FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Mother Han Granted Bail Under Harsh, Strict Conditions

Knut Holdhus
October 19, 2026



Dr. Hak Ja Han, aka. Mother Han, arriving in court in wheelchair. Here, at Seoul Central District Court August 31, 2026

Granted bail on health grounds, Hak Ja Han faces strict residence and contact restrictions during her current appeal case

On 19th October 2026, several South Korean news outlets reported that the Seoul High Court had granted bail to Hak Ja Han (한학자), head of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), allowing her to continue her appeal against a two-year prison sentence without being held in detention. The ruling came just one day before the expiry of the suspension of her detention, which had allowed her to receive hospital treatment for health reasons.

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

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

The ruling does not determine the outcome of the appeal. The original conviction of the religious leader - also called Mother Han - remains subject to further judicial review, and she continues to deny that she directed or was aware of the alleged activities.

Court imposes strict conditions on release

According to News1, published in the late afternoon on 19th October, the Seoul High Court's 13th Criminal Division approved Mother Han's bail application after considering her health, the progress of the proceedings, and the extent to which evidence had already been collected. The panel consists of Judges Kim Mu-shin (김무신), Lee Woo-hee (이우희), and Yoo Dong-gyun (유동균).

The court nevertheless imposed conditions stricter than those attached to her previous suspension of detention. Mother Han must pay a cash bail deposit of 200 million won (approximately US$140,000), remain at the hospital where she is currently receiving treatment, and

have no contact with anyone involved in the case.

Newsis and MBC News provide further details about the restrictions. According to Newsis, contact is permitted only with a very limited group of people, including medical personnel, lawyers, and individuals assisting Mother Han with mobility. Contact with all other people, including those connected to the case, is prohibited. MBC similarly emphasizes that she cannot return to her usual residence and must remain at the hospital.

Yonhap News, South Korea's designated public news agency and the country's largest wire service

Yonhap News also reports that the court explicitly required the bail deposit to be paid in cash. It explains that bail differs from a suspension of detention: the latter permits temporary release for urgent reasons, such as serious illness, whereas bail allows a defendant to remain free while proceedings continue, subject to specified conditions.

Han's appeal for release on health grounds

The reports also describe the arguments presented at the bail hearing on 13th October.

According to News1, Mother Han told the court that she needed assistance to take her medication and could not manage by herself. She said she was unable to do anything independently and asked to be allowed to receive treatment while living at her usual residence with assistance.

Newsis, the largest privately owned news agency in South Korea

Newsis reports additional remarks in which Mother Han described difficulties with her eyesight. She told the court that she could no longer see writing clearly at close range. She also expressed distress over her legal situation, saying that she had devoted her life to the cause of world peace and found it painful and distressing to face what she considered an unreasonable situation.

The special prosecution team opposed bail. As reported by News1, prosecutors acknowledged that Mother Han was experiencing health difficulties but questioned whether her condition posed a serious threat to her life. They therefore asked the court to reject her application.

The court ultimately accepted the application, citing her health, the progress of the case, and the degree of evidence collection. The stricter conditions, however, indicate that the release was not unconditional.

Background to detention and the appeal

Kookje Shinmun, a major Korean-language regional daily newspaper based in Busan, South Korea



Min Joong-gi, the head of an army of special prosecutors with extensive investigative powers

Kookje Shinmun and Yonhap News provide additional background on the detention history of Hak Ja Han (한학자). Both report that she was arrested in September 2025 by the special prosecution team led by Min Joong-gi (민중기), which was investigating allegations of improper connections between the FFWPU and the administration of former President Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열).

According to these reports, Mother Han was temporarily released in November 2025 after a suspension of detention was granted, but was subsequently returned to custody when an extension was denied. Her detention was suspended again in March 2026 so that she could receive hospital treatment. By the time bail was granted, she had been receiving treatment under this arrangement for approximately seven months.

The suspension was scheduled to expire at 3 p.m. on 20th October. The 19th October bail decision therefore ensured that Mother Han could remain outside detention as her appeal continued, albeit under more restrictive conditions.

News1, Newsis, and Yonhap all report that she had been sentenced in August to a total of two years in prison at her first trial. The sentence comprised one year for violating the Political Funds Act and another year for violations of the Improper Solicitation and Graft Act and occupational embezzlement.

Allegations and defence position



Co-defendant: Yoon Yeong-ho, August 9, 2020



Co-defendant: Jeong Won-ju, January 19, 2025



New indictment

The reports summarize allegations concerning political contributions and gifts in 2022. Mother Han was accused of conspiring with former Family Federation officials, including former World Headquarters director Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호) and former chief of staff Jeong Won-ju (정원주), to provide political funds to then-lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) and make donations from FFWPU-affiliated organizational funds to politicians from the People Power Party.

She was also accused of conspiring with Yoon to provide expensive gifts to Kim Keon-hee (김건희), the wife of former President Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열). News1 highlights an alleged diamond necklace from British jeweller Graff and gifts valued at more than 80 million won in total. Yonhap additionally mentions an alleged Chanel handbag and claims that the gifts were connected to requests concerning the religious organization's interests.

