

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Holy Mother Han Challenges S Korea's Case

Knut Holdhus
August 11, 2026



Broad challenge to state's case. Illustration: ChatGPT



Yoon Yeong-ho, former international HQ director of the [Family Federation](#), Dec. 6, 2020



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

Hak Ja Han defense raises evidence and due-process concerns presenting broad challenge to the special prosecutors' case

Part 3 of a 4-part series on the Hak Ja Han trial

See part 1: [How Reliable Is the Prosecution's Key Witness?](#)

See part 2: [Yoon's Changing Accounts Challenged by Defense](#)

With the first-instance verdict in the trial of [Family Federation](#) President [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) - also called [Mother Han](#) - scheduled for 31st August, her defense team is challenging not only the credibility of former World Headquarters Director [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호) but also the way the Special Prosecutor's Office obtained and presented evidence.

In its 6th August [statement](#) responding to a 5th August [Munhwa Ilbo report](#), the [Family Federation](#) argues that the prosecution's case suffers from two fundamental problems. First, it says that important testimony from [Yoon](#) could not be properly tested through cross-examination. Second, it claims that a substantial portion of the prosecution's documentary evidence was obtained outside the scope of the relevant search warrant.

These are legal arguments rather than simply disputes over the facts of individual incidents.

Did the investigation go beyond its authorized scope?

According to [Munhwa Ilbo](#), [Mother Han](#)'s lawyers argued during closing arguments that the Special Prosecutors had exceeded the legally authorized scope of its investigation.

The defense maintains that investigators initially had a warrant relating to alleged luxury gifts to former

First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희) but subsequently seized material concerning other matters, including the alleged 100 million won (in 2022 ca. US\$ 77,000) payment to former lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동).

The [Family Federation's statement](#) develops this argument considerably further.



It says that the prosecution submitted 3,410 pieces of evidence, of which 1,619 - approximately 47.5 percent - were allegedly obtained outside the scope of the warrant.

The defense therefore asks the court to exclude those materials from consideration.

The issue is important because a search warrant does not normally give investigators unlimited authority to seize anything they happen to discover. The warrant specifies what investigators are authorized to search for and, depending on the circumstances, what material may be seized.

The defense's argument is essentially that evidence concerning separate alleged crimes cannot automatically be gathered under a warrant issued for a different investigation.

Whether the evidence was in fact obtained unlawfully, and what consequences that would have for the case, are matters for the

court to determine.

The cross-examination dispute



A second major issue concerns [Yoon's](#) testimony itself.

[Yoon](#) has become an important prosecution witness, but according to the [Family Federation](#), he invoked his right to remain silent when the defense attempted to question him about several key allegations.

The Federation says this included questions concerning the alleged 100 million won payment to Kweon, the division of political contributions, gifts to Kim Keon-hee (김건희) and foreign funds.

The defense argues that this creates a serious problem. If [Yoon's](#) testimony is being used as direct evidence against [Mother Han](#), the defense needs a meaningful opportunity to challenge his account in court.

The [Family Federation](#) cites South Korean Supreme Court precedents, including the Cho Yang-eun (조양은) case, to argue that testimony which cannot be meaningfully subjected to cross-examination may have limited or no admissibility as evidence under the relevant circumstances.

The precise application of those precedents to this case will ultimately be a matter for the court.

The basic principle, however, is relatively straightforward: accused persons should have an effective opportunity to challenge important evidence being used against them.

The question of Yoon's credibility

The defense also attacks [Yoon's](#) credibility on broader grounds.

The [Family Federation statement](#) says that Yoon's lifestyle appeared inconsistent with his official income. It alleges that, despite a reported annual pre-tax salary of approximately 150 million won (in 2022 ca. US\$ 116,000), he used expensive cars, luxury hotel suites, expensive airline tickets and private jets.



A close associate of [Yoon](#) was found to keep 12 Chanel handbags at home. Illustration: Grok xAI

The [Federation](#) further refers to the discovery of 12 Chanel handbags at the residence of a close associate.

