FFWPU Europe and Middle East: More Medical Leave for Holy Mother Han Before Appeal

Knut Holdhus
September 30, 2026

Dr. Hak Ja Han, aka. Mother Han, being wheeled into the courtroom by her grandson Moon Shin-chul at Seoul Central District Court August 31, 2026

Newspim, a prominent South Korean economic and financial news agency and multimedia company based in Seoul

Medical leave extended for Mother Han as the Seoul High Court prepares to hear her appeal and bail request on 13th October

South Korean media outlets reported on 29th September 2026, that the Seoul High Court has extended the suspension of detention for Hak Ja Han (한학자) - also called Mother Han - leader of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, allowing her to remain outside detention while her appeal against a two-year prison sentence proceeds. The decision was reported by the news agencies Newspim, Newsis and News1, with the outlets providing somewhat different details about the conditions and background of the extension.

Newspim reported in the late afternoon that the Seoul High Court's Criminal Division 13, presided over by Judge Kim Moo-shin (김무신), had accepted Mother Han's application to extend the suspension of detention. The extension means that the suspension will remain in effect until 20th October, rather than expiring on 30th September as previously scheduled. Newspim noted that Mother Han has been outside detention since late March, when the court initially suspended her detention because of her deteriorating health. Several subsequent extensions have allowed her to remain in hospital while participating in the proceedings.

Former chief secretary Jeong Won-ju Jan. 19, 2025

As many South Korean media outlets generally do, Newspim only reported on the prosecution's allegations, devoting no space to the defense attorneys' counterclaims. According to the news agency, Hak Ja Han (한학자) was convicted in the first trial on 31st August and sentenced to a total of two years in prison.

The outlet summarized the prosecution's allegations that Mother Han (83), together with former chief secretary Jeong Won-ju (정원주) and former World Mission Headquarters director Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호), provided 100 million won in cash to then-People Power Party lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) in January 2022 and arranged so-called "split donations" totaling

144 million won (in 2022, ca $111,000 USD) to ruling-party lawmakers in March and April of that year. The news agency also reported the allegation that she and Yoon provided gifts worth approximately 80 million won (in 2022, ca $62,000 USD), including a Graff diamond necklace, to former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희) in July 2022.

Newspim didn't mention at all that Mother Han's defense consistently has maintained that the alleged political donations and contacts were the result of individual actions taken by subordinates, entirely without the octogenarian religious leader's authorization or knowledge. Her defense team has argued that she been unfairly targeted for missteps committed by others simply because of her position as the head of the Family Federation.

Newsis, the largest privately owned news agency in South Korea

Newsis, reporting shortly before Newspim, likewise said that Mother Han would remain temporarily released during the appeal. The large news agency specified that the suspension, which had been due to expire at 6 p.m. on 30th September, has now been extended until 3 p.m. on 20th October. Newsis emphasized that the defense had cited difficulties with detention because of Mother Han's shoulder fracture and surgery as well as problems with her eyesight.

Newsis also provided additional information about the first-instance proceedings. It reported that Jeong Won-ju (정원주) received two eight-month sentences, both suspended for two years.

Yoon Yeong-ho, former director general of the international headquarters of the Family Federation, February 11, 2022

News1, South Korea's largest private news agency and wire service

Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호) received six months in prison and his wife, former Family Federation finance director Lee Shin-hye (이신혜), received six months suspended for one year. According to Newsis, Mother Han's defense has maintained that contacts with politicians and the provision of valuables were the result of Yoon's individual actions rather than decisions by Mother Han. The outlet quoted her final statement in which she apologized for causing controversy but said that she had devoted her life to world peace and had never sought political power through money.

Newsis additionally noted that Mother Han faces separate proceedings concerning allegations of involvement in encouraging Family Federation members to join the People Power Party collectively. The news agency also reported that a joint investigation team has brought a further indictment alleging that approximately 10.5 billion won in organizational funds were embezzled together with Jeong Won-ju and Yoon Yeong-ho.

News1 similarly reported that the Seoul High Court Criminal Division 13 had accepted the application for another extension. It highlighted that Mother Han, now 83, must remain at the hospital where she is receiving treatment and is prohibited from direct or indirect contact or communication with people connected to the case during the period of suspended detention.

