

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Mother Han 2026 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee

Knut Holdhus
March 31, 2026



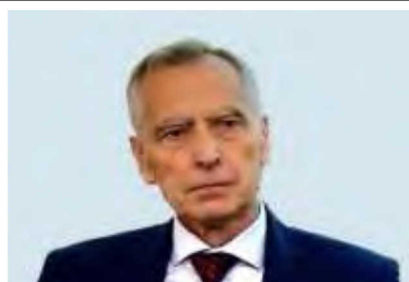
Hak Ja Han, Mother Han 14th August 2022 in Gapyeong, South Korea

세계일보

[Segye Ilbo](#)

Global peace initiatives highlighted as Hak Ja Han is nominated to Nobel Peace Prize by former EU Special Envoy Jan Figel

A 30th March 2026 [article](#) published by [Segye Ilbo](#) reports that [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자), president of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), has been put forward as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. The nomination was submitted by Jan Figel, a former European Union Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, who cited her long-standing contributions to interreligious dialogue, global peacebuilding, and the promotion of family-centered social values.



Dr. Jan Figel, here in July 2023



Sunhak Peace Prize

According to the [report](#), Figel's recommendation emphasizes the decades-long leadership of [Hak Ja Han](#) - also called [Mother Han](#) - in initiatives aimed at reducing religious conflict and fostering cooperation across cultural and national boundaries. Following the death of her husband, [Sun Myung Moon](#) (문선명) in 2012, she expanded a network of affiliated organizations - including the [Universal Peace Federation](#) (UPF) and the [Women's Federation for World Peace](#) (WFWP) - to advance what is described as a global vision of peace rooted in shared moral principles. These organizations have engaged in a range of activities, from appointing "Ambassadors for Peace" in numerous countries to organizing international summits and large-scale public events such as the "Rally of Hope", all framed around dialogue and reconciliation.

The [article](#) further highlights specific initiatives associated with [Mother Han](#)'s leadership. Among them are efforts to support peaceful reunification on the Korean Peninsula, including proposals for an international peace park in the Demilitarized Zone along the 38th parallel. Figel's nomination frames such projects as aligning with the ideals expressed in Alfred Nobel's will, particularly the ambition of reducing militarization and fostering fraternity among nations. In addition, cultural

diplomacy - such as international performances by the Little Angels children's dance troupe - is presented as part of a broader strategy to promote mutual understanding through the arts. The establishment of the [Sunhak Peace Prize](#) is also cited as evidence of institutional efforts to recognize and incentivize global peace work.

To contextualize this nomination, it is useful to understand how the Nobel Peace Prize process operates. Unlike many awards, nominations are not open to the general public. Eligible nominators include members of national parliaments and governments, certain university professors (typically in fields such as history, social sciences, law, or theology), previous Nobel laureates, and members of international courts. Qualified individuals may submit nominations to the Norwegian Nobel Committee, the body responsible for selecting the Peace Prize laureate. Self-nominations are not permitted, and the full list of nominees remains confidential for 50 years.



[Mother Han](#) (in red) with heads of state and world leaders on February 4, 2020, at the World Summit 2020, a large international peace conference in South Korea

The pool of eligible nominees is broad. The prize may be awarded to individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to peace-related efforts, including conflict resolution, human rights advocacy, disarmament, or the promotion of international cooperation. Over time, recipients have ranged from political leaders and activists to humanitarian organizations and multilateral institutions, reflecting the wide interpretation of "peace work" embedded in Nobel's original criteria.

The selection process itself is conducted by the Norwegian Nobel Committee, a five-member panel appointed by the Norwegian parliament. After reviewing hundreds of nominations each year, the committee creates a shortlist and undertakes detailed evaluations, often consulting external experts. Deliberations are confidential, and the final decision is typically announced in October. The committee is not bound to disclose its reasoning in full, though it provides a brief justification when the laureate is announced.

In this context, the nomination of [Hak Ja Han](#) reflects both the openness of the nomination system - where qualified individuals can propose candidates from a wide range of backgrounds - and the highly selective, deliberative nature of the final decision-making process. Whether or not a nomination ultimately leads to an award, it signals recognition within certain international circles of the nominee's perceived contributions to peace and global cooperation.

