

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Emotional Scenes as Mother Han Freed Briefly

Knut Holdhus
February 12, 2026



Image reflected in car door of [Mother Han](#) being taken in wheelchair to waiting car outside Seoul Detention Center February 12, 2026



Scenes of joy, tears, and prayer outside Seoul Detention Center as Mother Han is released temporarily for medical treatment

On 12th February, Hankyoreh, a liberal South Korean daily considered the leading voice in independent journalism, ran a

news item headlined "[Released for 9 Days](#)" - [Members of Unificationism in Tears Tell Hak Ja Han, "Thank You, Mother"](#)



[Mother Han](#) coming out from Seoul Detention Center in a wheelchair February 12, 2026

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[Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) - also called [Mother Han](#) - the leader of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) - an international religious movement founded in South Korea, also referred to as [Unificationism](#) (통일교) - was temporarily released from detention for ten days to receive medical treatment, prompting an emotional gathering of her followers outside a Seoul-area detention center.

[Mother Han](#), who is well into her 80s, has been on trial while in custody since last September. She faces charges that include allegedly providing money and valuables to prominent political figures, among them South Korea's former First Lady, Kim Keon-hee (김건희), and then ruling party lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동). Prosecutors also accuse her of making improper political solicitations connected to matters affecting the [Family Federation](#). [Mother Han](#) denies wrongdoing, and her trial is ongoing.



[Mother Han](#) being assisted into waiting car outside Seoul Detention Center February 12, 2026

On 11th February, a Seoul court [approved her request](#) for a temporary [suspension of detention](#) on medical grounds. The court allowed her to leave the Seoul Detention Center in Uiwang, just south of the capital, at 10:00 a.m. on 12th February. She is scheduled to receive hospital treatment until 2:00 p.m. on 21st February, after which she must return to custody. The court reportedly imposed conditions restricting her to hospital residence and limiting contact to medical staff and her legal team.

According to [Hankyoreh](#) reporter Shim Woo-sam (심우삼), the decision triggered a strong reaction among members of [Unificationism](#), many of whom gathered outside the detention center early that morning. For supporters, the moment was highly symbolic: [Mother Han](#) had been detained for roughly 140 days and had not been outside during that time. As they waited for her to emerge, followers repeatedly called out "Mother!", the title they use to address her.



The [Hankyoreh](#) writes that within [Unificationism](#) - officially known as the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) - [Hak Ja Han](#) is revered as "[True Mother](#)" or "[Holy Mother Han](#)".

Alongside her late husband, [Sun Myung Moon](#) (문선명), who founded what for decades was called the [Unification Church](#) in 1954, she is regarded by believers as a central spiritual figure and, theologically, as a co-Messiah. This religious status helps explain the intensity of emotion displayed at the scene.

When [Mother Han](#) finally exited the detention center, she was wearing a padded winter jacket and seated in a wheelchair. She did not make any public statement. A [Family Federation](#) official who came to receive her told her, "Mother, you've endured a lot!" Supporters shouted phrases such as "Thank you, Mother!", "We love you, Mother!", and "Stay strong, Mother!" Some were visibly in tears.

The [Hankyoreh](#) points out that the [Federation](#) itself issued a statement on its website welcoming the court's decision. It said that many members - whom the [religious organization](#) refers to as "family

members" (식구) [See editor's note below] - wept upon hearing the news and expressed gratitude that she would be able to receive medical treatment.

"Several related questions were asked, but [President Han](#) gave no response and remained silent as she boarded a vehicle. [...] If there are updates regarding [President Han](#)'s hospital treatment or other developments from the scene, we will bring them to you in our continuing news coverage."



[Mother Han](#) being assisted into waiting car outside Seoul Detention Center February 12, 2026

The episode underscores both [Mother Han](#)'s contested legal situation and her enduring authority within the [religious movement](#) she leads. While prosecutors pursue allegations of political influence and financial misconduct, her followers continue to frame events in spiritual and devotional terms, interpreting her temporary release not simply as a procedural legal matter but as a moment of relief and affirmation for their [faith community](#).