News1 described the suspension of detention as a legal mechanism permitting temporary release when a defendant faces serious circumstances such as severe illness, childbirth or a family funeral. The large news agency recalled that Mother Han had been formally indicted and detained in October 2025, before receiving the initial suspension in March 2026 because of her deteriorating health.

All three outlets reported that the first hearing of the appeal is scheduled for 13th October at 2 p.m. before the Seoul High Court. The same hearing will include consideration of Mother Han's bail application, submitted on 23rd September. Both her defense and the team of Special Prosecutor Min Joong-gi (민중기) have appealed the 31st August first-instance judgment, meaning that the two-year sentence remains subject to appellate review.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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No Charges Over Family Federation Probe Delay

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No charges against South Korean special prosecutors after CIO finds insufficient evidence that investigators deliberately delayed or concealed the case

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고위공직자범죄수사처
Corruption Investigation Office For High-ranking Officials

Logo of CIO. Author: Government of South Korea

The South Korean *Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials* (CIO) has cleared Special Prosecutor Min Joong-gi (민중기) and other members of the former Kim Keon-hee (김건희) special prosecutor team of allegations that they deliberately conducted a biased investigation into alleged political donations by the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification*. The decision, announced on 29th September 2026, concerned accusations that the special prosecutor's office had obtained evidence of alleged payments to politicians from both the ruling and opposition camps but had investigated only politicians affiliated with the conservative *People Power Party*.

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The decision was reported by a large number of South Korean media outlets.

Evidence was obtained but not immediately transferred

***Yoon Yeong-ho**, former director general of the international headquarters of the Family Federation, here 11th February 2022. Screenshot from live transmission by FFWPU*

According to **Yonhap News**, the CIO concluded on 28th September that there was insufficient evidence to establish criminal responsibility. Its investigation confirmed that a prosecutor working for the Kim Keon-hee (김건희) special prosecutors had obtained testimony from former Family Federation World Headquarters director Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호) indicating that money or valuables had been given to politicians. The prosecutors prepared a report on the interview, and the information was subsequently reported to special prosecutor Min himself.

연합뉴스

*The logo of **Yonhap News**, South Korea's designated public news agency and the country's largest wire service.*

However, Yonhap noted that the special prosecutor's team did not immediately undertake separate investigative measures concerning the testimony. The case was eventually transferred to the police in December 2025, approximately three and a half months after the testimony had been obtained.

***Prominent politician in governing party cleared**: Jeon Jae-soo (전재수). Photo (2023): 이데일리TV / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp.*

The issue became politically contentious because Yoon had reportedly mentioned politicians from both major political camps. In particular, he said that he had given two expensive watches and tens of millions of won to **Jeon Jae-soo** (전재수), then a *Democratic Party* lawmaker and later Busan mayor, allegedly in connection with requests concerning Family Federation interests such as the proposed Korea-Japan undersea tunnel. Yoon also reportedly said that he had provided money to former Democratic Party lawmaker **Lim Jong-seong** (임종성).

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The special counsel team had, however, treated these allegations as outside the scope of its investigation and did not formally investigate them at that time.

The CIO found no evidence of deliberate concealment

Hankyoreh focused particularly on what the CIO discovered about the special prosecutor team's internal handling of the information. It reported that the team had not simply ignored Yoon's testimony. Investigators found evidence that the testimony had been registered as a separate preliminary investigation and that the possibility of transferring the matter to another investigative agency had been considered.

The logo of the Hankyoreh (한겨레), one of South Korea's largest and most influential daily newspapers.

According to the CIO, statements from the Special Prosecutor, former Special Prosecutor Deputy Park Sang-jin (박상진) and prosecutors involved in the matter were consistent: they said that they had considered accepting the case formally and then transferring it to another competent investigative body. Internal documents seized during CIO searches of the special prosecutor's offices also reportedly contained evidence of such discussions.

Hankyoreh further reported that the prosecutors consistently denied receiving instructions from Min or Park to delay or conceal the investigation.

Munhwa Ilbo likewise highlighted the significance of the internal documents. The newspaper reported that the CIO conducted two searches of the special prosecutor's offices and seized computers and mobile phones belonging to Min and Park. Investigators subsequently questioned members of the investigative team and, more recently, Min himself as a suspect.

*Logo of **Munhwa Ilbo**, a conservative newspaper and South Korea's only national evening daily, ranking among the top ten dailies by circulation.*

Despite confirming that the testimony had been placed in the investigation record without additional immediate investigative action, the CIO concluded that this alone did not constitute criminal dereliction of duty.

