

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Mother Han Sentenced to 2 Years in First Trial

Knut Holdhus
August 31, 2026



Mother Han being wheeled into Seoul Central District Court on August 31, 2026. Illustration: Grok xAI, 31st Aug. 2026



Asked for 13 years: Min Joong-gi, the head of an army of special prosecutors with extensive investigative powers. Image: Grok xAI

朝鮮日報

Chosun Ilbo, South Korea's largest and most influential daily newspaper

경향신문

Kyunghyang Shinmun, a large and influential South Korean national daily, ranked among the top ten in terms of circulation

Hak Ja Han (83) sentenced in South Korea's "church - state" case as court rejects several allegations made by Lee Jae-myung's special prosecutors

South Korea's Seoul Central District Court on Monday, 31st August, sentenced [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자), leader of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) - in Korea often referred to as [Unificationism](#) (통일교) - to a total of two years in prison in the first-instance trial arising from allegations of unlawful political funding, improper solicitation and embezzlement. The verdict came about ten months after the special-prosecutor team led by Min Joong-gi (민중기) indicted her in October 2025.

The sentence is considerably below the 13 years in prison demanded by the special prosecutors appointed by the current left-leaning Lee jae-myung (이재명) administration. The court imposed one year for violating the Political Funds Act and another one year for violations of the Improper Solicitation and Graft Act and occupational embezzlement.

The South Korean media outlets reporting the verdict broadly agree on the central facts, but their framing differs. [Chosun Ilbo](#) and [MBC News](#) focus particularly on the court's findings concerning political money and gifts to former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희). [Hankyoreh](#) emphasizes the alleged "split donations" to People Power Party organizations.

[Kyunghyang Shinmun](#) (경향신문) places the verdict more explicitly within the broader allegation of political-religious collusion under the former Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열)

administration.

What the court found

According to [Chosun Ilbo](#), the court found that [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) - also called [Mother Han](#) - was involved in providing 100 million won (in 2022, ca \$77,000 USD) to then-People Power Party lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) in January 2022. The court accepted the prosecution's account that [Mother Han](#) instructed former World Headquarters Director Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호), through former chief of staff Jeong Won-ju (정원주), to take the money from an internal room and give it to Yoon, who subsequently delivered it to Kweon as political funding.

The court also found [Mother Han](#) and the other defendants guilty in connection with approximately 144 million won (in 2022, ca \$111,000 USD) in donations made to conservative People Power Party politicians and regional party organizations in March-April 2022. The prosecution characterized these payments as "split donations" (쪼개기 후원) - a method of dividing contributions into multiple payments in order to circumvent restrictions on political donations.



Hankyoreh one of South Korea's largest and most influential daily newspapers



MBC News, the news division of the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), one of South Korea's four major nationwide television and radio networks



Suspended sentence for Jeong Won-ju. Jan. 19, 2025



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

[Hankyoreh](#) gives particular prominence to this aspect, describing the case in its headline and subtitle as involving the alleged use of [Family Federation](#) funds for "split donations" to People Power Party metropolitan and provincial organizations.

A second major part of the case concerned expensive gifts allegedly intended to secure favorable treatment for [Family Federation](#) interests. The reports say these included a Chanel handbag and a Graff necklace, worth approximately 80 million won (in 2022, ca \$62,000 USD) in total, which were ultimately delivered to Kim Keon-hee (김건희) through the self-described shaman Jeon Seong-bae (전성배), commonly known as "Geonjin Beopsa."

According to [MBC News](#), the court concluded that the gifts were connected with efforts to obtain assistance for Family Federation projects and other pending issues. [Kyunghyang Shinmun](#) presents this as part of what the special prosecutors described as a "two-track" strategy: cultivating both Kweon Seong-dong and Kim Keon-hee (김건희) as channels for gaining access to the Yoon administration.

The court therefore accepted the prosecution's basic contention that the defendants were seeking political influence and government assistance for [Family Federation](#) interests.

Other defendants

The court also convicted several former Family Federation officials, although their sentences were substantially lighter.

