

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: S. Korean Media Distortions Refuted

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



Korean Family Federation publishes rebuttal of distortions in Hankyoreh report portraying personal opinions in unofficial meeting as part of official "leaders' meeting"

A statement issued by the [Family Federation](#) in South Korea to the media on 22nd January 2026. Translated from the [text on the Korean language website](#) of the [Family Federation](#).



Rebuttal to the 22nd January 2026 Hankyoreh report, "'120 Days in Detention': Unification Church's Hak Ja Han: 'The Truth Will Surely Be Revealed'"

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The Korean branch of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (hereinafter, the "Korean [Family Federation](#)") hereby states that the Hankyoreh report dated 22nd January 2026, titled ["'120 Days in Detention': Unification Church's Hak Ja Han \(한학자\): 'The Truth Will Surely Be Revealed.'"](#) [See editor's note below] contains information that differs from the facts. We

therefore ask that this clarification be taken into consideration.

The [report](#)'s reference to a "[Unification Church](#) leadership meeting" related to the Korean [Family Federation](#) is not factual. No such leadership meeting took place. What Hankyoreh described as a

"leadership meeting" was in fact a "Blessed Family Leaders Consultative Meeting", which is not an official body of the Korean [Family Federation](#). This gathering was an informal meeting in which believers, concerned about the recent situation of the [Family Federation](#), shared their faith-based views.



This informal meeting was not intended to convey the official position of the [religious organization](#), but rather served as a forum for believers to share their personal thoughts from a faith-based perspective regarding the regrettable circumstances currently facing the [organization](#).

On that occasion, Korean [Family Federation](#) President Song Yong-cheon (송용천) and Vice President Kim Dong-yeon (김동연) attended only upon invitation from the organizers of the meeting and merely shared updates on the recent situation of President [Hak Ja Han](#)

(한학자), as well as information regarding transparent governance and directions for improvement. Characterizing the gathering as a "leadership meeting" solely because the president and vice president were present is therefore inconsistent with the facts.

Reporting inaccurate information in a definitive manner is a serious matter that may cause significant harm to our [Federation](#). We earnestly request that reporting be conducted in a fair and objective manner, based on thorough factchecking. Thank you.

[Reference Material]

Statement of the Korean [Family Federation](#) dated 10th October 2025: "[The 'Emergency Countermeasures Committee meeting' reported by some media outlets is not an official body of the Korean Family Federation.](#)" (only in Korean)

22nd January 2026

Korean branch of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification

[Editor's note: The large South Korean daily Hankyoreh reported on 22nd January about a meeting on 19th January at the [Family Federation](#)'s Korean HQ in Yongsan-gu in Seoul where "around ten members of the leadership" gathered. According to Hankyoreh, the meeting was "to discuss future countermeasures" to the long-term detention of Co-Founder [Hak Ja Han](#), also called [Mother Han](#). The paper writes,

"One senior official was quoted as saying, 'People in society thought [Unification Church](#) members would rise up when [President Han](#) was detained, but we have maintained silence,' adding, 'Extraordinary measures are needed. We must hold large-scale protest demonstrations in front of the presidential office and the National Assembly.'"

The Hankyoreh claims that the participants at the meeting agreed that it is critical to solve the legal issues of [Mother Han](#).

In the [article](#), reporter Kim Ga-yoon ([김가윤](#)) also comments on the fact that a Mr. Park, a former district head of the [religious organization](#), at a [hearing on 13th January](#) at Seoul Central District Court confirmed that he had obeyed instructions from [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) ([윤영호](#)) "even though they ran counter to [President Han](#)'s intentions".

The large daily then goes on to write,

"The leadership appears to have judged that testimony given in this context was unfavorable to [President Han](#). As a result, it is reported that the participants reached a consensus that 'the main culprit is Jeong Won-joo ([정원주](#)),' asserting that the former chief of staff – who had supported [President Han](#) for decades and wielded substantial influence – should come forward and confess."

The Hankyoreh adds at the end that the gathering on 19th January was an informal meeting where concerned members shared their "faith-based opinions".]

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The controversy began when lawmakers introduced a bill informally labeled the “Religious Dissolution Act” (종교해산법), following allegations that members of a particular religious group had funneled money into politics unlawfully.



