

"What on earth does this guy Yoon Young-ho have to do with the Korean government?" (Cambodian official)

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- ⊙ Former World Headquarters Director of the Family Federation for Unification Yoon Young-ho, who attempted to build a cable car in Cambodia with government ODA funds
- ⊙ The de facto second-in-command within the Unification Church from 2020 to 2023, with his wife also holding a key position... Excellent speaking skills and event planning abilities
- ⊙ Founded the Global Policy Forum after being dismissed from the Unification Church in May 2023



Yoon Young-ho and the monk Geonjin. Photo = Chosun DB, YouTube capture

Kim Kun-hee, Monk Geon-jin, Yoon Young-ho, and the Unification Church. What happened between them? Special Prosecutor Kim Kun-hee's team arrested Yoon Young-ho, former head of the World Headquarters of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, on July 30th on charges of violating the Anti-Corruption and Bribery Act and the Political Funds Act. The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (hereinafter referred to as the Unification Church), commonly known as the Unification Church

, even had its headquarters, Cheon Jeong-gung Palace, raided due to this incident. The special prosecutors believe that former head Yoon, through Monk Geon-jin, attempted to deliver expensive items to First Lady Kim in exchange for requests to resolve various pending issues within the Unification Church. These expensive items included a Graf diamond necklace worth approximately 60 million won, two Chanel bags, and Cheon Su-sam concentrated tea. The whereabouts of the diamond necklace and Cheon Su-sam concentrated tea remain unknown.

Five Major Solicitation Allegations





A police bus enters Cheonwon Palace in Gapyeong County, Gyeonggi Province, on the afternoon of July 18, the day the Minjunggi Special Prosecutor's Office began raiding the Unification Church. Photo = Newsis

Former Chief Yoon is suspected of requesting ▲ Official Development Assistance (ODA) for the Mekong River site in Cambodia ▲ Hosting the UN Fifth Secretariat in Korea ▲ Acquiring YTN ▲ Inviting the Presidential Inauguration ▲ Inviting the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education to Unification Church international events in return for money.

In fact, if you know even a little about the history or circumstances of the Unification Church, it is easy to see that ▲ Hosting the UN Fifth Secretariat in Korea ▲ Acquiring YTN ▲ Inviting the Presidential Inauguration ▲ Inviting the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education to Unification Church international events cannot be viewed as requests at the level of the religious order.

The idea of hosting the UN Fifth Secretariat in Korea is to establish a UN Secretariat in the Demilitarized Zone. There is nothing particularly new about this, as Unification Church founder Sun Myung Moon proposed it in 2000, and in a public forum. On August 18, 2000, at the General Assembly of the Interreligious and International Federation for Peace and Prosecution (IIFWP) at the United Nations Headquarters in Manhattan, New York, Rev. Moon proposed transforming the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in this land, where North and South Korea are currently in a

state of confrontation, into a peace park. He proposed, "I propose that the United Nations, representing nations, and interreligious leaders work together to create peace zones in all border areas. This is a plan to turn borders and conflict zones, regardless of whether they are rivers, mountains, plains, or seas, into buffer zones, or peace zones. The UN will directly govern and supervise them so that people who have gathered from around the world to establish peace can live

there." The meeting was reportedly attended by former US Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole, former British Prime Minister Edward Heath, UN Economic and Social Council President Makarim Wibisono, and North Korean Ambassador to the UN Lee Hyong-chol. It is bizarre that a proposal that the founder of the religious sect had publicly proposed to the leaders of the United States and North Korea so long ago was being requested through Monk Geonjin, who was an advisor to Kobana Contents.

The attempted acquisition of YTN

is similar to the acquisition of YTN by the third son. As is well known, the Unification Church owns the Segye Ilbo and the Washington Times. Sources within and outside the church suggest that acquiring YTN was not even considered. Objectively, it would be more cost-effective to revive the weakened Washington Times than to spend a large sum to acquire a news channel. The person who considered acquiring YTN was Moon Hyun-jin, Chairman of the Global Peace Foundation (GPF), Reverend Moon's third son. He actually participated in the acquisition but was rejected.

The Unification Church and the GPF are not the same organization. The two sides have been engaged in a 14-year legal battle over property rights.

Inviting the President to the inauguration and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education to international Unification Church events is, from the Unification Church's perspective, a request that doesn't even seem like a favor. Attending the inauguration itself isn't a significant reward. Forty-one thousand people attended President Yoon Seok-yeol's inauguration. According to media reports, the inauguration ceremony was also attended by representatives from YouTube

channels such as Lee Bong-gyu TV, Sisa Warehouse, Sisa Fighter, You Know TV, Jjakji TV, and An Jeong-gwon TV (Bella Do). Several Unification Church figures are also said to have attended the inauguration for various reasons. Whether or not Yoon attended the inauguration is unclear. He did not personally state that he attended, and former Director Yoon was reportedly not seen.