Kookje Shinmun explicitly presents the defence's position: Han maintains that Yoon and other officials acted independently, without reporting to her or receiving instructions from her. She denies the allegations against her.

Kookje Shinmun also reports that the first appeal hearing took place on 13th October and that the proceedings are underway.

Finally, News1, Kookje Shinmun, and Yonhap report a separate case in which Mother Han and former officials face additional charges involving the alleged embezzlement of approximately 10.5 billion won (about US$7.5 million). According to News1 and Kookje Shinmun, proceedings in that case are scheduled to begin on 12th November.

The 19th October ruling thus changes Mother Han's detention status but does not resolve either case. She will remain at the hospital under strict bail conditions while the appeal against her two-year sentence proceeds.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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***Typical communist propaganda poster**: Revolution against the Billionaires. Photo: Gogerr / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int. Cropped*

The former communist argued that lasting human liberation requires more than transforming social structures: it also demands an understanding of conscience, moral responsibility, and the origins of love.

Can a society achieve genuine human liberation simply by changing its economic system? Or must any lasting solution to exploitation and inequality also address the motives, desires, and moral choices of the people who make up that society?

These questions became increasingly important to Lee Sang-heon (이상헌 – 1914–1997), a physician and philosopher who once regarded communism as the path to national independence and human liberation. His subsequent intellectual journey led him to question whether an ideology grounded in materialism could adequately explain human nature or provide a reliable foundation for a society free from oppression.

In the 15th October 2026 installment of its series *Communism Without God*, South Korean newspaper *Segye Ilbo* examines how Lee's doubts about materialism eventually directed his attention toward religion and the possibility that love and conscience originate in God.

세계일보

The logo of the Segye Ilbo, one of the top 10 comprehensive daily newspapers in South Korea.

For Lee, the limitations of communism were not confined to its political record. They concerned a more fundamental problem: even if a society successfully transformed its institutions, would it necessarily transform the people operating them?

A system might eliminate private ownership or reorganize relations between workers and employers, but such measures would not automatically eradicate the desire for power, personal advantage, or domination. If these impulses remained, new forms of exploitation could emerge under a different political arrangement.

In this sense, Lee's criticism went beyond the familiar argument that communist governments had failed to deliver their economic promises. He questioned whether materialism itself offered an adequate understanding of the human beings who were supposed to benefit from the revolution.

The limits of changing external conditions

Lee's professional experience as a physician contributed to his reflections. He understood that the physical condition of the body could influence mental life and that human beings were deeply affected by their material circumstances. Yet he also recognized the difficulty of explaining every aspect of human thought, emotion, and moral responsibility solely through bodily processes.

A doctor's determination to save a patient, compassion for someone enduring suffering, or the decision to defend what is right despite personal danger cannot be fully understood simply by calculating material costs and benefits.

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***Putting others' welfare before her own**: Mother Teresa of Calcutta, here at a pro-life meeting on 13th July 1986 in Bonn, Germany. Photo: Túrelio (via Wikimedia-Commons), 1986. License: CC ASA 2.0 Germany*

Such examples raised a question that economic analysis alone could not settle: Why are people sometimes willing to put another person's welfare before their own?

Lee observed that human beings possess a desire to preserve their lives, but they can also transcend immediate self-interest. They may find happiness in giving rather than receiving, discover meaning through caring for others, or willingly accept personal hardship for the sake of someone they love.

These actions suggest that human motivation cannot be reduced easily to survival or economic advantage. Nor can it be fully explained by membership in a particular social class.

For Lee, this was not an argument against addressing material suffering. Poverty, exploitation, and social inequality remained important problems. Rather, he questioned whether changing material circumstances alone could produce the moral transformation required for lasting human liberation.

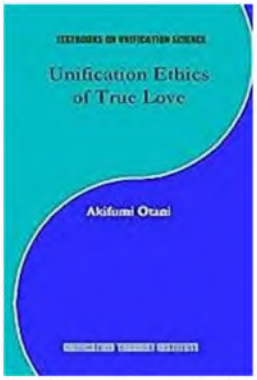
If the people administering a supposedly equal society continued to seek privilege and control, equality could become an official principle without being realized in practice. The replacement of one ruling group by another would not necessarily bring freedom.

Consequently, Lee believed that a comprehensive approach to social reform needed to consider both external structures and the inner disposition of human beings.

From human nature to the question of God

This line of inquiry led Lee toward a religious interpretation of human nature.

If love and conscience were fundamental aspects of humanity, he reasoned, their origins deserved serious consideration. Perhaps human beings could not be understood adequately as material entities alone.