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From the [press conference](#) in Tokyo on 26th March 2026 held by the [Association of Experts Calling for Fair and Impartial Trials](#) and the ["Second-Generation Association for the Protection of Believers' Human Rights"](#). Photo: ["Second-Generation Association for the Protection of Believers' Human Rights"](#).

A statement by ["Association of Experts Calling for Fair and Impartial Trials"](#) (Experts' Association), established by Japanese lawyers and academics, concerning the [Tokyo High Court decision](#) on 4th March to dissolve the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)). The statement was issued at a [press conference](#) in Tokyo on 26th March held by the association.

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I am Eitaro Ogawa (小川栄太郎), a literary critic, as just introduced. I will now read the **emergency statement from the "Association of Experts Seeking Fair and Impartial Trials"**.

On 4th March, at the [Tokyo High Court](#), a [dissolution order](#) was issued against the religious corporation formerly known as the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), and [enforcement procedures](#) began immediately.

A dissolution order is not merely the execution of law; it constitutes a fundamental judgment on the social credibility of a [religious organization](#). **For approximately 100,000 believers, their lives and dignity – rooted in their core faith – will be denied.**

Furthermore, as a result of the dissolution order, 1,933 staff members of the [religious organization](#) and their 2,441 dependent family members, totaling **4,374 people, will lose their means of livelihood.**

All assets, including religious facilities, have been seized. However, **these assets consist of donations made by believers. Each individual donation – whether money, land, or buildings – falls under property rights guaranteed by the Constitution.** Should not such compulsory confiscation require evidence of extremely serious criminal conduct by the [religious organization](#) and its followers?

As a comparable example of a dissolution order against a religious corporation based on extreme antisocial behavior, one may cite the case of Aum Shinrikyo [[See editor's note 1 below](#)]. In that series of incidents, a staggering 29 people were killed (28 by murder and 1 by

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death resulting from kidnapping and confinement), and approximately 6,000 were injured. Within the group itself, five members were also murdered, and the total number of dead or missing exceeded 30.

As a result, 13 core members including the leader Asahara were sentenced to death, and five received life imprisonment.

In contrast, **the Family Federation has not even caused a single criminal case**. Nevertheless, despite the absence of any recognized criminal acts that would justify a "social death penalty" such as dissolution, the order has been issued.

We issued a statement on 25th March of last year as well, pointing out how unjust the **initial decision** was. In that statement, we identified the following serious **legal deficiencies**:

1. The dissolution is based on civil cases concerning donations that began on average 32 years ago.
2. There have been zero illegal donations in the past 11 years, yet continuity is being assumed without evidence, violating the principle of evidence-based adjudication.
3. Despite evidence of **alteration** and **fabrication** in documents submitted by the government, these issues were overlooked.



Constitutionally highly problematic proceedings against **Family Federation** were held behind closed doors in the joint building of the Tokyo High Court, Tokyo District Court, and Tokyo Summary Court in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo, Japan. Photo: [663highland / Wikimedia Commons](#). License: [CC ASA 3.0 Unp](#)

Furthermore, a fundamental problem is that the government's request for the dissolution of the **religious corporation** has been treated as a non-contentious case [[See editor's note 2 below](#)] and kept non-public.

We strongly object to the fact that a legal process effectively declaring the social death of an **organization** is **conducted entirely behind closed doors**. It cannot be said to differ in any meaningful way from **secret trials in authoritarian states**.

Moreover, **the grounds cited by the Tokyo High Court for the dissolution decision are even more irrational**.

First, **the High Court stepped into doctrinal matters** of the **Family Federation** and made subjective judgments about its beliefs, treating doctrine itself as one of the key reasons for dissolution. For the state to judge the merits of religious doctrine violates the principle of separation of religion and state and is impermissible in a modern nation.

Second, while the lower court based **its decision** on civil cases prior to the **organization's** 2009 compliance declaration [[See editor's note 3 below](#)], the **High Court** placed **primary emphasis on alleged unlawful acts after that declaration**.

