

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Holy Mother Han's Bail Request Spotlights Injurious Detention

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November 16, 2025



From a demonstration in downtown Seoul in October 2025 protesting the prolonged detention of [Mother Han](#)



Bail bid of Mother Han (82) raises questions about pre-trial detention for ailing religious leader in poor health after operations

According to reporting 14th November from both the [Korea JoongAng Daily](#) and [Yonhap News](#), [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) - also known as [Mother Han](#) - submitted a bail application to the Seoul Central District Court on 13th Nov. 2025. Judicial officials noted that a specific date for the bail hearing had not yet been scheduled.

The timing of the request follows closely on the heels of her [short-lived medical furlough](#): on 4th November, the court authorized her [temporary release](#) for health reasons, allowing her to undergo eye surgery. [Mother Han](#) then sought an extension of this medical leave, claiming additional care was necessary, but the court [denied the request](#) on 7th November, ordering her return to detention after medical treatment outside the facility.



Pastor Son Hyun-bo, here August 2025

The close proximity between [Mother Han's medical furlough](#) and her bail application has led judicial observers to suggest that her health condition - particularly her recent eye surgery - may be a key motivating factor behind the request.

The ongoing detention of [Family Federation](#) leader [Hak Ja Han](#) - alongside the continued imprisonment of Pastor Son Hyun-bo (손현보) of the large Segyero Church (세계로교회) in the port city of Busan - has become a focal point of concern about the future of religious liberty in the country.

Both leaders represent religious communities that lean conservative and maintain independence from mainstream political blocs. Their supporters and religious-freedom monitors argue that the simultaneous, long-term detentions of two high-profile faith leaders may signal an emerging pattern of state overreach into religious life.

[Mother Han](#), who has been held since 22nd September on charges including bribery, illegal political donations, and destruction of evidence, recently requested bail after the above-mentioned short [medical furlough](#) granted for eye surgery.

Although the [Korea JoongAng Daily](#) and [Yonhap News](#) accurately report that her request is still pending, advocacy groups emphasize the broader implications: that extended pre-trial detention of a religious figure, especially amid politically sensitive allegations, risks blurring the distinction between legal accountability and the suppression of religious actors deemed politically inconvenient.

A similar narrative has developed around Pastor Son, whose prolonged detention has alarmed many religious organizations. For them, the issue is not merely the legal particulars of two unrelated cases, but the cumulative effect these high-profile incarcerations have on the wider religious landscape. Groups that monitor religious liberty argue that, intentionally or not, state action is having a chilling effect on the activities of faith communities - particularly those that are seen to hold traditionalist views or have been critical of certain political developments.



A typical cell at Seoul Detention Center where [Mother Han](#) is being held, possibly for many months.
Image: Chat GPT

The back-to-back confinement of [Mother Han](#) and Pastor Son - leaders of large, widely recognized religious communities - has been interpreted as an indicator that the current left-leaning Lee administration is increasingly willing to use prosecutorial power in ways that disproportionately affect conservative religious institutions. Advocacy groups stress that the issue is not whether charges should be investigated, but whether extended pre-trial detention is being used in circumstances where less restrictive measures could suffice.

Advocacy groups warn that when the state criminally investigates religious leaders whose theological or political orientations diverge from the mainstream, investigations risk being viewed as politically motivated - even if procedurally proper. Such perceptions, they argue, weaken public trust in democratic neutrality and may influence how minority or nontraditional religious communities behave.

In the South Korean legal system, pre-trial detention can be lengthy, particularly in cases involving corruption. Religious-freedom monitors argue that when such detention is applied to prominent religious leaders, it sends a message - whether intended or not - that the state is willing to exert extraordinary pressure on religious actors. This, they claim, may discourage religious communities from civic engagement, charitable outreach, or vocal participation in public debates.

Bail as a Test Case



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

[Mother Han](#)'s bail request is therefore interpreted by advocacy groups as more than a procedural step - it is a symbolic test of whether the judiciary can provide a corrective balance when executive and prosecutorial actions are perceived as overbroad. They argue that granting bail, particularly on health grounds, would demonstrate that the state recognizes the need to protect both the dignity of the accused and the autonomy of religious institutions.

Religious-freedom organizations insist that the issue is not immunity for religious leaders but proportionality. They warn that if South Korea is seen as pursuing aggressive legal action

against politically conservative faith leaders while failing to apply comparable scrutiny to other sectors, this may create the appearance of selective enforcement - damaging the country's reputation as a defender of pluralism.

From their perspective, the cases of [Mother Han](#) and Pastor Son represent a critical juncture. South Korea

must ensure that legal mechanisms for accountability do not inadvertently cross into the realm of coercion, and that the line between legitimate investigation and perceived intimidation remains clear, transparent, and vigorously defended.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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A message by Song Hee-cheol (송희철), Director of the World Peace Martial Arts Federation, delivered as part of an interview by Cheonshim Weekly, a [Family Federation](#) video news program in Korean shown on 14th November 2025 at a prayer vigil in Gapyeong, South Korea. Slightly edited.

