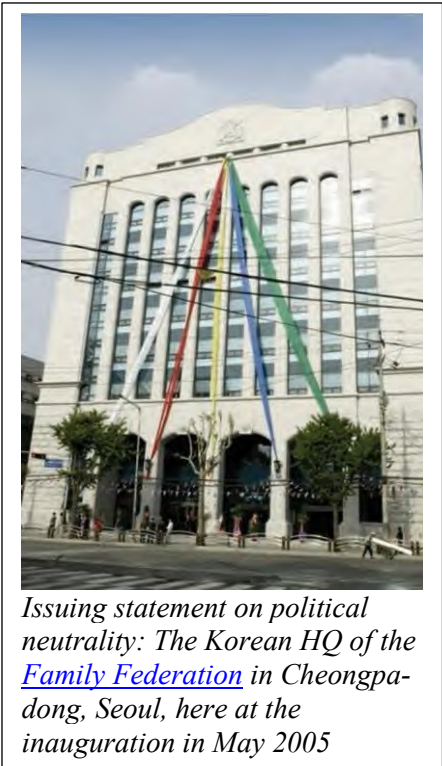


FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Statement of Principles of Political Neutrality

Knut Holdhus
May 13, 2026



Statement by the Korean HQ of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) on political impartiality and compliance with South Korean election laws. Illustration: ChatGPT



Issuing statement on political neutrality: The Korean HQ of the [Family Federation](#) in Cheongpa-dong, Seoul, here at the inauguration in May 2005

Korean Family Federation publishes statement on its principles of political impartiality and strict compliance with election laws

A statement issued by the South Korean headquarters of the [Family Federation](#) to the media on 27th April 2026. Translated from the [text on the Korean language website](#) of the [Family Federation](#).

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Guidelines on Political Neutrality and Election-Related Legal Compliance

The [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) upholds the fundamental mission of religion and maintains a clear distance from all political activities. Accordingly, it hereby declares the following principles of political neutrality.

Principle of Political Neutrality

As a purely religious organization, the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) has no affiliation with any specific political party or candidate and does not express support for or opposition to any election-related matter.

Prohibition of Election Campaigning and Political Activities

All forms of political activity that may violate the Public Official Election Act are prohibited, including encouraging party membership, supporting election campaigns, or inducing votes for specific candidates.

Prohibition of Private Organizations and Politically Linked Activities

The formation and operation of private organizations related to elections or political activities are prohibited.

Prohibition of Election Intervention Through Official Position

Clergy members and public officials must strictly comply with regulations prohibiting election campaigning through the use of one's position within a religious institution or organization. Any concurrent positions that could create political misunderstandings, such as accepting official roles within political parties, are prohibited.

Prohibition of Political Use of Names and Assets



The use of the [religious organization](#)'s name, logo, facilities, or online and offline networks (including social media and communities) as promotional tools for specific political parties or politicians is strictly prohibited.

Prohibition of Defamation

Improper speech, conduct, or individual activities that distort the identity of the [religious organization](#) or damage its reputation during the election process are prohibited.

Scope of Application and Responsibility

These guidelines apply at all times, regardless of whether an election period is underway. Any legal liability arising from violations of these guidelines shall rest solely with the individual

responsible. In the case of clergy members and public officials, disciplinary action will be taken strictly and without exception in accordance with internal regulations.

27th April 27, 2026

Korean Headquarters of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)



Being detained without evidence for more than seven months for allegedly meddling in South Korean politics: [Mother Han](#), here being released on 27th March 2026 for urgent medical treatment after being held long-term in a tiny cell

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South Korean Family Federation trial involving Mother Han raises question: Where does civic education end and politics begin?

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Movement Promoting Family As National

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May 2026 at
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OhmyNews 모든 시민은 기자다
The logo of OhmyNews. In smaller writing, reflecting the citizen journalism policy, it says, “All citizens are reporters”. *Public domain* image

On 8th May 2026, the South Korean online newspaper OhmyNews (오마이뉴스) published a **courtroom report** by journalist Lee Jin-min (이진민) detailing the latest developments in the trial involving **Hak Ja Han** (한학자), the leader of the **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** – in South Korea often called **Unificationism** (통일교).

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The case has drawn significant public attention in the country. The **religious movement** has long claimed that its involvement in public affairs is educational or moral rather than directly political. Yet, the current left-leaning Lee Jae-myung administration has appointed “special prosecutors” in order to investigate allegations that senior figures within the **Family Federation** attempted to influence the country’s 2022 presidential election, potentially violating laws governing political funding and improper lobbying.



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

The issue emerged during the 25th hearing in the trial of **Hak Ja Han** – also called **Mother Han** – and several senior officials from the **religious organization** at the *Seoul Central District Court* on 8th May. The special prosecutors are investigating whether organizations linked to the **Family Federation** improperly supported political actors or sought influence in ways prohibited by law.