The same goes for the invitation to the Minister of Education. Events hosted by Unification Church-related organizations often feature the names of former and current foreign prime ministers, ministers, and lawmakers. Given this context, it's hard to believe the Unification Church would coerce the Minister of Education into attending, even offering a 60 million won diamond necklace. Even if attendance were necessary, Unification Church-related organizations like the Segye Ilbo or UPF could have stepped in. A sobering glance suggests that even if a favor was exchanged, it was likely motivated by former Director Yoon's personal needs.

The Cambodian case is somewhat different. Former Director Yoon had publicly discussed this issue within the Unification Church. It was the "Peace Park Project" near the Mekong River.

Just before his arrest, he told the JoongAng Ilbo, "I trusted Mr. Jeon (Seong-bae) because he let me talk to Mrs. Kim and told me about ODA."

Around this time, on June 13, 2022, the government increased the loan limit for the Korea-Cambodia Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) from \$700 million to \$1.5 billion. In November of that year, former President Yoon and his wife visited Cambodia. Then, in May 2024, the EDCF's size was increased again to \$3 billion for the period 2022-2030. This was the largest increase among the 27 priority partner countries, an unprecedented event. What led to

this sudden increase in Cambodia's ODA

? In 2022 and 2023, there was a businessman, Mr. A, who discussed business with former Director Yoon in Cambodia. He is not a member of the Unification Church. He said,

"Originally, I planned to build a cultural and tourism facility in a key location in the capital, Phnom Penh, in collaboration with the Cambodian government. We've been discussing this with the Cambodian government for several years. The Cambodian government planned to use ODA funds provided by Korea for the facility. Then, in 2022, former Director Yoon Young-ho proposed that he wanted to build a cable car on top of the facility I was building."

— Cable car?

"That location is a key location next to the Royal Palace. It's a good place for a cable car. I thought it wouldn't be a bad idea, so I agreed. Former Director Yoon said he would pursue a Mekong River development project, separate from my project. I assumed he'd use Unification Church funds for both the cable car and the Mekong River development. But that wasn't the case."

— It must require a huge amount of money.

"The Unification Church only provided the usual missionary funds, and former Director Yoon planned to use ODA funds to build the project. He hinted that he had a network in the Yongsan area."

— Did the project proceed smoothly?

"The EDCF was originally set at \$700 million. After President Yoon and his wife visited Cambodia in November 2022, the amount doubled. However, the project continued to be delayed. Yoon Young-ho's side kept delaying the project, saying, 'Just wait, just wait.'"

— Did the Cambodian government respond in any way?

"The Cambodian government officials in charge of practical work are quite intelligent. Many of them studied abroad in Europe. One day, a government official I frequently interacted with asked me, 'What exactly is Yoon Young-ho doing in the Korean government?'"

— So what was your response?

Q: What was your response?

"I told them, 'He's a person in charge of the Unification Church and has no connection to the Korean government.' The Cambodian government officials were very suspicious of Yoon Young-ho."

— What happened to the construction plan?

"Ultimately, the EDCF funds increased from \$700 million to \$3 billion. I've tried various projects, but it's rare for support to suddenly increase in such a concentrated manner in one country. So I thought, 'This won't work.' I waited and saw it through, and then withdrew completely around the end of 2023. I understand it hasn't progressed since." Around that time, rumors were circulating in

Cambodia

that "Mrs. Kim Kun-hee's mother was trying to take over a local bank and embezzle aid funds," said another businessman, Mr. B, who is familiar with Cambodian affairs.

"In Cambodia, if the Prime Minister cracks down on the military, it's difficult to detect slush funds through banks. In such a country, Official Development Assistance (ODA) can be a blind fund." Could it be

that the pear fell as the crow flew? In March 2023, Deutsche Financial, the automotive finance subsidiary of Deutsche Motors, resolved at its board meeting to acquire a 97.81% stake in BAMC FINANCE PLC (BAMC), a Cambodian financial company. The acquisition was finalized in December 2023, ultimately investing US\$4.39 million (approximately KRW 6 billion) to acquire a 99.1% stake in BAMC.

Deutsche Motors' name has been mentioned alongside that of Kim Kun-hee. Deutsche Motors stated its intention to expand into automotive finance in Cambodia. As you'll find out if you visit Cambodia, tuk-tuks (three-wheeled vehicles) and motorcycles are more popular than cars. According to Mr.

