

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Former First Lady and Holy Mother Han in New Case

Knut Holdhus
November 11, 2025



Seoul Central District Court with the logo of the Chosun Ilbo and the front cover page of the "Political Parties Act" published by (S Korean) National Law Information Center. Image by Grok xAI

朝鮮日報

Chosun Ilbo



The former First Lady of the Republic of Korea Kim Keon-hee

Special prosecutors target former First Lady Kim Keon-hee in expanding election probe that involves Family Federation and Hak Ja Han

The major South Korean daily Chosun Ilbo reported on 11th November, in an article titled "[Unification Church Case Assigned to Kim's Court](#)", on new developments in the high-profile case involving 82-year-old religious leader [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) - known to followers as [Mother Han](#). She has been held in solitary confinement in a [tiny cell](#) for more than 50 days despite [serious health concerns](#), as prosecutors pursue [additional charges](#) linked to alleged political interference.

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Journalist Oh Yu-jin (오유진) described the latest step in South Korea's ongoing investigation into alleged collusion between religion and politics. The report centers on new charges against former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희), arising from claims that members of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (also known as the [Unification Church](#)) were systematically enrolled in the ruling People Power Party (PPP),

currently the main opposition party.

The case has been assigned to the 27th Criminal Division of the Seoul Central District Court, presided over by Judge Woo In-sung (우인성) - the same division currently handling the case against [Hak Ja Han](#) herself.

According to legal sources cited by Chosun Ilbo, the new case includes not only Kim but several prominent figures: [Family Federation](#) leader [Hak Ja Han](#), the [Federation's](#) former international secretary-general [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호), former presidential chief secretary Jeong Yoon-joo (정윤주), and the well-known shaman Jeon Seong-bae (전성배), also called Geonjin. All face supplementary charges under South Korea's Political Parties Act (정당법).



Yoon Yeong-ho, Dec 6, 2020



People Power Party lawmaker
Kweon Seong-dong Dec. 23,
2024

What makes this assignment particularly notable, the paper explains, is that the same division already oversees Kim's separate case involving alleged violations of the Capital Markets Act. Moreover, this court is responsible for most of the cases tied to alleged coordination between religious groups and political actors that have emerged from the special counsel investigation into Kim.

Among these related cases is an accusation under the Political Funds Act involving PPP lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) and [Hak Ja Han](#).



The special counsel's office announced on 9th November that the [Family Federation](#) faces [additional charges](#) for allegedly mobilizing members to join the People Power Party en masse ahead of the party's March 2023 national convention. Prosecutors claim this campaign aimed to support a particular candidate aligned with President Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열).

Investigators reportedly discovered that in November 2022, Kim requested [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) - through intermediary Jeon Seong-bae - to coordinate the collective enrollment of members of the [religious organization](#). In return, Kim and Jeon allegedly offered government support to the [Family Federation](#) and a proportional-representation seat in the next general election. The goal, prosecutors contend, was to secure the election of a candidate loyal to presidential candidate Yoon. [Mother Han](#), [Yoon Yeong-ho](#), and Jeong Yoon-joo are accused of conspiring to coerce

members of the [Family Federation](#) into participation.

In summary, Chosun Ilbo observes that consolidating these interconnected cases under a single court division reflects a comprehensive judicial approach to the widening investigation - by many regarded as a widening crackdown on political opponents. The move underscores how South Korean authorities are addressing one of the most complex and politically sensitive intersections of faith, party politics, and alleged electoral manipulation in recent history.

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- November 9, 2025
- Knut Holdhus



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According to the large South Korean daily the Chosun Ilbo on 7th November, new

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charges have been added to the previously-filed ones in the special prosecutors' case against **Hak Ja Han** (한학자), also known as **Mother Han**. A story by Kim Na-yeong (김나영) headlined "**Kim Keon-hee, Han Hak-ja Indicted in Unification Church Party Scheme**" reveals,

"The special prosecutor's team, led by Min Jung-ki (민중기), investigating various allegations against former first lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희), announced on the 7th that it had additionally indicted Kim, **Unification Church** leader **Hak Ja Han** (한학자), and others in connection with the alleged 'collective entry of **Unification Church** members into the People Power Party'."