Pushing for new anti-religious legislation: President Lee Jae Myung of the Republic of Korea, here on 29th October 2025, at the Hilton Hotel in Gyeongju, South Korea. Official White House Photo by Molly Riley. Public domain image. Cropped

Matters escalated when reports suggested that the president had asked officials to examine whether religious foundations themselves could be dissolved. This immediately raised alarms about the separation of church and state and the protection of religious freedom – core constitutional principles in South Korea, as they are in many Western democracies.

The author’s central argument is that while individual wrongdoing must be addressed, it is a serious constitutional mistake to leap from allegations against individuals to questioning the legal existence of an entire religious organization. In a state governed by the rule of law, punishment is meant to be precise and proportional. Law exists to identify individual responsibility, not to express collective outrage or to dismantle institutions because of the actions of some of their members.

South Korea’s Constitution, much like the U.S. Constitution or the constitutions of many European states, explicitly guarantees freedom of religion and affirms the separation of church and state. Importantly, the article clarifies that this separation does not mean religion must remain silent on social or moral issues. In Western political thought, as in South Korea, separation of church and state traditionally means that government power should not interfere in religious belief, organization, or internal affairs. It is meant to restrain the state, not to muzzle religious voices.

What troubles the author is that recent discussions appear to reverse this logic. Under the proposed approach, the state would evaluate religious speech and activity, label certain actions as “political” or “harmful to the public interest”, and then use that judgment as grounds for dissolving a religious organization. From a constitutional perspective, this is a dangerous shift. Rather than keeping government out of religion, it places religion under government supervision.

Legal experts in South Korea have echoed these concerns. Unlike countries such as the United States or Japan, South Korea does not have a comprehensive legal framework governing religious organizations. Dissolving a legal entity under existing civil law requires extremely strict conditions, and actual cases are exceedingly rare. Introducing a new legal mechanism specifically aimed at dissolving religious bodies would therefore mark a significant expansion of state power into an area traditionally protected from such intrusion.

One of the most serious constitutional problems identified in the article is the violation of the principle of proportionality – a concept familiar to constitutional courts across Europe and increasingly influential in U.S. jurisprudence as well. Proportionality requires that government action be suitable, necessary, and the least restrictive means available. In this case, South Korea already has well-developed laws governing political finance, elections, and criminal conduct. These laws allow for investigations, prosecutions, fines, imprisonment, and restrictions on political activity, all targeted at specific individuals.

Given this existing legal toolkit, enabling the dissolution of an entire religious organization represents the most extreme possible sanction. The author argues that this clearly violates the principle of minimal intrusion. Punishing an entire faith community for the alleged crimes of individuals also undermines a foundational legal norm: that responsibility is personal, not collective.

The potential consequences of such a law extend beyond legal theory. The article warns of a chilling effect on religious life more broadly. Religious organizations may begin to self-censor, avoiding public discussion of morally sensitive issues – such as family policy, bioethics, or anti-discrimination laws – out of fear that their statements could be interpreted as improper political intervention. This concern will resonate with Western readers familiar with debates over whether religious institutions should be allowed to speak openly on contentious public issues.

There is also the risk of selective enforcement. If the power to dissolve religious organizations exists, its application may vary depending on the political orientation of the government in power. This is not merely a religious freedom issue; it could easily spill over into the broader nonprofit and civil society sector, weakening the independence of organizations meant to serve as a check on state authority.

Notably, the article highlights reactions within South Korea’s Christian community. While public responses have been restrained, there is significant private concern. This concern is not rooted in sympathy for the Family Federation itself. Rather, it reflects an understanding that once the state claims the authority to dissolve religious organizations, that power is unlikely to remain confined to one unpopular or controversial group. Today it may be one religion; tomorrow it could be another faith, or even a secular civic organization.

The author concludes by reframing the issue in stark terms. This is not about defending a particular religion. It is about defending constitutional boundaries.

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A constitution that guarantees freedom of religion: The Constitution of the Republic of Korea. Here, the first version enacted in 1948. Photo: NZ 토끼들 / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int



The dissolution of an entire religious organization because of unlawful acts of some of its members is an extreme measure. Here, the logo of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification.

Unlawful acts should be punished through existing laws, and religious institutions should remain under the protection of constitutional guarantees. In a democratic republic, the temptation to sacrifice foundational principles for short-term political satisfaction must be resisted. What is truly at risk, the author argues, is not the fate of one religious organization, but the integrity of the constitutional order itself.

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: New South Korean legislation giving the state the right to police and dissolve religions. Illustration: Chat GPT, 22nd January 2026.

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