Yoon Young-ho, who did not share the details

, former Director Yoon ultimately attempted to leverage his connections with Monk Geonjin to leverage ODA funds for the Cambodian Mekong River Development Project. Was the Unification Church fully aware of this situation? We spoke to Unification Church officials to find out. This is what Mr. C, a Unification Church member who worked directly with former Director Yoon in the executive office, said. Of course, since this is an internal appointment, it should be taken with caution.

"Former Director Yoon didn't share his work with the entire organization. He had each person individually lead their own projects, with A handling this task and B handling that task. As a result, there were many cases where I didn't know what was going on next to me. The Cambodia ODA case was no different. Former Director Yoon resigned in May 2023. There was going to be a successor, right? There's no relevant data. He took it all with him. The employee in charge of that work also quit. So, I had no idea what was going on in detail. If it was a matter of the religious order, it would make sense for the data to remain."

— You weren't aware of what was happening right next to you?

"Of course, I heard about it in passing. In Cambodia, they even talked about it publicly, so I knew about it. I just didn't know the details. Even though I worked with former Director Yoon for three years, there were things I learned from watching the news this time. For example, I heard about the YTN acquisition for the first time."

Taking on a high-ranking position at age 43





World leaders attending the 2020 World Summit pose for a commemorative photo with Hak Ja Han Moon, the president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (center, red jacket). Photo = Family Federation for World Peace and Unification

Yoon Young-ho held the highest position in the Unification Church from around 2020 until early 2023. He was effectively second in command alongside Cheonmuwon Vice President Won-ju Jeong, who had long served as Chief of Staff to President Hak-ja Han. Born in 1977, he would have been 43 years old in 2020. I've always wondered how he managed to rise to that position.

Yoon Young-ho hails from Pohang and comes from a family of Unification Church believers, including his parents and older brother. He graduated from Sun Moon University's College of Theology. He completed his doctoral studies in Buddhist Studies at Dongguk University and Confucianism at Sungkyunkwan University. According to his own personal history, he is currently pursuing a doctorate in film studies at Sungkyunkwan University. After

serving as a lecturer at Dongguk University's Department of Buddhist Studies, he was appointed Director of Planning at the Unification Church World Headquarters (the equivalent of the Unification Church headquarters) and Deputy Director of President Hak-ja Han's Office in 2015. What's remarkable is that he held such important positions simultaneously in both organizations. After hosting World Summit 2020, his event planning prowess was recognized and he was promoted to the position of Director of the World Headquarters.

What was the secret to his rise to such a young position? First, according to those around him, he's diligent. He's not a degree collector, having enrolled in three doctoral programs. From what I've heard from his classmates at Dongguk University, it seems he's also been quite diligent in his Buddhist studies. In 2014, he received an academic award from the Korean Buddhist Seonri Research Institute for a Buddhist-related thesis. By 2023, he'd published two books on Buddhism. He'd even edit and read the speeches his subordinates wrote for him. In some ways, he's even considered a perfectionist. He was also very particular about his appearance, preferring expensive brands like watches and suits. He even wore a Hermès belt to his arrest warrant hearing on July 30th. He

's also known for his excellent memory and his eloquence. He's even been known to speak fluently for 30 minutes after seeing a presentation he's never seen before. However, not all of the information is factual. It's said he speaks six languages, but that's also not true.

Concerns arose even within the Unification Church following his sudden rise at such a young age. Furthermore, Yoon Young-ho's wife, Ms. Lee, was in charge of accounting in the Finance Department. Upon becoming the head of the headquarters, Yoon Young-ho promoted his wife to head of the Finance Department. This effectively gave the couple control of the organization's core positions. There were reportedly concerns behind the scenes at the time. "The organization needs self-purification, but it could collapse." However, the atmosphere was no longer conducive to such remarks in front of Yoon Young-ho.

Yoon Young-ho appears to have exploited the unique nature of the Unification Church organization. Until Yoon Young-ho joined the world headquarters in 2015, there was reportedly a separate audit office. However, after Yoon Young-ho arrived at headquarters, he reportedly sent the auditing officer to South America for some reason, essentially eliminating the audit function.

A one-hour private meeting with the president-elect?

As time passed, skepticism about his abilities naturally arose within the Unification Church. Fundamentally, any religion prioritizes the expansion of its membership. In short, the church needs to increase by at least one believer. After Yoon Young-ho took over as head of the headquarters, the fact that the Unification Church's membership didn't grow as he

had promised became a growing problem. Yoon Young-ho reportedly sensed his own downfall starting in 2022. He often told his subordinates, "How much longer do I have left?" Yet, to showcase his abilities, he mentioned various projects, such as the Cambodian project, according to Mr. C.