According to the **Chosun Ilbo** article, the special prosecutor's office said that Kim Keon-hee (김건희), **Hak Ja Han** and others –



Former South Korean First Lady **Kim Keon-hee**, here in Washington DC 10th July 2024. Photo: Jim Bourg/U.S. Department of State. **Public domain** image. Cropped

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Logo of the People Power Party (PPP)

including Jeon Seong-bae (전성배) and **Yoon Yeong-ho** (윤영호) – were additionally indicted on charges of violating the *Political Parties Act* for organising a "collective entry" of **Family Federation** members into the *People Power Party*.

The **article** states that Kim was already indicted in August for violations including the *Capital Markets Act*, the *Political Funds Act*, and solicitation of bribes under the *Act on the Aggravated Punishment of Specific Crimes*.

The new indictments add charges under the *Political Parties Act* (i.e., coercing party membership, if the allegation is correct) concerning the coordinated entry of **Family Federation** members into the *People Power Party*.

KBS World has previously reported that for **Hak Ja Han** and others, previous indictments include offences under the *Political Funds Act*, anti-graft laws (e.g., embezzlement, bribery, evidence-destruction) relating to the federation's alleged favours to Kim and/or the party.



Thus the "additional" label means that these new counts build on an existing set of charges, not that they are entirely separate/unconnected.

Other outlets are covering the expansion or further layers of the probe, consistent with the "additional indictment" narrative of the **Chosun Ilbo** article. A report from the **Korea Times** (2nd Nov. 2025) says the special counsel team cited evidence of Kim's alleged involvement in personnel-favouring at the presidential office, beyond earlier charges of stock manipulation, political funds violations, and receipt of luxury gifts.

A broader picture emerges that the special counsel's investigation into Kim, the **Family Federation** / **Mother Han**, and the *People Power Party* is widening – from bribery, political funds and stock manipulation to alleged mass membership manipulation and party entry schemes.

In the



Special prosecutors seem determined to keep the world's oldest female pre-trial detainee behind bars for a longer period than her health may allow. Here, artistic impression of **Mother Han** in detention cell. Illustration: Grok xAI.

see also **Mother Han**, special prosecutors barred her on 22nd May

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case against [Mother Han](#), special prosecutors barred her on 23rd May 2025 from leaving South Korea amid investigation into alleged luxury gifts to Kim. Those early restrictions signaled a formal suspect status, not yet full indictment.

On 9th July, the investigation broadened as [Hak Ja Han](#) was formally designated by the *Special Prosecutors' Office* as a criminal suspect, including suspected bribery via a religious intermediary, embezzlement and interference.

The court then issued a detention warrant for her on 22nd September on charges of unlawful political funding, embezzlement, and obstruction of justice. That marked a significant intensification of charges. On 10th October, the charges against her were formalized as she was indicted.

It is quite plausible that the additional charges against [Hak Ja Han](#) will lead to both a longer investigation and extended detention.

A broader scope means more witnesses, more documents to review, more forensic and financial tracing – all of which tend to lengthen investigations. The complexity of the case – political, religious, financial – inherently slows things down. And Korean criminal-procedure frameworks allow for extensions of pre-trial detention under certain conditions (risk of flight, evidence tampering, etc.). Given the breadth of the allegations, prosecutors are more likely to request such extensions.

Of course, [Mother Han's](#) age (82) and numerous health issues may give her defence more leverage to argue for bail or conditional release on medical grounds, which could shorten or interrupt detention even if the investigation itself is long.

Because the case has strong political-religious overtones, the authorities may seek to resolve key issues more quickly to manage public and institutional fallout, but this is highly uncertain.

It is quite plausible that [Mother Han](#) remains in detention – or under very restrictive conditions – well into 2026. The prosecutors deem the charges as serious, the investigation is expansive, and the risk of evidence tampering has already been flagged by the court – all of which support extended detention.



Artistic impression of [Mother Han](#) in wheelchair at preparatory hearing. Illustration: Grok xAI, Oct. 2025

The fact that she was already granted a temporary medical release suggests the court is sensitive to her health. If her condition worsens, a court might convert detention to medical supervision or bail.

If the investigation drags on, the special counsel may still keep her in very restricted custody conditions (hospital ward under guard, limited contact) rather than standard prison, which could mitigate the health/detention risk but still keep her effectively immobilised.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Posters outside Seoul Detention center 3rd November 2025. Photo: [Bitter Winter](#)

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