

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Conflicting Testimony of S Korea's Key Witness Against Mother Han

Knut Holdhus
August 9, 2026



Yoon Yeong-ho, whose testimony has become a major part of the prosecution's case. Here, 5th Dec. 2021



Munhwa Ilbo, a conservative newspaper and South Korea's only national evening daily, ranking among the top ten dailies by circulation

Documentary evidence exposes timeline discrepancies that the defense says render the key witness's testimony unreliable

Part 1 of a 4-part series on the Hak Ja Han trial

As South Korea approaches the 31st August first-instance verdict in the trial of [Family Federation](#) President [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) - also called [Mother Han](#) - one of the central questions before the Seoul Central District Court is the credibility of former [Family Federation](#) World Headquarters Director [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호), whose testimony has become a major part of the prosecution's case.

In a [statement](#) issued on 6th August, the [Family Federation](#) closely examined a [report](#) published the previous day by the South Korean daily Munhwa Ilbo (문화일보). The [Federation's statement](#) goes considerably beyond the [newspaper's account](#), presenting a detailed chronology that it says casts serious doubt on [Yoon's](#) testimony.

The first and perhaps most concrete part of the defense argument concerns an alleged 100 million won (in 2022 ca. US\$ 77,000) political contribution to former People Power Party lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) and what allegedly happened afterward.

The prosecution's basic allegation

According to the 5th August [Munhwa Ilbo report](#) by Hwang Hye-jin (황혜진), the Special Prosecutor's Office led by Special Prosecutor Min Joong-gi (민중기) alleges that [Yoon](#) delivered 100 million won to Kweon on [Mother Han's](#) instructions. The prosecution further alleges that [Yoon](#) subsequently reported the matter to her.

The prosecution has presented [Yoon](#)'s testimony as important evidence supporting the allegation that [Mother Han](#) was involved.



Allegedly received 100 million won: Former People Power Party lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong, Dec. 23, 2024



Was the story doctored in order to support the arrest and detention of [Mother Han](#)? Here, being temporarily [released](#) from health-detrimental long-term detention for urgent medical treatment on 27th March 27, 2026



One of the sacred sites of the [Family Federation](#) - the Cheon Jeong Temple in Gapyeong, South Korea. The building houses a museum in honor of the life of the [True Parents](#)

his testimony.

[Hak Ja Han](#)'s lawyers, however, argue that [Yoon](#)'s account is contradicted by documentary and other objective evidence. The [Family Federation](#)'s 6th August [statement](#) develops this argument at considerably greater length than the [Munhwa Ilbo](#) [article](#).

One of the defense's most important points concerns a document described as a "Special Report".

A one-year discrepancy in a key document

According to [Munhwa Ilbo](#), [Mother Han](#)'s lawyers told the court that [Yoon](#) claimed to have reported the payment to her after delivering the 100 million won (in 2022 ca. US\$ 77,000) in January 2022. However, the report document presented by the Special Prosecutor was actually created in January 2023.

The [Family Federation statement](#) provides more specific details. It says that a document bearing the date 3rd January 2022 was examined during the trial and found to have actually been created on 3rd January 2023. The [Federation](#) says the prosecution acknowledged that the date was an error.

The defense argues that this is much more significant than a simple typographical mistake. Its reasoning is that if a document is being presented as a contemporaneous record of a conversation or report in January 2022, but was actually created a year later, its value as evidence of what happened at the time becomes questionable.

The [Federation](#) goes further, alleging that investigators and [Yoon](#) subsequently shaped their questions and answers around this chronology in order to support the arrest and detention of [Mother Han](#).

The disputed morning meeting

The defense also challenges the timing of another alleged conversation between Yoon and [Mother Han](#).

As reported by [Munhwa Ilbo](#), the lawyers argued that [Yoon](#) claimed Kweon conveyed his thanks to [Mother Han](#) shortly after the presidential election, and that [Yoon](#) passed this message to her between approximately 7 and 8 a.m.

The defense says there is no corresponding record in [Yoon](#)'s diary or in the "Special Report."

The Family Federation [statement](#) adds a more detailed challenge. According to the statement, access records show that [Yoon](#) entered the Cheon Jeong Temple premises at approximately 9 a.m. It also says that his own diary records his wake-up time as 9:30 a.m.

The Federation therefore argues that [Yoon](#) could not have met [Mother Han](#) between 7 and 8 a.m. as he allegedly testified.

This is presented by the [Federation](#) as a particularly serious contradiction because it does not depend simply on competing recollections. The defense says that physical access records and Yoon's own diary establish a timeline that is incompatible with

Whether the court accepts this interpretation will ultimately depend on how it assesses the underlying records and the circumstances in which they were created.

Was Yoon acting on instructions - or independently?

