

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Christian's Groups S Korea's Faith Control Laws

Knut Holdhus
December 16, 2025



South Korean Christian leaders protesting President Lee Jae-myung's initiative to dissolve religious organizations. Illustration: Grok xAI



South Korean Christian leaders warn on attack on religious freedom, rejecting President Lee Jae-myung's recent remarks on finding ways to dissolve unwanted religious bodies

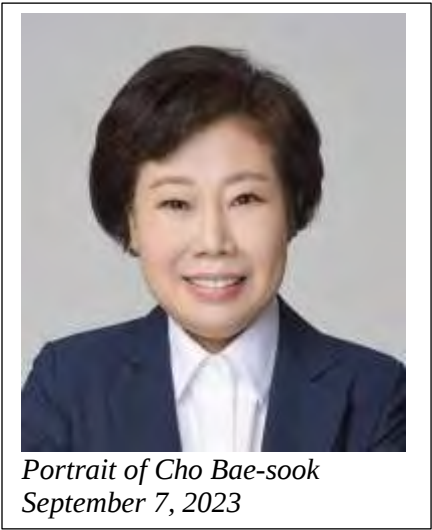
Tokyo, 12th December 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

"Withdraw the Remarks on Establishing a Legal Framework for Dissolving Religious Organizations"

South Korean Christian Groups Appeal

by the foreign news desk / editorial staff of [Sekai Nippo](#)

Criticism has arisen from religious circles over instructions by South Korean President Lee Jae-myung (이재명) to consider establishing a legal framework that would include the dissolution of religious organizations.



Portrait of Cho Bae-sook
September 7, 2023

On 10th December, South Korean Christian groups and Cho Bae-sook (조배숙), a lawmaker from the conservative main opposition party People Power Party, held a press conference in Seoul, calling for the withdrawal of the remarks and for the protection of freedom of religion.

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Participants in the press conference included the General Korean Christian Federation [한국기독교총연합회 – a known major Protestant umbrella group in South Korea] and other Christian groups from around the country. They issued a statement asserting that "the president's remarks on dissolving religious organizations constitute a serious challenge to the Constitution and to freedom of religion," and demanded an official declaration that there would be no future attempts to legislate "the dissolution of religious organizations" or "religious control".

The statement noted that countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France do not have systems for dissolving religious organizations at all and emphasized that "the Japanese model for dissolving religious corporations referenced by the president has raised concerns at the United Nations Human Rights Council and elsewhere." It criticized that introducing the Japanese approach into South Korea would cause the country to "degenerate into the most powerful state of religious control among OECD members."

Regarding President Lee's call for legal measures to enable dissolution under the banner of the "principle of separation of religion and state", the groups countered that "the separation of religion and state exists to prevent state power from interfering in religion". They expressed alarm, warning,

"Even if intervention begins on a small scale, there is a risk that state power will eventually come to occupy the religious sphere."



One of the religious organizations being cracked down on in South Korea: Yoido Full Gospel Church, here Dec. 4, 2016

In South Korea, tensions between the administration and religious circles have continued, including raids by a special prosecutor on facilities belonging to Yoido Full Gospel Church, the Protestant broadcaster Far East Broadcasting Company, and the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)).

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Investigators Investigated: South Korean Crisis

- December 15, 2025
- Knut Holdhus



Raids on prosecutors and detention center mark unprecedented escalation in bribery probe as investigators come under investigation

A Yonhap News Agency report of 15th December 2025 documents a corruption investigation of exceptional breadth and institutional sensitivity in contemporary South Korean politics. The article written by Chae Yun-hwan carried the headline "Unification Church leader named suspect in bribery case involving politicians".

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Now also being raided by police: The Seoul Detention Center. Here, its gate in

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While allegations of bribery involving religious organizations and politicians are not unprecedented, the present case stands apart because of the unprecedented decision by police to conduct coordinated raids today, 15th December, not only on [Family Federation](#) facilities and politicians' residences, but also on the *Special Prosecutor's Office* and the *Seoul Detention Center*. These actions signal a level of institutional distrust and procedural escalation that elevates the affair beyond a conventional bribery probe and into a crisis implicating the integrity of the justice system itself.

According to the [report](#), the leader and co-founder of the [Family Federation](#), [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자), also called [Mother Han](#), is at the center of the current investigation. She has been named a suspect for allegedly providing unlawful funds and luxury items to politicians across party lines, in violation of the *Political Funds Act*.

The breadth of alleged recipients – spanning former cabinet ministers and lawmakers from both conservative and progressive camps – supports the prosecution's emerging narrative that there has been a systematic, non-partisan strategy of political influence rather than isolated acts of favoritism. This interpretation is reinforced by courtroom testimony from former [Federation](#) official [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호) asserting that support was deliberately extended to both ruling and opposition figures.

What renders this case extraordinary, however, is not merely the alleged conduct of a powerful religious organization, but the investigators' implicit challenge to other state institutions. The raid on the *Seoul Detention Center*, where [Mother Han](#) is currently held, underscores the determination of police to secure primary evidence without reliance on custodial intermediaries. Such an action suggests concern over potential evidence suppression or incomplete cooperation, an unusual implication when directed at a correctional facility operating under strict procedural norms.

Even more striking is the search of the *Special Prosecutor's Office* itself. The police justification – that records may not have been fully transferred when the case changed hands – goes beyond administrative oversight and enters the realm of alleged investigative bias.



Under investigation: [Yoon Yeong-ho](#), here 22nd April 2023. Screenshot from [FFWPU](#) video



Chief Special Prosecutor Min Jung-ki (민중기), who is now himself being investigated. He summoned [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#) and Pastor Son Hyun-bo for questioning and asked for their long-term detention. Min is the head of a huge team of special prosecutors with extensive investigative powers. Image generated by Chat GPT September 2025.

By targeting the office of Special Counsel Min Jung-gi (민중기), police are effectively asserting that an institution specifically created to ensure independence and impartiality in high-level corruption cases may itself have failed to meet those standards. This development reframes the investigation as not only a matter of bribery, but also of institutional accountability and jurisdictional conflict within the prosecutorial apparatus.

Politically, the implications are severe. The involvement of figures linked to both major parties undermines attempts to frame the investigation as partisan retaliation, while the reference to alleged preferential treatment toward politicians affiliated with the former president's party raises questions about selective enforcement and politicized justice. The resignations, denials, and counter-accusations that follow are likely to deepen public cynicism not only toward alleged religious power brokers but toward state institutions as well.

The [Yonhap](#) [report](#) depicts a moment in which the investigation itself becomes a subject of scrutiny. The raids on the *Special Prosecutor's Office* and the *Seoul Detention Center* symbolize a breakdown of presumed institutional trust, marking this case as a rare instance

where the boundaries between suspect, investigator, and overseer are simultaneously contested.

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: *Special Prosecutor's Office being raided by police.* Illustration: Grok xAI, 15th December 2025

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