The defense interprets these circumstances as evidence that [Yoon](#) had a strong personal motive to minimize his own responsibility and shift blame toward [Mother Han](#).

This is an important distinction in the defense's argument. It is not simply claiming that [Yoon](#) made mistakes. It is suggesting that **he had a reason to give testimony that would benefit himself.**

The prosecution, however, has not accepted the defense's characterization of Yoon's motives.

The MPP project

The [Family Federation's statement](#) also raises a separate issue concerning what it calls the MPP project (The Mekong River Peace Park project).



Special prosecutors distorting the [Family Federation's](#) distinctive religious concepts of "[Cheonil-guk](#)" and "national restoration" Illustration: ChatGPT

According to the [Federation](#), the Special Prosecutor interpreted the [Federation's](#) religious concept of "National Restoration" [See editor's note below] as evidence of a political or church-state project and used this interpretation to connect [Mother Han](#) to activities attributed to [Yoon](#).

The defense offers a very different explanation.

It alleges that [Yoon](#) had effectively turned the MPP project into a personal enterprise, pursuing financial and political opportunities for himself and relatives. The [Federation](#) refers to claims concerning Cambodian citizenship, payments to local politicians and efforts to obtain exclusive casino rights.

It also says that [Yoon](#) continued pursuing the project through personal communications even after leaving the [Family Federation](#).

These are serious allegations, but they form part of the [Federation's](#) own characterization of the evidence and go beyond the narrower issues summarized in the 5th August [Munhwa Ilbo report](#).

Three layers of the defense challenge

The significance of the defense's arguments becomes clearer when they are viewed together.

The lawyers are effectively asking the court to examine three separate questions:

- 1. Was the evidence lawfully obtained?

- 2. Can [Yoon](#)'s testimony be considered sufficiently reliable when his accounts are disputed and his cross-examination was limited?
- 3. Does the remaining evidence actually establish that [Mother Han](#) personally ordered or authorized the alleged acts?

This means that the defense is not relying on one alleged contradiction or one disputed document.

Instead, it is challenging the prosecution's case at several levels - the legality of the investigation, the admissibility of evidence, the credibility of a central witness and the connection between that witness's actions and [Mother Han](#) herself.

The significance for the 31st August verdict



The court is not being asked simply to decide whether [Yoon](#) made statements that were inconsistent.

It must determine what evidence can legally be considered, how reliable the admissible evidence is, and whether the evidence as a whole proves [Mother Han](#)'s personal responsibility for acts deemed criminal to the standard required in a criminal case.

For the defense, these questions are closely connected. If substantial evidence is excluded and [Yoon](#)'s testimony is found unreliable or insufficiently tested, the prosecution's case could be significantly weakened.

That is the defense's argument.

Whether the court agrees will become clear when the Seoul Central District Court delivers its first-instance verdict on 31st August.

This article summarizes arguments presented by [Hak Ja Han](#)'s defense team and the [Family Federation](#), together with matters reported by the South Korean daily [Munhwa Ilbo](#). Claims concerning unlawfully obtained evidence, [Yoon Yeong-ho](#)'s motives and the MPP project are presented as defense allegations and should not be understood as established findings of the court.

To be continued. Part 4 coming soon.

See part 1: [How Reliable Is the Prosecution's Key Witness?](#)

See part 2: [Yoon's Changing Accounts Challenged by Defense](#)

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

[Editor's note: In the context of [Hak Ja Han](#) and the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU), "national restoration" (국가복귀, 국가복원, or related terms often translated as "restoration of the nation") is primarily a religious and [providential](#) concept, not simply a political one.

The challenge - and the point raised above - is that prosecutors and the defense appear to disagree about whether references to "national restoration" should be understood as religious objectives or as political activities.

When [Hak Ja Han](#) speaks of "national restoration", she is generally referring to the goal of [Unificationism](#) to transform a nation so that it reflects [God's ideal](#) and becomes part of the realization of [Cheonil-guk](#) ([Kingdom of Heaven](#)), rather than simply winning political influence or supporting particular politicians. Whether specific activities undertaken in pursuit of that goal crossed into political lobbying is precisely what seems to be contested in the proceedings described above.]

