

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Yamagami Trial Romanticizes Terror By Blaming Family Fed

Knut Holdhus
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Scene of the assassination of Shinzo Abe in front of Yamato-Saidaiji Station in Nara City, Japan



Editorial as Yamagami's trial opens: A fair trial must reveal the full truth without allowing misplaced sympathy for assassin's heinous act of terror.

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Editorial

Face the Reality of a Heinous Act of Terror

First Hearing in Abe Assassination Trial

by the editorial board of [Sekai Nippo](#)

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Tetsuya Yamagami, indicted for the assassination of Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister of Japan

Today [28th October] marks the opening of the first session in the lay judge trial of Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也), who has been indicted for murder and other charges in the July 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三).

A fair trial is essential - one that uncovers the truth while never losing sight of the fact that this was an act of terrorism.

The Sentence Will Be the Main Point of Contention

The defendant attacked Abe during a campaign speech for the House of Councillors election, using a homemade gun. This was an extremely grave act of terrorism that shook the very foundations of democracy.

However, after the Nara Prefectural Police leaked that Yamagami's motive stemmed from resentment toward the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), to

which his mother was a member, a wave of sympathy for the defendant began to spread.

According to reports, Yamagami intends to admit to the murder charge, with the trial focusing on his sentencing. His defense team is expected to argue for leniency, claiming that his mother's large donations

to the former [Unification Church](#) constituted "religious abuse" of her child. Yet invoking such a notion - far removed from international norms - risks clouding the lay judges' judgment.

On the other hand, prosecutors are expected to emphasize the malice and premeditation of the crime. The evidence is clear: Yamagami built the homemade firearm himself and researched Abe's schedule in advance.



A floral tribute stand set up at Osaka Gokoku Shrine on 6th July 2024, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the death of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Organized by the Itagaki Taisuke Memorial Association

Still, the essence of the case lies not only in these details but in the fact that it was a terrorist attack carried out during an election speech, striking at the heart of democracy. Moreover, Yamagami attacked and killed Abe - who was not even his direct target of resentment - in order to stir public criticism of the former [Unification Church](#) and to avenge his grudge against the [religious organization](#).



Prime Minister Tsuyoshi Inukai

Yamagami has reportedly said that Abe "was not his true enemy." Yet he allegedly calculated that if he killed the former prime minister - Japan's longest-serving leader - based on the vague perception that Abe was "close to" the former [Unification Church](#), the media would turn on the [religious organization](#).

Echoes of the 15th May 1932 Incident

The aftermath of this event recalls the 15th May Incident of 1932, in which Prime Minister Tsuyoshi Inukai (犬養毅) was assassinated. The naval officers responsible received light sentences after public and press sympathy swelled in their favor, fueling an atmosphere that tolerated political violence.

A similar pattern emerged when Mainichi Shimbun faced public backlash for describing an upcoming feature on the Abe assassination as exploring the "[social justification of the incident](#)".

The social consequences have already been severe: in April 2023, a copycat attack occurred, when then-Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (岸田文雄) was targeted with a homemade explosive device.

The trial over Abe's assassination should focus squarely on the essence of Yamagami's actions and bring to light the background behind them.

Lingering Doubts About the 'Lone Wolf' Theory

Nara Prefectural Police investigated and the prosecution indicted Yamagami as a lone perpetrator. Yet questions remain.

For example, the findings of Dr. Hidetada Fukushima (福島英賢) of Nara Medical University Hospital - who treated Abe - stated that Abe's heart had suffered major damage, while the police autopsy results reportedly differed sharply. There are also reports that the fatal bullet has not been located.

These are not mere "conspiracy theories", but reasonable questions that must be addressed. The court is expected to hear testimony from the medical examiners involved, and satisfactory explanations are essential. Only through that process can the full truth of the incident be brought to light.

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Mother Han, indicted earlier this month by a special counsel team, faces charges that include violations of the *Political Funds Act* and the anti-graft law, among several other alleged offenses.



Artistic impression of Mother Han in wheelchair at preparatory hearing. Illustration: Grok xAI, Oct. 2025

Preparatory hearings are designed to allow the prosecution and defense to present their views, address procedural matters, and organize the timetable for the upcoming trial. Attendance by the defendant is typically not mandatory, but **Mother Han** – who remains in detention pending trial – personally appeared for the session 27th October despite her ongoing custody.

The case marks one of the most **high-profile legal proceedings** in recent months, drawing public attention for its potential implications in the broader investigation into political and financial misconduct.

The Korean headquarters of the **Family Federation** issued a **statement** soon after the session.

One thing seems certain: She is likely to be detained for a long time. No one knows exactly for how long, but a reasonable estimate appears to be that **she remains in detention at least until mid-2026**, unless extraordinary relief is granted. The duration of detention pending trial depends on how quickly its phases proceed – e.g., indictment, preparatory hearings, trial, possible appeals, etc.

Once the trial begins, if hearings are held “one to two times a week” – as the **Yonhap News Agency** writes – the **process may take many months** depending on complexity (number of witnesses, documents, defence motions, appeals etc.). And after the district court’s decision, potential appeals to higher courts will extend the timeline further.

Can **Mother Han** then be **released before the verdict**?

Certain possibilities exist. The release may come early if a court finds the detention no longer necessary (e.g., risk of flight/evidence destruction gone, or health deterioration critical), the defense may apply for release (on bail or conditional release).

Given her advanced age (82) and reported health issues – her legal team has raised them – there may be arguments for humanitarian release or special decision, but such release is not guaranteed, especially when the court has cited strong risk factors (as here).

But given the alleged ambitious nature of the large team of special prosecutors behind the case, it won’t be easy to obtain an early release.

The **Segye Ilbo** wrote in an editorial on 22nd October that the practice of coercive, separate, and highly publicized investigations has long served as a proving ground for ambitious prosecutors, who seek to demonstrate effectiveness through arrests and indictments rather than fair process or evidentiary soundness.



Korea JoongAng Daily The **Korea JoongAng Daily** wrote on 23rd September that **Mother Han**’s advanced age (82) and reportedly poor health have been raised by her defence team.

According to the **Chosun Ilbo** on 2nd October, in South Korean courts, age/health can be grounds for detention reconsideration (for example human rights/humanitarian relief), but they are **not** automatic guarantees of release.



If her health deteriorates significantly, her legal team may press for release on medical grounds; the court may consider a “hospital remand” or conditional release. But until such relief is granted, detention continues.

And there are also **factors that may lengthen the detention**. One

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And there are also factors that may strengthen the assessment. One such factor is the complexity of the case: large number of documents, witnesses, involvement of international aspects (e.g., overseas funds) could slow things.

Possible appeals are of course another factor, and yet another one would be if new charges are added, or if separate investigations linked to this case cause delay.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Artistic impression of Mother Han in detention cell. Illustration: Grok xAI.

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