The timeline argument forms part of a broader defense theory about [Yoon](#)'s role.



The [Family Federation statement](#) says that Jeong Won-ju (정원주), another defendant and formerly a senior aide to [Mother Han](#), consistently maintained that [Hak Ja Han](#) did not give Kweon the 100 million won.

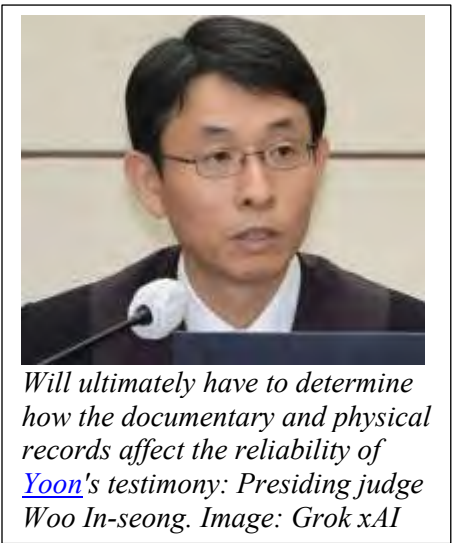
The Federation also points to recordings in which Yoon allegedly boasted that if he asked [Mother Han](#) to come, she would come. The defense interprets such remarks as evidence that [Yoon](#) possessed considerable personal influence and was capable of arranging matters himself.

This leads to a fundamental disagreement between the two sides.

The prosecution's case, as described by [Munhwa Ilbo](#), portrays [Yoon](#) as acting on [Mother Han](#)'s instructions. The defense instead argues that [Yoon](#) sometimes acted first and reported later

- or did not report at all - and that his later testimony has attempted to portray independently initiated actions as decisions made by [Mother Han](#).

The [Federation](#) also cites text messages that it says show Kweon himself wanted to visit the Cheon Jeong Temple - at the time [Mother Han](#)'s residence - while [Yoon](#) allegedly prevented or delayed such a meeting by referring to his own schedule. The defense regards this as further evidence that [Yoon](#) was exercising his own initiative rather than simply carrying out instructions from [Mother Han](#).



Why the chronology matters

The significance of these arguments extends beyond the individual dates.

[Hak Ja Han](#)'s defense is essentially asking the court to distinguish between evidence that directly establishes her involvement and evidence that merely relies on [Yoon](#)'s later recollection of events.

The [Family Federation](#)'s 6th August [statement](#) argues that when [Yoon](#)'s testimony is compared with document-creation dates, palace access records, diary entries and communications, a series of contradictions emerges.

The prosecution, by contrast, has presented Yoon's testimony as important evidence supporting its case.

With the verdict scheduled for 31st August, the court will ultimately have to determine how much weight to give [Yoon](#)'s testimony and how the documentary and physical records affect its reliability.

For the defense, the issue can be reduced to a fundamental question: if the chronology of key events cannot be reconciled with the testimony used to establish [Mother Han](#)'s involvement, can that testimony safely support a criminal conviction?

NB. This article summarizes arguments presented by [Hak Ja Han](#)'s defense team and the [Family Federation](#). The allegations and interpretations described above have not been presented as established facts unless specifically identified as findings or statements reported by the court or other sources.

To be continued. Part 2 coming soon

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Crossroads for religious liberty



From the head table of speakers holding copies of a joint declaration at the [press conference](#) held at the Seoul Foreign Correspondents' Club on 7th August 2026, from left to right: Thierry Valle, president of [CAP Liberté de Conscience](#), Márk Nemes, deputy director of [CESNUR](#), Hans Noot, associate director of [HRWF](#), Michael Langhans, executive director of [FOREF](#) Germany, Massimo Introvigne, managing director of [CESNUR](#) and editor-in-chief of [Bitter Winter](#). Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by [HRWF](#), improved resolution by ChatGPT, 8th Aug. 2026.

A speech by Dr. Massimo Introvigne, managing director of [CESNUR](#) and editor-in-chief of [Bitter Winter](#), at a [press conference](#) held at the Seoul Foreign Correspondents' Club on 7th August 2026. The event was organized by [Human Rights Without Frontiers](#) (HRWF) together with [CAP Liberté de Conscience](#) (CAP LC), [FOREF](#), the [Center for Studies on New Religions](#) (CESNUR) and [Bitter Winter](#).

See also [How Reliable Is the Prosecution's Key Witness?](#)

I'm a sociologist of religion and I have also served in institutional capacity, including as a representative of the *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe* (OSCE) for combating racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance.

When I was there, I co-authored at a conference in Rome what is called the *Rome Model* and is now widely quoted, a tool that predict that minorities, particularly religious minorities, are normally attacked through three stages: 1) intolerance – primarily by the media – 2) discrimination by courts of law, administrative authorities, and government, and then 3) persecution and violence.