*The front-page cover of "**Unification Ethics of True Love**" by Akifumi Otani, developed based on Dr. Lee Sang-heon's Unification Thought.*

Lee explored the possibility that human beings were created in the image of God and that the capacity to love reflected this origin. From this perspective, the willingness to sacrifice for another person was not an inexplicable exception to the logic of self-interest. It was an expression of something fundamental to human nature.

This interpretation also offered a different understanding of universal love. If every human being shared an origin in God, then the basis for respecting others would not depend exclusively on class, nationality, political allegiance, or shared economic interests.

Love could therefore extend beyond the boundaries that divide people into opposing groups. It could include strangers, those with whom one disagreed, and even those regarded as enemies.

Such an understanding challenged the tendency to define human relationships primarily through conflict between social classes. It suggested that a society committed to human dignity needed a moral foundation that recognized the worth of people regardless of

their position in the economic or political order.

Lee's turn toward religion thus emerged from his determination to pursue human liberation more consistently, rather than from a simple rejection of his former convictions. He sought to preserve the concern for exploitation and suffering that had initially attracted him to communism while moving beyond what he regarded as its inadequate account of humanity.

An alternative to materialism

Lee developed *Unification Thought* (통일사상) [See editor's note below] as an alternative philosophical framework. At its center was the conviction that God must be understood as the source of human existence and that love, conscience, and responsibility are essential to understanding human life.

The broader implication was that social reform and personal transformation should not be treated as unrelated objectives. Institutions matter because they shape people's lives, but the moral qualities of those exercising power also matter because institutions cannot guarantee justice by themselves.



With Soviet regime casualties ranging between 6 and 20 million, Stalin's rule underscores how heavily the moral character of leadership impacts human history. Photo of Joseph Stalin taken in 1917. Unknown author. Public domain image.

The question, then, is not simply how to construct a society in which resources are distributed more fairly. It is also how to foster relationships in which people recognize one another's dignity and act with responsibility toward others.

Lee's perspective offers a religious answer to a longstanding philosophical problem: whether a materialist account of human beings can adequately explain moral obligations that appear to transcend personal interests. His conclusion was that love was not merely an incidental emotion produced by material conditions, but a force rooted in the very foundation of human existence.

Whether one accepts this conclusion or not, the questions he raised remain relevant to debates about political ideology, social justice, and human freedom. Economic and institutional reforms can address important sources of suffering, but they do not automatically resolve questions about conscience, moral responsibility, or the misuse of power.

For Lee, the search for genuine human liberation therefore required a more comprehensive understanding of what human beings are and what makes their lives meaningful. His answer began with the proposition that love has a source beyond material interests and that recognizing this source is essential to building a society founded on freedom, dignity, and responsibility.



Religious affairs reporter Jeong Seong-su (정성수).

Based on an article by Jeong Seong-su (정성수) in the South Korean daily Segye Ilbo, 15th October 2026, the second installment of the series "Communism Without God".

Continued from part 1: When the Promise of Equality Turns to Control

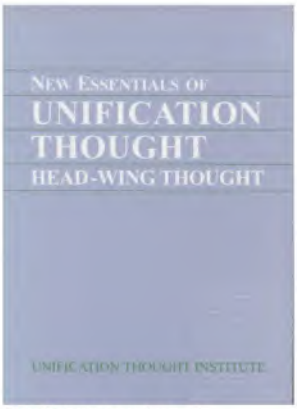
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***Text**: Knut Holdhus, editor*

Photo (2025): Segye Ilbo

***Featured image** above: Dr. Lee Sang-heon (이상헌 – also romanized as Sang Hun Lee – 1914–1997), a South Korean physician and philosopher who developed Unification Thought (통일사상) [See editor's note 1 below], here at a seminar in Schmitten, Hessen, Germany in October 1991. Photo: FFWPU, improved resolution by Grok xAI, October 2026.*

[***Editor's note 1*: Unification Thought** is a philosophical system developed by Sang Hun Lee (이상헌 – 1914-1997) from the teachings of Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012). It was designed as a comprehensive worldview that integrates religion, philosophy, science, ethics, and social theory into a single framework centered on God's purpose for creation.



The latest version of Unification Thought: New Essentials of Unification Thought, published in 2006.

At its core, Unification Thought argues that reality reflects the nature of God, understood as a being of "dual characteristics": internal character and external form, as well as masculinity and femininity in harmonious unity. Human beings, according to this view, are created to embody divine love through mature relationships, family life, creativity, and moral responsibility.

The system places strong emphasis on purpose and relationality. Everything exists through "give-and-take action", a dynamic process of interaction that produces harmony, growth, and development. Human history is interpreted as a providential process aimed at restoring the ideal world originally intended by God, overcoming alienation, conflict, and selfishness caused by the human fall.

Unification Thought also attempts to respond to modern ideologies. It criticizes both materialistic Marxism and purely secular humanism while also seeking to modernize traditional religious thinking. Its ethical and political applications include theories of education, art, economics, and social organization grounded in family-centered ethics and mutual cooperation. The philosophical system can be regarded as a synthesis of Eastern and Western thought, religion and science.]

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