

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: July Verdict Likely - Long Appeal Looms

Knut Holdhus
April 1, 2026



[Mother Han](#) on 7th February 2020 in Gapyeong, South Korea



Trial of Mother Han nears final phase with final hearing in June and verdict likely by July, but the full legal process could continue for months or even years

The South Korean news agency [News1 reported](#) on 31st March 2026 about the latest developments and the hearings the same day in the case against [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) - also called [Mother Han](#)

- the co-founder and current leader of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) - in Korea often referred by as [Unificationism](#) (통일교).

According to [News1](#), the case revolves around accusations of "political-religious collusion", a term used in South Korea to describe improper or unlawful cooperation between religious groups and political actors. Prosecutors allege that figures associated with [Unificationism](#) attempted to influence political outcomes - particularly the 2022 South Korean presidential election - through financial support and organized voter mobilization. In return, they were suspected by special prosecutors appointed by the current Lee Jae-myung (이재명) administration of seeking favorable treatment or policy support from politicians.

The [News1 article](#), written by reporter Yoo Soo-yeon (유수연), describes that a key moment in the proceedings occurred when Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) was called to testify as a witness in court. His testimony was considered important because of his alleged involvement in meetings with senior [Unificationism](#) officials during the election period. However, during questioning, Kweon refused to answer certain key questions - specifically those related to accusations that he received 100 million

Korean won (in April 2026, roughly 69,000 U.S. dollars) in illegal political funds.



Kweon Seong-dong, here portrait January 2025



Yoon Yeong-ho, former director general of the international headquarters of the [Family Federation](#), here February 11, 2022



[Mother Han](#) being released on March 27, 2026 for urgent medical treatment after being held detained in a tiny cell for more than six months

His refusal came after the court explicitly warned him that giving false testimony could lead to charges of perjury. Faced with this legal risk, Kweon chose to exercise his right to remain silent on that issue rather than provide an answer that might later be used against him. This moment highlights a common legal tension in such cases: witnesses who are also defendants in related proceedings must carefully navigate between testifying truthfully and avoiding self-incrimination.

[News1](#) writes that the broader case also involves allegations that the [Family Federation](#) attempted to financially support political campaigns. According to Kweon's testimony, during a meeting in late 2021, [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호), then a senior [Unificationism](#) official, suggested providing billions of won to support his party's presidential campaign. Kweon claims he rejected the offer, stating that such practices were no longer acceptable in modern South Korean politics, which now relies more heavily on public funding and regulated donations.

He further testified that [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) or another [Unificationism](#) representative expressed interest in having then-presidential candidate Yoon Suk Yeol (윤석열) attend a "Korean Peninsula Peace Summit" an event organized by [Unificationism](#). Kweon said he told them this would be difficult because of the [religious organization's](#) controversial reputation among the public. [Unificationism](#) has long been persecuted by fundamentalist Christians in South Korea, and their numerous media outlets.

According to the [News1 report](#), in a subsequent meeting, [Unificationism](#) officials allegedly reiterated their willingness to provide support - this time suggesting it could channel donations through multiple regional party organizations. Again, Kweon claims he warned that such actions could violate the law if the funds were linked to the [religious organization](#).

Another notable aspect of the testimony concerns a cultural detail that may seem unusual to international readers. Kweon acknowledged that he once performed a "deep bow" to [Hak Ja Han](#) during a visit to the Cheon Jeong Temple (천정궁), a [Unificationism](#)-related site. In Korean culture, especially in political contexts, such gestures can be a sign of respect toward elders or influential figures, particularly around the Lunar New Year. [News1](#) describes how Kweon defended his actions as a routine expression of courtesy rather than evidence of undue deference or allegiance, saying,

"Whether at a temple or a senior center, it is standard for politicians to offer a deep bow when visiting after Lunar New Year. If they give you votes, what wouldn't you do?"

Despite his denials, prosecutors presented evidence that appears to contradict Kweon's claims. One piece of evidence is a diary entry written by [Yoon Yeong-ho](#), which reportedly includes a note suggesting financial support may have been provided to Kweon. When confronted with this, Kweon questioned whether denying the allegation in court could expose him to perjury charges, given that the matter is still under appeal in a separate trial. Ultimately, he declined to answer.

The [article](#) also touches on another allegation: that Kweon may have passed along information about a possible investigation into [Hak Ja Han](#) to [Unificationism](#) official [Yoon Yeong-ho](#). Kweon denied any improper conduct, describing the information as a vague rumor rather than confirmed intelligence. He stated that he simply mentioned

it in passing out of personal familiarity with the individuals involved, not as an attempt to interfere with an investigation.

In addition to Kweon's testimony, the [article](#) highlights procedural tensions between the court and the special prosecution team. The prosecutors criticized the court for quickly approving a [suspension of detention](#) for [Hak Ja Han](#) without giving them sufficient time to present their views. As a result of that decision, she was [temporarily released](#) from custody until the end of April. The court responded that there were valid reasons for its decision but did not elaborate in detail.

[News1](#) reports that the trial is expected to conclude on 12th June, when both sides will present their final arguments. This final hearing will include the prosecution's sentencing request, as well as closing statements from the defense and the defendants themselves. Such hearings mark the final stage of a criminal trial in South Korea before the court delivers its verdict.

[Mother Han](#) was [released from detention](#) on 27th March for urgent medical treatment and will at least until the end of April not be able to appear in the court hearings of her case. Her current absence does not, however, automatically delay the legal process. As long as her lawyers are present and the court accepts her medical condition, the trial - especially the scheduled final hearing - can proceed as planned.

If 12th June is the final hearing, a verdict might realistically come sometime in late June to July. The court sets a sentencing date, usually 2-6 weeks after the final hearing. In complex or high-profile cases, it can even take longer.

After the verdict both prosecution and defense have 7 days to file an appeal. Appeals go to a High Court (second instance), and potentially to the Supreme Court (final instance). This means that the June trial outcome is not necessarily final. The full legal process could continue for months or even years.

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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 Ján 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.

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Dr. Jan Figel, here in July 2023. Photo: [FOREF](#)

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.

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The [Sunhak Peace Prize](#) logo.



Mother Han with heads of state and world leaders on 4th February 2020, at the World Summit 2020, a large international peace conference in South Korea. Photo: Graeme Carmichael

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.

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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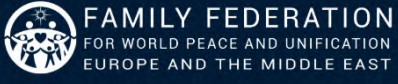
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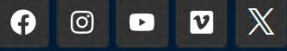
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