Jeong Won-ju (정원주), formerly [Mother Han](#)'s chief of staff, received two eight-month prison terms, one for political-funding violations and another for improper solicitation and embezzlement. Both sentences were suspended for two years, effectively meaning that she does not serve the prison term unless the suspension is revoked.

Former World Headquarters Director Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호) was sentenced to six months in prison, while his wife, former Finance Director Lee, received six months with a one-year suspended sentence.

Important limitations to the verdict

The reports also stress that not every allegation brought by the special prosecutor resulted in a conviction.

Most significantly, the court rejected the allegation that [Family Federation](#) funds used in the split-donation scheme constituted embezzlement. [Chosun Ilbo](#) reports that the judges found insufficient evidence of an intention to appropriate the money unlawfully.

The court also dismissed the charges without reaching a substantive guilty/not-guilty determination concerning several other allegations because it concluded that they fell outside the legally defined investigative scope of the special-prosecutor investigation.

These included allegations that [Mother Han](#) and Jeong Won-ju (정원주) obtained information about an investigation into their alleged overseas casino gambling and instructed Yoon yeong-ho (윤영호) to delete it; allegations concerning the use of [Family Federation](#) money to provide funds or valuables to foreign politicians in countries including Nepal and Senegal; and allegations concerning the purchase of jewelry with organizational funds. The [MBC report](#) likewise highlights these dismissals, including the allegation involving more than 700 million won allegedly diverted through political support abroad.

Thus, while the verdict represents a significant conviction on the core political-funding and gift-related allegations, the court did not accept the entire case assembled by the special prosecutors.

Overall, the four reports portray the ruling as a partial judicial validation of the special prosecutor's theory that [Family Federation](#) officials sought political influence through money and expensive gifts, while at the same time substantially narrowing the scope of criminal liability by rejecting or dismissing several other allegations.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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FAMILY FEDERATION
FOR WORLD PEACE AND UNIFICATION

NEWS AND INSIGHTS



Calls For Renewal At Father Moon Anniversary

August 30, 2026 • The News Desk





Sun Myung Moon. Photo: FFWPU

Sun Myung Moon remembered at ascension anniversary as Family Federation seeks renewal amid mounting challenges during current wave of state persecution

Many South Korean media outlets reported on 30th August on the **14th anniversary of the Seonghwa (ascension) of Sun Myung Moon (문선명)** – also known as **Father Moon**. Generally, the reports portrayed the event not simply as a commemorative religious event, but as an occasion for the **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** – in Korea often called **Unificationism (통일교)**

– to reaffirm its identity, strengthen internal unity, and explicitly address the **religious organization's** present difficulties.

The reports were published while the four-day commemoration was taking place at the *HJ Cheonju Cheonbo Training Center* in Gapyeong, Gyeonggi Province, from 28th August through 31st. Various outlets emphasized the international character of the gathering, saying that members from South Korea, the United States, Japan, Europe and elsewhere participated both in person and online.

The Seoul-based online media outlet **TheReport** (더리포트), in an **article** by Shin Dong-rip (신동립), presents the event primarily as an effort to remember **Father Moon's** legacy of **“true love” and peace while renewing the faith community**.

TheReport

The logo of the South Korean online newspaper TheReport

The **article** reports that **Father Moon's** children and



Father Moon's and Mother Han's grandsons Moon Shin-chul and Moon Shin-heung and daughters-in-law Moon (born Choi) Yeon-ah and Moon (born Pak) Hoon-sook presenting flowers on 30th August 2026 at the 14th anniversary of the ascension of Father Moon. Photo: FFWPU

grandsons **Moon Shin-chul (문신출)** and **Moon Shin-heung (문신흥)** delivered *Hyojeong Letters* (letters of a heart of filial devotion), expressing their longing for and gratitude toward **Father Moon**. They recalled what the **article** describes as his lifelong dedication to the will of our “Heavenly Parent”, the salvation of humanity, and the causes of peace and unification.

TheReport places particular emphasis on their message in the context of the **Family Federation's** current difficulties. Moon Shin-chul (문신출) reportedly said that, despite the hardships facing the **movement**, its “roots of faith” would not be shaken and that its members would continue to follow what they regard as the right path.