At the center of this particular hearing was testimony from a former president of **Sun Moon University** (선문대학교), identified publicly only by his surname, Hwang (황). His testimony was significant because it offered a rare insider’s perspective on how **Federation** leaders viewed political involvement during the election period.

Hwang acknowledged that something unusual was happening inside the **religious organization** in the months before South Korea’s 20th presidential election. He said he sensed “activities that had never happened before,” suggesting that there was a distinct shift in atmosphere compared to previous election cycles. According to him, some within **Federation** circles were uncomfortable with what they were seeing and considered it inconsistent with the **movement’s** traditional posture.

However, Hwang was careful to limit responsibility for those actions. He testified that the unusual political activity was confined to specific branches of the **movement**, particularly the **Family Federation World**

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movement, particularly the [Family Federation](#) World Headquarters and the [Universal Peace Federation](#) (UPF), an affiliated international organization often presented as an independent peace-building body.



Yoon Yeong-ho, 6th Dec. 2020. Screenshot from Peacelink TV

Crucially, Hwang insisted that [Mother Han](#) herself did not issue any orders related to election intervention. He stated that he had never heard any instruction from her to support a candidate or involve the [Federation](#) in electoral politics. Instead, he identified former World Headquarters director [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호) as the person exercising operational control during

that period.

This distinction appears central to the defense strategy: to argue that any politically questionable behavior was carried out by specific individuals rather than by the [Federation](#) leadership as an institution.

One of the most striking moments of the hearing came when Hwang addressed the apparent contradiction between the [Family Federation](#)'s denial of political ambition and its past decision to create a political party.

Hwang referred to the [Unificationism](#)-founded *Family Party for Universal Peace and Unity* (천주평화통일가정당) – formally launched in March 2003 – which fielded candidates in South Korea's 2008 parliamentary election. The party promoted themes such as [family values](#), world peace, and Korean reunification.

To many outside observers, establishing a political party and running candidates would seem to be straightforward political participation. But Hwang argued otherwise. He claimed that the party was never intended to function like a conventional political organization seeking power or office. Instead, he described it as what he called an “educational political party” – an unprecedented effort designed to improve public morality and cultivate principled leaders through civic education.

According to his explanation, when [Mother Han](#) spoke about politics, she was not encouraging direct political participation. Rather, she was advocating the moral education of politicians so that the political system could function more ethically. Supporters will say that's definitely needed in today's South Korean political culture, often described as corrupt right to the top of the system.

For many outside South Korea, this distinction may seem unusual or even difficult to accept. In most democratic systems, creating a political party and nominating candidates would automatically be regarded as political action. Hwang acknowledged that ordinary people could understandably misunderstand the intentions of the [religious organization](#), but he insisted that the [Family Federation](#) has always viewed political engagement differently – as a form of social guidance rather than partisan competition.

According to the [OhmyNews article](#), Hwang emphasized that none of the nominated candidates in South Korea's 245 electoral districts in 2008 are “active politicians today, and among the candidates at the time, there were also people who were not members of [Unificationism](#).”

The hearing also included testimony from another former senior official, identified only as Jo (조), who once served as vice president of the Japanese branch of the [Family](#)

as vice president of the Japanese branch of the [Family Federation](#) and later headed its World Headquarters.

Jo described [Mother Han](#)'s management style as highly cautious and deliberate. According to him, she tends to observe individuals for months before entrusting them with major responsibilities. He suggested that this reflected a careful leadership approach rather than impulsive decision-making.



[Hak Ja Han](#)

[Mother Han](#) being released on 27th March 2026 for urgent medical treatment after being held detained in a tiny cell for more than six months. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

herself did not attend the hearing. Her detention had previously been [suspended](#) for health-related reasons, and that suspension was recently [extended](#) through the end of May. Her repeated absence from proceedings has reportedly reduced attendance by [Family Federation](#) followers who had previously come to court to show support.

For international readers, this case highlights broader questions about the relationship between religion and politics in South Korea. It also illustrates how religious organizations can frame engagement perceived by some as political in moral or educational terms, even when their activities resemble conventional political intervention.

[Lee Jin-min's reporting](#) captures a critical moment in this ongoing legal drama: a courtroom effort by the defense to draw a line between spiritual mission and political action, while prosecutors attempt to show that the boundary may have been crossed.

The next court hearing is scheduled for 15th May.

In its [report](#), OhmyNews pointed out that Nam Do-hyeon (남도현), Park Ye-ju (박예주), and Oh Se-jin (오세진) from the team of special prosecutors investigating the former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희) attended the 8th May hearing. The legal team defending [Mother Han](#) consisted of ten attorneys from the law firms *Bae, Kim & Lee LLC* and *LKB & Partners*.

OhmyNews is a South Korean online newspaper widely known for pioneering a citizen journalism model.

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Text: Kout Heldhus, editor

Featured image above: The [Family Federation](#) involved in civic education. Illustration: ChatGPT, 11th April 2026

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