FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Moon Shin-chul, grandson of Sun Myung Moon and Hak Ja Han made head of FFWPU International Headquarters

Knut Holdhus
October 14, 2026



Moon Shin-chul addressing a meeting of Family Federation members in South Korea in April 2026



Moon Shin-heung, here speaking to members in Japan in August 2026

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

Leadership transition draws media attention as grandson takes the helm and Family Federation prepares a new generation of leaders

South Korean media have reported that the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), commonly known in the country as Unificationism (통일교), has established a new top-level organizational body, the World Headquarters, appointing Moon Shin-chul (문신출), a grandson of founders Sun Myung Moon (문선명) and Hak Ja Han (한학자), as its head. The appointments have renewed media discussion about the movement's future leadership and the possibility of hereditary succession amid the current legal difficulties and absence from the religious organization's day-to-day activities of Hak Ja Han (한학자), also called Mother Han.

On 13th October, several South Korean media outlets reported on the appointments, citing a 29th September internal document obtained by Japan's Mainichi Shimbun. According to the document, the World Headquarters was established as the Federation's highest-level organizational body, with Moon Shin-chul (문신출 - born 1999) appointed as its director. His younger brother, Moon Shin-heung (문신흥 - born 2001), was named head of the newly established Cheonshim Cultural Institute, which is responsible for overseeing cultural content and communications. The various media reports correctly state the brothers are in their twenties.

The reports identify Moon Shin-chul (문신출) and Moon Shin-heung (문신흥) as sons of Moon Hyo-jin (문효진 - 1961-2008), the eldest son of Sun Myung Moon (문선명) and Hak Ja Han (한학자).

Hankyoreh quoted the large Japanese media outlet Mainichi Shimbun as observing that, with Mother Han currently absent from the organization, her grandson would effectively assume a leading position. However, the Japanese newspaper also cited expert assessments suggesting that, given his young age and limited experience, the Family Federation would probably continue to be run in practice through collective leadership, with established senior officials supporting him.

Pressian, a prominent progressive, independent South Korean online news publication. Its name is a portmanteau (blend word) of the English word "Press" and the acronym "IAN" (Internet Alternative News)

JoongAng Ilbo, one of South Korea's largest and most influential dailies.

The online news outlet Pressian, in a 14th October report, framed the appointments more explicitly as a sign that hereditary succession was taking shape. Its headline described the development as Unificationism's own form of "hereditary succession". The article noted that the younger brother of Moon Shin-chul (문신출) had simultaneously been appointed to lead the cultural organization, interpreting the two appointments as part of a broader leadership transition. It also highlighted the timing: Mother Han, 83, was appealing a 31st August first-instance verdict sentencing her to two years in prison for offences related to political funds and alleged bribery.

The succession question had already attracted attention earlier in the year. In a 17th February article, JoongAng Ilbo examined competing interests surrounding the Family Federation's future leadership. It identified Moon Shin-chul (문신출) and Moon Shin-heung (문신흥) as Mother Han's preferred successors and highlighted the role of their mother, Choi Yeon-ah (최연아) - also known as Moon Yeon-ah (문연아), who previously served as Mother Han's chief secretary and is now chair of the Sunhak Educational Foundation. The article also mentioned Moon Hoon-sook (문훈숙), director of Universal Ballet, as another significant figure in the network surrounding the potential successors.

What the various South Korean media reports fail to mention, is the fact that there has already existed a World headquarters within the Family Federation. Doo Seung-yeon (두승연), aka. Ken Doo, was its director from August 2025 to September 2026. Before him, Dr. Song Yong-cheon (송용천) served as International President from May 2023, taking over after Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호), who held the position of Director General of the international headquarters since May 2020.



Dr. Michael Balcomb, here speaking in London on Sep. 20, 2026

At an international prayer meeting on Zoom 14th October, Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of the Family Federation in Europe and the Middle East, commented on the latest leadership change where Moon Shin-chul has been asked to officially take responsibility for the leadership of our international headquarters together with his brother Moon Shin-heung. Dr. Balcomb said,

"The last year and a half, they've been touring the churches of Korea and supporting True Mother, visiting her many times in detention. But now they're being asked to step up.