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

[Editor's note: The Korean expression 식구님 (shikku-nim) is an internal, honorific term used by the [Family Federation](#) to refer to its members. 식구 (食口) literally means "people who share meals", and by extension, "family members" or "household members". It carries a strong connotation of intimate, familial belonging, not just organizational membership.

In the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), members commonly refer to one another as 식구 ("family") rather than "members" (신도) or "followers".

Adding - 님 creates 식구님, which adds respect and warmth, elevates the term in formal or public communication, signals internal solidarity and spiritual kinship.

So the term 식구님들 used in the [Hankyoreh article](#) means something closer to "our respected family members" rather than simply "[Federation](#) members". [Hankyoreh](#) places the word inside quotation marks because it is citing the [religious organization](#)'s own statement. The [newspaper](#) does not adopt the term itself but preserves the [Family Federation](#)'s internal language to accurately reflect how the [organization](#) framed the situation.

The [Federation](#) statement reads: "As news of [True Mother](#)'s [suspension of detention](#) was reported, many 식구님들 shed tears, welcomed the court's decision, and expressed gratitude for the opportunity for treatment." Here, 식구님들 reinforces the idea of the [Family Federation](#) as a spiritual family and strengthens at the same time the maternal framing of [Hak Ja Han](#) as "[True Mother](#)". It is rhetorically significant. Referring to followers as "family members" reinforces hierarchical and affective bonds: [Hak Ja Han](#) is "Mother", and believers are her "family".

In short, 식구님들 is an honorific internal term meaning "respected members of our (spiritual) family", reflecting the [Family Federation](#)'s self-understanding as a spiritual family under "[True Parents](#)".]

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The South Korean news agency News1 reported 11th February 2026 that a court in Seoul has temporarily released **Hak Ja Han** (한학자), the leader of the **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** – also known under its former name the **Unification Church** – so that she can receive medical treatment. This decision marks the second time in recent months that the court has suspended her detention due to health concerns.



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...suspected collusion between politics and religion, an issue that has drawn significant public attention in South Korea. While her trial is still ongoing, she has been held in *Seoul Detention Center*.

Artistic impression of *Mother Han* in detention cell. Illustration: Image from "Video tribute to Dr. Hak Ja Han created by Unconditional Productions".

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On 11th February, the 27th Criminal Division of the *Seoul Central District Court* approved *Mother Han*'s request for what is known in Korea as a "suspension of detention" (구속집행정지). Under South Korean law, this legal measure allows a defendant to be released temporarily from custody when there are urgent or humanitarian reasons to do so. Common grounds include serious illness, childbirth, or the need to attend a close family member's funeral. Once granted, the suspension takes effect immediately.

News 1 writes that the court ruled that *Hak Ja Han*'s detention will be suspended from 10:00 a.m. on 12th February until 2:00 p.m. on 21st February. During this period, she will be released from the detention center and transferred to a hospital for treatment.

According to reports, *Mother Han* recently suffered three separate falls while in custody. As a result, she is said to be unable to move independently. In addition to injuries related to the falls, she is reportedly dealing with existing health conditions, including high blood pressure and glaucoma, a serious eye disorder that can lead to vision loss if not properly treated. These combined health issues formed the basis of her request for temporary release.



The building housing Seoul Central District Court. Image: Grok xAI, Nov. 2025.

According to *News1*, *Mother Han*'s legal team emphasized that the application for suspension was not intended to delay or obstruct the judicial process. In a public statement, her lawyers said the purpose of the request was to ensure that she could receive the minimum necessary medical care to prevent her condition from worsening. They framed the move as a medical necessity rather than a legal strategy.

This is not the first time the court has granted *Mother Han* temporary release. After her *initial detention* in September, she filed a similar request, which the court approved on 4th November under certain conditions. At that time, she was hospitalized and underwent surgery for glaucoma. However, when she later asked for the suspension period to be extended, the court *rejected the request*, and she was required to return to the detention center on 7th November.

The latest decision reflects the court's assessment that her current medical condition justifies another short-term suspension. Her trial is expected to continue after the suspension period ends.

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: *Mother Han* being escorted from wheelchair in front of courthouse. Illustration: Chat GPT, 11th February 2026.

Featured image above: Worries about *Hak Ja Han*'s health condition. Illustration: Chat GPT, 5th February 2026.

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