Moon Shin-heung (문신흥) stressed the determination to pass on the tradition of love, faith and the **Blessing** to future generations and continue pursuing peace and unification.

The **outlet** also describes the formal program: a commemorative ceremony on 29th August, visits to **Bonhyangwon** – the sacred burial site and tomb – a memorial service, and special pilgrimage programs. At the 30th August commemorative worship service, Song Yong-cheon (송용천), president of the Korean chapter of the **Family Federation**, emphasized **Father Moon's** vision of a peaceful world in which humanity would live as one family beyond barriers of race, religion, ethnicity and nationality.

Significantly, **TheReport** highlights Song's call for the **Family Federation** to rebuild public trust through **transparent communication and responsible management**. The **organization**, it says, regards the anniversary not merely as a memorial but as an opportunity for **self-reflection and renewal**, acknowledging "moral responsibility" for matters that occurred during its past course and pledging to become a more faithful religious community.

The **article** also reports a **charitable initiative**: 64 participating organizations and members donated **126 bags of rice weighing 10 kilograms each, or 1,260 kilograms in total**, for distribution to socially marginalized people in the local area.

Finally, **TheReport** provides considerable historical background on **Father Moon**, including his death in 2012 and the condolence message and "Fatherland Unification Award" reportedly sent by North Korean leader **Kim Jong-un** (김정은). It notes that North Korean authorities also sent condolence messages and wreaths on later anniversaries. See **Grand Celebration of 80th Birthday**

The investigative journalism media outlet **Choishin News** (최신뉴스 – literally: The latest news), in a report by Moon Dong-ju (문동주), follows much the same factual outline but places somewhat greater emphasis on **spiritual solidarity among members and the messages from Father Moon's children**.

Its headline stresses the large overseas participation and the **faith community's** determination to strengthen its spiritual bonds. The **report** highlights the statement of Moon Shin-chul (문신출) that the **movement's** "roots of faith" remain deep and his appeal that members should **"look after True Mother"**, referring to **Hak Ja Han** (한학자) – .

See also **Mother Han Sentenced to 2 Years in First Trial**

Moon Shin-heung (문신흥) is quoted as pledging to continue working toward a world in which humanity lives as one family beyond barriers of religion, race, nationality and ideology.



The logo of the investigative journalism media outlet Choishin News (최신뉴스)



Choishin News also gives prominence to the call of Song Yong-cheon (송용천) to practice the values of **true love and peace** emphasized by **Sun Myung Moon** and Hak Ja Han. Like **TheReport**, it quotes Song calling for transparent communication and responsible administration in the **religious organization** so that it can regain the trust of the public and society.

The **outlet** says the anniversary should not remain merely a celebration of **Father Moon's** life and achievements. Rather, it should serve as an opportunity to consider how his ideals can be

Song Yong-cheon (송용천), president of the Korean chapter of the **Family Federation**, speaking on 30th August 2026 at the 14th anniversary of the ascension of **Father Moon**. Photo: FFWPU

translated into practical action today. It reports the **Family Federation**'s stated intention to use the occasion for **reflection and renewal**, while

acknowledging its "moral responsibility" and promising to fulfill its religious role more responsibly toward society, the nation and the world.

Choishin News concludes by saying the **Family Federation** intends to use the anniversary as a starting point for serving its neighbors and society and putting the values of peace and coexistence into practice.

The regional daily **Kyeongbuk Shinmun** (경북신문), in an **article** by Kim Chang-hyeon (김창현), provides the most extensive account of the anniversary and particularly detailed quotations from Moon Shin-chul and Moon Shin-heung.



The logo of the South Korean regional daily Kyeongbuk Shinmun (경북신문).

Moon Shin-chul is quoted as saying that the members' faith remains deeply rooted despite current trials and that their convictions will continue forward despite efforts to shake them. He also makes the unusually direct appeal that members should **care for Mother Han** (Hak Ja Han) and become a "tree" upon which she can rely.

Moon Shin-heung similarly presents the present period as one of exceptional hardship, saying that **True Mother** is carrying the burden of "cosmic suffering" on behalf of her children. He pledges that members will become more united around her and faithfully transmit the tradition of love, faith and the **Blessing** to succeeding generations.