Introducing Song, Chan Soo-byeon representing Cheonshim Weekly said,

“Ever since [True Mother](#) was taken into the detention center, there has been someone who has not missed a single day – staying there day and night, living and sleeping in front of that place, offering devotion.

That person is Song Hee-cheol (송희철), Director of the [World Peace Martial Arts Federation](#).

He was moved after hearing a lecture on Unification Martial Arts in 2006 and joined the [Family Federation](#). Even though his wife is Catholic, he has never wavered in his firm conviction toward our [Federation](#).”

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[True Mother](#) is the [Only Begotten Daughter](#). Because of that she is now in a place she should never have had to enter.



TV coverage of [Mother Han](#)’s case on a large screen in Seoul’s Yongsan Station September 2025. Photo: Massimo Introvigne / [Bitter Winter](#)

On 23rd September, when I saw the first Korean TV report, I was deeply shocked.

Not only I, but I believe all members of the Korean Unification family (통일가의 식구들) – and indeed members of the worldwide Unification family – must have felt devastated when they saw that news report.

When I opened the door to the prayer hall (도장) and turned on the lights, thinking that I should offer a prayer to Heavenly Parent before the [True Parents](#) again, at the very moment I switched on the lights in the prayer hall, I felt a strong light coming toward me from the [True Parents](#)’ portrait. At that moment I clearly heard [True Father](#)’s powerful voice saying to me,

“Go quickly! Go quickly! Go quickly!”

Even now the memory gives me chills. I was shocked – *Where am I supposed to go so quickly? Where should I go?*



Song Hee-cheol campaigning in front of Seoul Detention Center 28th September 2025. Photo: Masataka Asaoka

Then it came to me: because I had seen the news about [Mother](#), [Father](#) must be telling me to go to [Mother](#) quickly. So I thought,

“I must go right away!”

Send us a message

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I packed the mat I used, the portrait of **True Parents**, and my blankets, and the next day I arrived at 8:20 a.m. That place is exactly where I am standing today.

The reason I have been able to light incense every day until now, attending **Father** and **Mother** and offering devotion in front of the detention center, is because Heaven has been working. And because **Father** gave me that urgent command from the spirit world, I was able to endure well until today by that power.

Suddenly one day one employee started running across the courtyard, moving hurriedly.

"Huh? Why is he moving so fast?"

Then someone said, "**True Mother** is coming out."

So I waited at the closest spot, and soon **Mother** appeared – being guided out by the prison officers. As she came out, she gently waved her right hand.

As she lowered her hand, I said,

"**Mother**, you have gained the victory!"

And
when I
took her
hand,
Mother
firmly
held my
hand in



***Mother Han** being wheeled out of Seoul Detention Center 4th November 2025, while Song Hee-cheol is walking by her side, holding her hand. Screenshot from video by Masataka Asaoka.*

return. For about two or three minutes – around 20 meters – I had the honor of accompanying **Mother** all the way to the car, saying,

"**Mother**, I love you. **Mother**, you have gained the victory!"

I assisted her until she entered the car. Experiencing this, I felt, *Heaven is truly working.*

I had prayed at this place for 43 days, sincerely offering devotion for **Mother's** release, praying only that she would be found innocent and set free. And Heaven allowed me to take **Mother's** hand. I felt that our ancestors, Heavenly Parent, and **True Father** were working – **Father**, through me, allowed **Mother** to take my hand.

Why? Because **Mother** took my hand so naturally, so warmly. It was such an honor. I could attend her with the heart that **Father** was holding **Mother's** hand as she came out.

If any wrong has been done, it was we "sons and daughters" who may have done wrong – not the **Only Begotten Daughter**. She is the one who wishes only for fairness, prosperity, and blessing for every nation, for all people of Korea – offering help spiritually and materially. She is **Holy Mother Han**, the **Only Begotten Daughter**. How can such a person be confined in a detention center in Korea – how can an 82-year-old person be placed there and interrogated? I simply cannot understand or accept it.

I believe firmly that this will be the year when our Unification faith of the **Kingdom of Heaven (Cheonil-guk)** is recognized in the nation of Korea. It is a new religion of the East that can unite the whole world through love, peace, and **true love**. With this conviction, I declare that **Mother** will gain the victory.

Why? Because she is the **Only Begotten Daughter** – she will prevail. Because she is **Holy Mother Han** – she will prevail.

[True Father](#) has gained the victory, and only if [True Mother](#) also gains the victory will the [Unification Principles](#) be fulfilled (fully realized), and the whole world be unified.

A world of glory, unity, and happiness will surely unfold after [Mother's](#) release – I am certain of it.

And now, in front of the detention center, not only Korean members but members from all around the world gather.

Translated to English from the transcription of the original Korean. Slightly edited. The viewpoints expressed are those of the speaker.

Featured image above: Song Hee-cheol in front of his altar in his tent outside Seoul Detention Center November 2025. Screenshot from video by PeaceTV.

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