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Prosecution's Star Witness

Changing accounts, conflicting dates: Hak Ja Han's defense challenges prosecution's main witness Yoon over luxury gifts testimony

Part 2 of a 4-part series on the Hak Ja Han trial

See part 1: [How Reliable Is the Prosecution's Key Witness?](#)

See part 3: [Defense Mounts Broad Challenge to State's Case](#)

As the 31st August verdict in the trial of [Family Federation](#) President [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) approaches, her defense team is challenging not only the chronology of the alleged 100 million won (in 2022 ca. US\$ 77,000) political contribution discussed in [part 1](#) of this series, but also former World Headquarters Director [Yoon Yeong-ho](#)'s accounts of luxury gifts allegedly given to former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희).

A central question is whether [Yoon](#)'s testimony consistently supports the prosecution's allegation that [Hak Ja Han](#) – also called [Mother Han](#) – personally authorized the gifts. In its 6th August [statement](#) responding to an 5th August [Munhwa Ilbo](#) (문화일보) [report](#), the [Family Federation](#) argues that [Yoon](#)'s accounts changed repeatedly during the investigation and that documentary evidence raises serious questions about the chronology of at least one of the gifts.

The issues concern a Chanel handbag, a Graff necklace, and a separate episode involving a visit to then-President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열).

Why the gifts matter

문화일보

Logo of [Munhwa Ilbo](#), a conservative newspaper and South Korea's only national evening daily, ranking among the top ten dailies by circulation.

[ho](#) (윤영호) gave expensive luxury items to former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희) while seeking assistance with matters affecting the [Family Federation](#).



Yoon Yeong-ho, former director general of the international headquarters of the [Family Federation](#), here 11th February 2022. Screenshot from live transmission by [FFWPU](#)

According to [Munhwa Ilbo](#)'s 5th August [report](#), the Special Prosecutor's Office alleges that [Yoon Yeong-](#)

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The prosecution's case is significant for **Mother Han** because it seeks to establish that these activities were not simply **Yoon's** personal initiatives but were carried out with the knowledge or instructions of the **Family Federation's** president.

Hak Ja Han's defense disputes that interpretation. The lawyers argue that **Yoon's** own accounts changed during the investigation and that other evidence suggests he sometimes acted independently.

Three versions of the Chanel handbag story

The



A Chanel handbag. Illustration: ChatGPT, 10th August 2026, edited.

defense's most detailed criticism concerns a Chanel handbag allegedly given to Kim Keon-hee. As reported by **Munhwa Ilbo**, the defense says **Yoon** gave **three different accounts** at different stages of the investigation.

During his first investigation by the *Seoul Southern District Prosecutors' Office*, **Yoon** allegedly said that **Mother Han selected the handbag first**.

During a subsequent investigation, **Yoon's** account reportedly changed. He said that **he and intermediary Jeon Seong-bae (전성배) had first decided on the handbag and then suggested it to Mother Han**.

During questioning by the Special Prosecutor's Office, according to the defense, **Yoon** gave yet another version, saying that **he had reported the specific model of handbag to Mother Han**.

The defense argues that these changes are important because they concern the fundamental question of who initiated the gift.

The **Family Federation statement** expands on this point by citing text messages that it says show **Yoon** telling Jeon Seong-bae (전성배) that he would send a gift before he learned that Kim Keon-hee (김건희) was planning an overseas trip.

The **Federation** therefore interprets the messages as evidence that **Yoon** had already decided to provide a gift and only learned about the First Lady's travel plans later.

That interpretation is disputed by the prosecution, and the court will have to determine what significance, if any, the messages have.

The Graff necklace and an apparent chronology problem

The defense considers the chronology



surrounding a Graff necklace even more problematic.

According to the South Korean daily *Munhwa Ilbo*, Yoon testified that he purchased the necklace in July 2022 on Mother Han's instructions.



A Graff necklace. Illustration: ChatGPT, 10th August 2026, edited.