And in response to that, all around the world, efforts are being made to prepare the next generation of young leaders who can work with them in the time to come. And that's on every level.

And as you heard a couple of weeks ago, also here in Europe, where we're beginning the search now for the next continental directors."

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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South Korean media devoted extensive coverage to the first day of

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hearings in the appeal trial of Hak Ja Han (한학자), leader of the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (FFWPU), at the *Seoul High Court* on 13th October 2026.

See also Grandson Named Head of New World Headquarters

Bail request and health concerns

The major news agency News1 reported that a separate bail hearing was also held for the 83-year-old religious leader, widely known as Mother Han. According to the report, she told the court:

Logo of News1 (뉴스1), South Korea's largest private news agency and wire service.

> "I need to take medication, but I cannot do so without assistance; I am unable to do anything on my own."

Mother Han has been held in detention since September 2025, spending her time in a small cell. However, serious health problems led to the suspension of her detention in March 2026 to allow her to receive urgent medical treatment.

At the bail hearing, she asked the court to allow her to continue receiving treatment while living at home.

According to News1, however, the special prosecutors appointed under the left-leaning administration of President Lee Jae-myung (이재명) opposed her release on bail. Their response appeared to give little weight to the humanitarian considerations raised by her age and frail condition. They reportedly argued:

> "While we acknowledge the poor state of her health, it is unclear whether her condition poses a critical threat to her life."

The prosecutors' position has raised questions about how much consideration is being given to the humanitarian needs of an 83-year-old woman with serious medical problems. Their opposition to bail leaves open the possibility that Mother Han could be returned to detention once her medical suspension ends, despite her stated inability to manage even basic daily tasks without assistance.

Newsis reported that she, during the bail hearing, also expressed distress over the circumstances, saying that she found it painful and regrettable to face what she described as an incomprehensible situation after spending her life working for world peace.

The logo of Newsis (뉴시스), the largest privately owned news agency in South Korea

*The logo of **Yonhap News**, South Korea's designated public news agency and the country's largest wire service.*

Her lawyers cited her deteriorating health and underlying medical conditions, arguing that continued detention would make it difficult for her to endure the proceedings and exercise her defense rights effectively. Yonhap reported that the defense referred to three falls since her detention and worsening pre-existing conditions.

The court had previously ordered the suspension of her detention, with that arrangement due to remain in effect until 20th October

At the appeal hearing, the prosecution sought to overturn parts of an earlier judgment, arguing that the sentences imposed were too lenient. In August, the 83-year-old religious leader was sentenced to two years in prison over allegations involving unlawful political funding, gifts to former first lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희), and related financial offenses.

Mother Han now again denied the



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charges through her defense team. Her lawyers maintained that the key actions attributed to her had been carried out independently by former Family Federation World Headquarters director Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호).



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

The opening hearing before the *Seoul High Court's Criminal Division 13* brought sharply conflicting accounts of responsibility within the religious organization. According to South Korean news agencies and media outlets, the prosecution argued that the first-instance court had made factual and legal errors, while the defense challenged the reliability and admissibility of testimony central to the conviction. Yoon's own legal team, meanwhile, took the opposite position, arguing that financial support on the scale alleged could not have been carried out without Mother Han's instructions.

Prosecutors challenge acquittals and sentences



Min Joong-gi (민중기), the head of an army of special prosecutors with extensive investigative powers. Image: Grok xAI, Jan. 2026.

Many media outlets reported that the special prosecution team led by Min Joong-gi (민중기) challenged the August judgment on several grounds. The prosecutors argued that the first-instance court had wrongly acquitted Mother Han of certain embezzlement charges connected with political donations and had dismissed other allegations on the grounds that they fell outside the special prosecutor's authorized investigative scope.