This model applies to to both totalitarian and democratic states.

In fact, I'm not here to single out Korea.

This year I was called by the same OSCE to be a keynote speaker at a regional summit in Rome about intolerance and persecution of religious minorities in Western Europe.

There are only democratic countries in Western Europe, yet there are hate crimes.

And I discussed in particular the situation of the *Jehovah's Witnesses*, applying the Rome model and showing how intolerance led to serious hate crimes, including hundreds of instances in Europe of violence, in some cases of attempted homicide.

Coming to Korea, we see, as in many other countries, the three stages at work.

The first stage is intolerance, which is the prevailing depiction in the media of some religious minorities as “heretics”, “cults”, “false prophets”, etc.

And this is



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Intensely persecuted, even by government representatives: Shincheonji Church of Jesus. Here, its logo.



Intensely persecuted in South Korea: The Jehovah's Witnesses. Here, their logo and official website.

targeting in particular the **Unification Church** – now called the **Family Federation** – Shincheonji [See editor's note 1 below], Jehovah's Witnesses and others, relying largely on accounts by other religionists who are in competition with these groups, and apostate tax members.

The word “apostate” is not an insult. It is a sociological category designating the small minority of ex-members who spend their life attacking the groups they have left. Most ex-members are not apostates.

From intolerance, the step is short to discrimination by courts of law and administrative authorities.

And we are concerned to see in the Korean Parliament a draconian draft law allowing swift dissolution of religious organizations being discussed, one of the strictest in the world.



Intensely persecuted, even by government representatives: Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. Here its logo



Lee Man-hee (이만희 – 95), founder and chairman of Shincheonji (New Heaven and Earth). Photo: [MBC PD수첩](#) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 3.0 Unp](#)



Hak Ja Han (한학자 – 83), aka **Mother Han**, Co-Founder of the **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification**. Photo: [FFWPU](#)



Pastor Son Hyun-bo (손현보) of Segyero Church in Busan, here August 2025. Photo: [Bitter Winter](#)

And we are also concerned by the selective and particularly harsh application of existing laws, particularly the *Election Law* (Public Official Election Act) to detain religious leaders, including the now liberated Pastor Son Hyun-bo (손현보), **Mother Han** (한학자) of the **Family Federation** and Chairman Lee (이만희) of Shincheonji [See editor's note 1 below].

The last two cases are very surprising for me coming from

The last two cases are very surprising for me coming from European Union because [Mother Han](#) is 83, Chairman Lee is 95.

In the European Union we have laws mandating that such elder defendants, if they are not responsible of violent crimes or blood crimes [\[See editor's note 2 below\]](#), should await trial under house arrest and not in jail.

There is a danger that intolerance and discrimination will lead to actual violence.

And we have seen the violence in Korea while in the course of forced de-conversion we have a case of people severely beaten and even killed, as you all know.

And that just proves how easily the slippery slope of intolerance and discrimination may lead to persecution.

So religious intolerance should be stopped when it starts. It's not a problem unique to Korea. We have the same problem in the European Union. There is a similar problem in the United States.

But there are some specially alarming cases in Korea. And the media may play a role in alleviating the suffering of members of religious minorities. If there are specific common crimes, they should be investigated and punished.

But the blanket discrimination and intolerance against minorities is something that put in danger the very values on which our democratic social societies, including Korea.

Thank you.

See also [How Reliable Is the Prosecution's Key Witness?](#)

Featured image above: Dr. Massimo Introvigne, managing director of [CESNUR](#) and editor-in-chief of [Bitter Winter](#), at the Seoul [press conference](#) on 7th August 2026. Screenshot from live transmission by [HRWF](#), resolution improved by ChatGPT, 7th Aug. 2026.

[Editor's note 1: Shincheonji], officially known as *Shincheonji Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony*, is a new religious movement founded in South Korea in 1984 by Lee Man-hee, who claims to be the promised pastor mentioned in the Bible's Book of Revelation.

Shincheonji teaches that the Book of Revelation is being fulfilled through its church and that Lee Man-hee has received divine revelation to interpret it. He teaches that South Korea is the location where the prophecies of the *Book of Revelation* are actively playing out in real-time, making it the epicenter of the final harvest. Shincheonji focuses on filling the literal 144,000 slots of the 12 Tribes mentioned in Revelation. Once this number of truly sealed, flawless believers is completed, they believe they will rule as kings and priests over the rest of humanity.]

[Editor's note 2: "Blood crimes" is a direct translation of a term used in continental European legal systems like Italy's *delitti di sangue*, referring to homicides or crimes involving severe physical bloodshed.]

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