The **Family Federation** statement supplies a more detailed chronology. It says that Yoon explained the purchase as having been prompted by media reports concerning Kim Keon-hee (김건희) wearing a borrowed necklace during an overseas trip.

The problem identified by the defense is the date of those reports.

According to the **Federation**, the relevant news story first appeared on 30th August 2022, while the purchase receipt for the necklace is dated 29th July 2022.

In other words, the defense says the necklace was purchased approximately one month **before** the media report that Yoon allegedly said prompted the purchase.

The **Federation** describes this as a case of “reversed causality”: the alleged cause appears in the chronology after the alleged effect.

Put more simply, the defense is asking how Yoon could have purchased the necklace in July because of a news report that did not appear until August.

This is one of the clearest examples in the **Federation's** statement of its broader strategy: rather than merely arguing that Yoon's recollection is unreliable, the defense seeks to compare his testimony with independently dated documents and events.

The visit to President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol

The defense also points to another episode that it believes illustrates a pattern of Yoon acting independently.

According to *Munhwa Ilbo*, Yoon had claimed that he reported his planned visit to then-President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열) to Mother Han in advance.

The defense, however, cited an earlier statement by Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호) in which he allegedly said:

“I was unable to tell Mother that I was going to visit the President-elect, and when I informed her the following day, she was surprised.”



Former President Yoon Suk-yeol of the Republic of Korea April 25, 2023, in Maryland, USA. Photo:

sne was surprised.

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The **Family Federation statement** adds that **Yoon** made this admission publicly at a gathering of hundreds of leaders on 8th April, two weeks after the visit.

The **Federation** also refers to other contextual evidence, including **Yoon's** activities on the evening of the visit, which it says indicate that he did not immediately report the meeting to **Mother Han**.

The defense uses the episode to challenge the prosecution's broader portrayal of **Yoon** as someone who routinely acted as **Mother Han's** representative under her instructions.

A broader question about Yoon's role

Taken together, the Chanel handbag, Graff necklace and presidential visit form an important part of the defense's larger theory.

The **Family Federation** argues that **Yoon** had substantial independence in dealing with political and business figures. According to this interpretation, he sometimes made decisions himself and subsequently either reported them to **Mother Han** or failed to report them.

The prosecution, however, alleges that **Yoon's** activities were connected to **Hak Ja Han**, and that she directed or authorized at least some of them.

The difference is crucial. If **Yoon** acted independently, the defense argues, his actions cannot automatically be attributed to **Mother Han** simply because he held a senior position in the **Family Federation**.



What will the court make of the inconsistencies in Yoon's testimony? Seoul Central District Court. AI-illustration: ChatGPT, 5th July 2026

What will the court make of the inconsistencies?

The defense's challenge therefore has two dimensions.

First, it questions **Yoon's consistency as a witness**, particularly where his accounts allegedly changed between different stages of the investigation.

Second, it points to **objective chronology**: text messages, purchase receipts, media reports and earlier statements that the defense says conflict with his later testimony.

The **Family Federation's** 6th August **statement** presents

these discrepancies as evidence that [Yoon's](#) testimony should not be relied upon to establish [Mother Han's](#) responsibility for acts classified as criminal.

That conclusion remains a defense argument, however. The court will have to assess the original documents, testimony and other evidence before determining whether the alleged inconsistencies materially affect Yoon's credibility.

With the first-instance verdict scheduled for 31st August, the question is becoming increasingly focused: **did [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) act as [Mother Han's](#) representative, as the special prosecutors allege, or did he sometimes act on his own initiative and later attribute his actions to the [Family Federation's](#) president, as her defense contends?**

The answer could have major implications for the court's assessment of [Mother Han's](#) personal responsibility.

NB. This article summarizes arguments presented by [Mother Han's](#) defense team and the [Family Federation](#), together with the account published by the South Korean daily [Munhwa Ilbo](#). The defense's allegations and interpretations should not be understood as established facts unless independently confirmed by the court or other reliable evidence.

Continued in part 3: [Defense Mounts Broad Challenge to State's Case](#)

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Changing accounts of handbag and necklace. Illustration: ChatGPT, 10th August 2026.

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