"I later learned that the Cambodian government would promote the Mekong River development project and solicit investment whenever someone from abroad visited. Director Yoon Young-ho promoted this within the Unification Church as

investment whenever someone from abroad visited. Director Yoon Young-ho promoted this within the Unification Church as if Cambodia had offered it only to him. Most followers apparently believed it. They were only concerned that it would cost a lot of money."

His claim that he "spoke privately with President-elect Yoon Seok-yeol for an hour" is in the same vein. March 22nd, the day he claims to have met with then-President-elect Yoon, was the first meeting of the transition team's secretariat. With so many pressing issues piling up, such as cabinet appointments, the composition of the presidential office, and the relocation of the presidential office to Yongsan, would the president-elect really have met with Yoon Young-ho for an hour? Perhaps he could have stood next to Monk Geonjin and briefly shook hands.

Establishment of an Independent Organization



A scene introducing himself from a promotional video for the GPD Forum, an organization created by Yoon Young-ho.

In 2022, as he frequently visited Seoul, suspicions circulated within the headquarters, such as, "Is (Yoon Young-ho) quitting the Family Federation and entering politics?" This was due to Yoon Young-ho's remarks. For example, at an international event preparation meeting, if someone reported that "a certain VIP was not being booked," Yoon Young-ho would get angry and say, "I will personally book them through my network." That network, in effect, was Monk Geonjin. At the time, Unification Church headquarters staff simply believed that Yoon Young-ho had a formidable network in domestic and international politics. Yoon Young-ho himself fueled this sentiment, going around saying things like, "He's close friends with the President of Senegal," or "He's close with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen."

Why didn't anyone raise the issue even as Yoon Young-ho's exaggerations and lies became increasingly apparent? Church staff say it was difficult to distinguish between Chairman Han's thoughts and Yoon Young-ho's. As time passed, he realized that certain words and phrases Yoon Young-ho had said or used never came out of President Han's mouth, and realized, "Ah, that was Yoon Young-ho's idea." Given the close relationship between Yoon Young-ho and President Han, it would have been difficult to suspect.



Kwon Eun-bi performing at the GPD Forum's Art Neuron Musica on January 13th of last year. Photo = GPD Forum website

In May 2023, Yoon Young-ho and his wife were dismissed from the religious order. Afterwards, Yoon Young-ho

In May 2020, Yoon Young-ho and his wife were dismissed from the religious order. Afterwards, Yoon Young-ho independently established the GPD Forum, renting two floors of a building in Gwangjin-gu, Seoul, for 500 million won. He held a concert called "Youth Neuron," inviting celebrities popular with young people, including Poppin' Hyun-joon, Kwon Eun-bi, and Proudman.

Throughout his GPD Forum activities, Yoon Young-ho has avoided revealing his Unification Church affiliation or his real name. In promotional materials, he is simply referred to as Chairman Daniel Yoon or simply "Yoon." The name of the organization, "GPD Forum," is also unusual. It bears a striking resemblance to the GPF, run by Reverend Moon's third son, Chairman Moon Hyun-jin. Those unfamiliar with the details of the Unification Church's history could easily mistake it for the same organization. In February, Yoon Young-ho testified in court that he "acted as if he were Reverend Han's son."

This is a common occurrence in religious groups

Special prosecutors began investigating Yoon Young-ho late last year. Yoon Young-ho reportedly asked the denomination for help. The denomination speculates that he harbored a grudge when things didn't go his way. He then allegedly began testifying that he did it "at President Han's direction." This, of course, is the Unification Church's claim. We contacted Yoon Young-ho to hear his side of the story, but received no response.

In fact, incidents like the current Unification Church scandal are commonplace among religious groups. In the 1990s, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's General Chairman, Robert S. Folkenberg, resigned after being implicated in a large-scale financial scandal. This was due to the revelation of his personal network's monopoly on finances and business. The denomination subsequently overcame the crisis by strengthening regional decentralization, decentralizing financial and personnel authority to regional conferences and divisions. Similarly,

the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) was exposed in 2005 for example, when it was revealed that millions of dollars in donations had been misappropriated for internal personal expenses or operating expenses. Following this, the Unification Church restored trust and overcame the crisis through an investigation by external law and accounting firms, the dismissal of those involved, measures to ensure transparency in its financial system, and transparent announcements.

Founded in 1954 and now over 70 years old, all eyes are on how the Church will resolve this crisis.



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