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## **Kyrgyzstan - Unification Church banned from Kyrgyzstan - Chong U Lee**

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Bishkek--A Bishkek court banned the Unification Church from Kyrgyzstan Wednesday, after the judge ruled the Church had failed to register itself as a religious group – and following a push by a local youth organization for the prosecution of a Church member accused of torturing a Kyrrgyz man. The court also ordered the liquidation of the Federation of Families for World Peace (FFWP), an association headed by Unification Church member Chong U Lee, a South Korean citizen.

The Bishkek city prosecutor's office, along with the State Committee for National Security and the State Commission for Religious Affairs, petitioned the court to ban the organization. "The organization Federation of Families for World Peace was registered as a public association dealing with charitable activities," said prosecutor Zalkar Aknazarov. "But the study of [evidence examined by the court] showed that the public association, under the cover of charity, actually performs religious activities of the Unification Church, widely referred as sect of Moon."

The Unification Church was founded in South Korea in 1954 by Sun Myung Moon, who continues to lead the Church. The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification was set up in 1997 by Moon and his wife to promote the values of the Unification Church as well as interreligious cooperation, according to the Church's website. But Aknazarov said that any organization or group of people engaged in religious activity must register with the State Commission for Religious Affairs and that in failing to do so, the FFWP violated Kyrgyz law. "Moreover, the sect of Moon is aimed at inciting religious hatred between people, between the followers of other religions," Aknazarov added.

The hearing, held in a small courtroom of Sverdlov district of Bishkek city, lasted for two hours without the defense being represented. Judge Jaukharat Bayzullayeva said that the FFWP's lawyer, Yulia Bulatova, had written to tell the court that she was unwell but had not submitted confirmation of this from a medical professional. Bulatova was present at a previous hearing on Feb. 16, 2012, where she challenged statements that the FFWP was involved in religious activities. "It is only involved in charity activities – giving clothing, toys and sweets to children's homes," Bulatova said. "The prosecutor, referring to different unreliable websites on the Internet, states that the Federation conducts religious activities. But it does not, and there is no real evidence of this."

"The religious beliefs of Chong U Lee have no effect on the work of the Federation," the lawyer added. Since earlier this year, the Youth Council, a pro-government political youth group has called for the Unification Church to be banned, claiming members of the Church tortured Kyrgyz citizen Bakai Mambetaliev, a lawyer employed by UTI International, a construction company headed by Chong U Lee's brother, Lee Chong Khon, who is also a member of the FFWP.

“Since its foundation, the sect of Moon managed to build close ties with influential figures in Kyrgyzstan, which helped them escape criminal cases against them,” Mavlyan Askarbekov of the Youth Council. “We... are advocating to close sects such as Moon's and extradite their foreign preachers. We believe that these sects have a negative and destructive effect on society in Kyrgyzstan.”

Leaving the courthouse yesterday Sayrakan Bobusheva, mother of the alleged torture victim, said she was happy with the judge's decision. “Bakai worked for [UTI International] for about nine months,” Bobusheva said. “On Nov. 17, 2007, he was invited to the Church's office in Bishkek and was asked to join Moon's sect. But he refused. Then he was subjected to horrible torture: they stuck needles under his nails and navel and beat him until he wrote a statement that he owed \$100,000 to UTI International.”

Bobusheva says that this promissory note was issued in order to prevent her son from reporting the torture. Lee Chong Khon's lawyer, Azamat Amanov says that his client has been a victim of fraud and that Mambetaliev embezzled funds from his employer. “There is no evidence that Lee Chong Khon tortured or mistreated Bakai Mambetaliev, who had worked for UTI International and misappropriated its funds...” Amanov said. “In November 2011, the Supreme Court found Bakai guilty and sentenced him in absentia to five years [in prison]. Lee Chong Khon is just a victim of a campaign led by Bakai's mother after he was sentenced.”

Bobusheva confirmed that her son had received the sentence but said that he was not currently in prison, and didn't offer an explanation as to why he was "at home" and not in prison, when asked. Prosecutor Aknazarov says that at the prosecutor's office in Bishkek is currently investigating the claims of torture and mistreatment, and is reopening investigations into a road accident in 2006 that resulted in the death of 21-year-old Indira Jumagulova in which Lee Chong Khon was allegedly involved.

Jumagulova's mother, Railya Duyshenbayeva, told the Washington Times that she agreed not to pursue charges over her daughter's death after Lee Chong Khon offered her money, which she never received. Amanov says that Lee Chong Kong and his brothers, all of whom are members of the FFWP, have not been involved in any illegal activity. “Yes, Lee Chong Kong is a member of Unification Church,” Amanov said. “However, as a member of the [FFWP], he was only involved in charity activities, such as building a school, supporting children's houses. He never propagated his religious views in Kyrgyzstan.”