Kyeongbuk Shinmun also gives particular attention to Song Yong-cheon's appeal for **"transparent communication and sharing"** and **responsible management**, describing these as necessary to build a healthier faith society and restore public trust.

Like other reports, **Kyeongbuk Shinmun** emphasizes that the anniversary is intended to be more than commemoration. The **Family Federation** reportedly wants it to become a moment of **institutional self-examination, renewal, normalization of the movement, and renewed commitment to social responsibility**.

The **paper** also reports the 1,260-kilogram rice donation and provides the same historical account of **Father Moon**'s death, the large international mourning ceremony, North Korean condolences and the later commemorative gestures from North Korea.



The logo of the South Korean daily newspaper Jeonguk Maeil Shinmun (전국매일신문 - Nationwide Daily News).

The **Jeonguk Maeil Shinmun** (전국매일신문 - Nationwide Daily News) published a **report** by Han Yeong-min (한영민) about the anniversary. Its principal emphasis is particularly clear from its headline: **"Reflecting on the life and peace legacy of Sun Myung Moon [...] 'Taking the lead in realizing a society of togetherness'"**

Rather than focusing primarily on the commemorative ceremonies themselves, the **article** repeatedly stresses the **Family Federation**'s stated intention to **translate Father Moon's ideals of true love and peace into social responsibility**. The **report** highlights the **organization's** pledge to reflect on its past, renew the religious community, **operate more transparently**, and regain public trust. The phrase **"a society of togetherness"** gives the **report** a somewhat more outward-looking emphasis than the purely spiritual language prominent in some of the other coverage.

The **Jeonguk Maeil Shimbum** presents the anniversary particularly as an opportunity for the **Family Federation** to reconnect **Father Moon**'s legacy with **social service, peaceful coexistence and responsible engagement with society**.

The emphasis of another daily, **Segye Ilbo** (세계일보), is **turning remembrance of Sun Myung Moon into practical expressions of true love, social service, and institutional renewal**.



The [Segye Ilbo](#) coverage of the anniversary event is more outward-facing. It presents the [rice donation](#) as the central tangible expression of the anniversary: remembrance is linked directly to helping disadvantaged people in the community. The [Segye Ilbo](#) article by Jeong Seong-su (정성수) portrays the anniversary less as an internal religious commemoration and more as an attempt to demonstrate **social responsibility and renewed public engagement** at a time when the [Family Federation](#) acknowledges that it is facing difficulties.

Overall picture



From the commemoration in Gapyeong, South Korea of the 14th anniversary of the ascension of [Father Moon](#). Photo: [FFWPU](#)

The most significant feature of the extensive media coverage of the anniversary is perhaps the language of **“moral responsibility”, “transparency”, “responsible management”, and “renewal”**. This represents a notable acknowledgment by the [Family Federation](#) that simply defending its founder’s legacy is not sufficient; it also needs to address the [organization’s](#) relationship with society and rebuild public trust.

Another noticeable feature of the South Korean media reports is that they remain largely **event-oriented and sympathetic to the [Family Federation’s](#) own framing**. Some of the media coverage reproduces the [movement’s](#) terminology – such as **“True Father”, “True Mother”, “Heavenly Parent”, “True Love”, and “Blessing”** – without independently examining those theological claims. Nor does the various reports substantially discuss the ongoing legal proceedings involving [Mother Han](#), even though the anniversary occurs immediately before her scheduled first-trial verdict on 31st August.

See also [Mother Han Sentenced to 2 Years in First Trial](#)

Thus, read in the context of the current controversy, the anniversary can be seen as serving **two purposes simultaneously**: commemorating [Father Moon](#) and reinforcing the movement’s theological identity, while also presenting a public message that the [Family Federation](#) intends to emerge from its current crisis through reflection, reform, unity and renewed social responsibility.

Text: [Knut Holdhus](#), editor

Featured image above: From the commemoration in Gapyeong, South Korea of the 14th anniversary of the ascension of [Father Moon](#). Photo: [FFWPU](#)

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