However, according to the [High Court](#), **only four individuals were definitively found liable for unlawful acts**, with total damages of 18,681,600 yen [ca. \$122,000 USD in March 2026]. Meanwhile, 138 individuals – accounting for 915,486,469 yen [ca. \$6.0 million USD in March 2026], or 95.6% of the total amount – were merely deemed as **cases where “the possibility of unlawfulness cannot be denied.”**

What does it mean to say “the possibility cannot be denied” **without presenting concrete evidence? If such reasoning is accepted, almost anything in the world could be treated as potentially culpable.** In essence, the court issued a [dissolution order](#) based on cases where wrongdoing could not be proven.

The decisions of both courts are built on the **predetermined conclusion of dissolution, forcing reasoning to fit that outcome.**

If a [Supreme Court decision](#) were to follow along these lines, it could become a **catastrophic trigger that undermines the very foundation of a rule-of-law society and a free society.** We are deeply concerned about this possibility.

Many people may feel that such a warning is exaggerated. That is precisely why we must speak out. We urge the [Supreme Court](#) to pause before making its decision.

This is because most citizens are entirely unaware of the facts of this case or the irrationality of the courts' reasoning.

What should be questioned in this dissolution order is not whether the [Family Federation](#) is a good or bad religion. The real question is whether it has violated laws and committed acts clearly recognized as seriously harming the public welfare, as required under the *Religious Corporations Act*.

The two judicial decisions have failed to prove any illegality on the part of the [organization](#).

The core issue is this: is it acceptable to declare “social death” when illegality has not been proven?

This is not a matter limited to a single religious corporation. If such a precedent is established by the [Supreme Court](#), there will be no stopping who might face the same fate in the future.

That is how weighty a [Supreme Court](#) precedent is.

Finally, we reaffirm the gravity of this matter and present this statement.

26th March 2026.

English text translated from transcription of original Japanese text as read by Eitaro Ogawa (小川栄太郎) in video recording by “Second-Generation Association for the Protection of Believers’ Human Rights”.

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Front page of 2018 English version of Religious Corporations Act of Japan.

Justice”

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Featured image above: Eitaro Ogawa, here during a [symposium in Nagoya](#) 19th October 2025. Screenshot from video by “[Second-Generation Association for the Protection of Believers’ Human Rights](#)”.

[**Editor’s note 1: Aum Shinrikyo**, a Buddhist new religious movement founded in 1984 by Shoko Asahara, preaching apocalyptic prophecies. It was dissolved in 1996 due to its leaders’ criminal acts, including the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack in 1995 and the Matsumoto sarin incident in 1994.]

[**Editor’s note 2: A non-contentious case** refers to a legal matter where there is no dispute between parties. These cases typically involve administrative, procedural, or uncontested legal actions, such as **probate (handling a deceased person’s estate), uncontested divorces, adoption, or registering a trademark**. Since there are no opposing parties or legal conflicts, these cases usually proceed smoothly through the legal system without litigation.]

[**Editor’s note 3: The 2009 compliance declaration** of the [Unification Church of Japan](#) (now the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)) was a formal commitment by the organization to reform its practices in response to longstanding public criticism and legal challenges.

The [Unification Church](#) in Japan had faced numerous allegations related to recruitment tactics and donation solicitation, termed “spiritual sales” (靈感商法) by a hostile network of activist lawyers who had declared the [religious organization](#) an enemy. These issues led to multiple lawsuits orchestrated by the activist lawyers and significant media backlash. This prompted the [organization](#) to take measures to restore its reputation and demonstrate compliance with legal and ethical standards.

The [religious organization](#) pledged to stop possibly unethical donation practices, including what the hostile network of lawyers claimed amounted to “pressuring members into making large financial contributions under spiritual pretexts.”

This was in response to accusations from the same activist lawyers that followers “were being manipulated into giving away substantial amounts of money or property.”

The [Unification Church](#) stated it would enhance internal oversight to ensure compliance with ethical and legal standards. Measures included better training for leaders and stricter guidelines for evangelization and solicitation of donations.

After this compliance declaration, there was a significant decrease in the number of lawsuits against the [Unification Church](#) – since 2015 called the [Family Federation](#). The [religious organization](#) has used this as evidence that it has improved its practices and should not be subject to dissolution.]

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