The legal question was not simply whether there had been a delay

A central point emphasized by several outlets was the distinction between **delayed action** and the criminal offence of **dereliction of duty**.

Newspim quoted the CIO as explaining that, under Supreme Court precedent, merely delaying an investigation or making an error in the course of one's duties does not automatically constitute dereliction of duty. Prosecutors must establish that a public official consciously abandoned or neglected an official responsibility.

Logo of Newspim (뉴스핌), a prominent South Korean economic and financial news agency and multimedia company based in Seoul.

The CIO acknowledged that approximately three and a half months elapsed between the acquisition of Yoon's testimony and its eventual transfer to the police. But it concluded that the delay itself was insufficient to establish criminal intent, particularly because internal

discussions about registering and transferring the case had continued during that period.

경향신문

The logo of Kyunghyang Shinmun, a large and influential South Korean national daily, ranked among the top ten in terms of circulation.

Kyunghyang Shinmun similarly stressed the Supreme Court precedent that simple investigative delays or mistakes in carrying out official duties do not by themselves amount to dereliction of duty. The newspaper reported that the CIO found no evidence that Min, his deputy or other prosecutors had instructed investigators to delay or conceal the case.

Was the matter actually within the special prosecutor's jurisdiction?

Special Counsel Act named after Former First Lady *of South Korea Kim Keon-hee (김건희). Photo: 首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int*

Another important element of the CIO's reasoning concerned the legal scope of the **Kim Keon-hee Special Counsel Act**.

Yonhap News reported that the CIO said it would be difficult to conclude definitively that the alleged receipt of money by politicians fell within the statutory investigative mandate of the Kim Keon-hee special investigative mandate of the Kim Keon-hee special prosecutors. Consequently, even if Yoon's testimony were assumed to be truthful, the special prosecutor team could reasonably have considered the allegations outside its jurisdiction.

Special Counsel Act named after Former First Lady *of South Korea Kim Keon-hee (김건희). Photo: 首相官邸ホームページ / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int*

Hankyoreh made a related point: although the special counsel law contains provisions concerning the transfer of unfinished investigations when the special prosecutor's investigative period ends, it does not clearly specify a particular deadline for transferring a matter that the special prosecutors consider outside their statutory investigative scope.

This distinction was therefore central to the CIO's decision. The question was not simply whether the special prosecutor team should have acted sooner, but whether its handling of the information demonstrated an intentional abandonment of a legal duty.

The later investigation

Munhwa Ilbo reported that the case involving Jeon and other political figures was ultimately transferred to the police when the special prosecutor's investigative period ended in December 2025. It was subsequently investigated by a joint prosecution-police investigative unit dealing with alleged political-religious corruption.

According to the newspaper, the investigation into the alleged receipt of money by Jeon and other political figures was eventually closed through decisions not to refer the cases for prosecution or because prosecution was considered legally unavailable. Four people, including a former aide to Jeon, were instead indicted on evidence-destruction charges, with a first-instance ruling scheduled for 30th September.

MBC NEWS

Logo of MBC News, the news division of the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), one of South Korea's four major nationwide television and radio networks.

Meanwhile, **MBC News** summarized the CIO's conclusion as follows: although the special prosecutor team had obtained and internally reported Yoon's allegations, there was no evidence that Min or other investigators had ordered the investigation to be delayed or concealed. Nor could the alleged political payments necessarily be regarded as falling within the special prosecutor's statutory mandate.

The 29th September reports establish a distinction between **the factual handling of Yoon's allegations and the criminal question of whether that handling amounted to intentional dereliction of duty**. The CIO confirmed that the testimony was obtained, reported to senior members of the special prosecutor team, and not immediately transferred to another investigative authority. At the same time, it found evidence that the possibility of transferring the matter had been considered internally and found no evidence of an instruction to suppress or conceal it. On that basis, the CIO concluded that the evidence was insufficient to establish criminal responsibility and closed the case with a finding of **"no charges" (혐의없음)**.

See also Alleged Bias: Investigating the Investigators

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***Text**: Knut Holdhus, editor*

***Featured image** above: **Min Joong-gi** (민중기), the head of an army of special prosecutors with extensive investigative powers. Image: Grok xAI, Jan. 2026.*

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