One major point of contention concerns so-called "split donations" to the *People Power Party* (PPP), South Korea's conservative political party. The allegations concern contributions made through regional party organizations in March and April 2022. The prosecution argued that funds transferred from Family Federation-affiliated districts to facilitate the donations demonstrated an intention to misappropriate organizational money. News1 reported that prosecutors specifically challenged the acquittal concerning 210 million won transferred for donations to regional party organizations.

The prosecution also contested the dismissal of allegations involving attempted evidence destruction and other alleged financial misconduct. As Yonhap reported, prosecutors argued that the alleged evidence-destruction offense was closely connected to the suspected political funding arrangement involving former PPP lawmaker Kwon Seong-dong (권성동). They maintained that if the special prosecutor had authority to investigate the alleged illegal political funding, related attempts to destroy evidence could also fall within its remit.

Prosecutors further argued that the alleged diversion of Family Federation funds for overseas political contributions emerged during their investigation into the sources of money used to purchase gifts for Kim Keon-hee (김건희). They rejected the characterization of this as an unrelated investigation.

The special prosecution team also argued that the conduct at issue had seriously undermined the constitutional principle of separation of religion and state and the fairness of

The logo of JoongAng Ilbo, one of South Korea's largest and most influential dailies.

democratic elections. It described the original sentences as disproportionately lenient in view of the seriousness of the alleged offenses. According to Newspim and JoongAng Ilbo, the prosecution maintained that Mother Han had used the religious organization's financial and human resources to pursue reciprocal interests with political power.

Mother Han's defense blames former executive

Mother Han's defense team rejected the prosecution's account and reiterated that she had neither authorized nor been informed in advance of Yoon's alleged political contacts and gifts. The lawyers argued that the prosecution had failed to establish a conspiracy involving Mother Han and that the evidence directly linking her to the alleged arrangements depended overwhelmingly on Yoon's testimony.

According to Newsis and Newspim, the defense maintained that Yoon had independently pursued contact with former President Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열) and had not reported the meeting to Mother Han beforehand or immediately afterward. The lawyers argued that if the political contacts had been part of a shared plan, a prompt report to the organization's leader would have been expected.

Logo of Newspim (뉴스핌), a prominent South Korean economic and financial news agency and multimedia company based in Seoul.

The defense also challenged the admissibility of the testimony of Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호), arguing that Hak Ja Han's right to effective cross-examination had been compromised. The lawyers said Yoon had refused to answer important questions from Mother Han's side while responding to questions from the special prosecution team. They further argued that his statements had changed during the investigation and subsequent proceedings.

Newspim reported that the defense also questioned inconsistencies in Yoon's accounts of the alleged transfer of 100 million won to Kweon and the purchase and delivery of luxury gifts to Kim. These reportedly included a Chanel handbag and a Graff diamond necklace. Mother Han's lawyers argued that Yoon had made the relevant decisions independently and that the first-instance judgment should be overturned.



*Former chief secretary **Jeong Won-ju** (정원주), here on 19th Jan. 2025. Screenshot from FFWPU video, improved resolution by ChatGPT, 31st July 2026.*

The defense of former chief secretary Jeong Won-ju (정원주) also attributed the alleged conduct to Yoon, arguing that he had built political connections to protect his position within the religious organization and pursue personal interests without informing Mother Han or Jeong.

Yoon's defense, however, directly contradicted this account. As reported by Yonhap and JoongAng Ilbo, his lawyers argued that Mother Han was the ultimate decision-maker within the Family Federation and that financial support exceeding 100 million won could not have been authorized without her instructions. They maintained that Yoon's testimony concerning Mother Han's involvement was credible and that the ultimate beneficiary of the arrangements was the religious organization rather than Yoon personally.

Asia Today also reported that the court considered whether prosecutors assigned to the special prosecution team retained their authority to conduct the appeal following the launch of the new prosecution agency. The court accepted that their existing authority remained valid under the relevant transitional provisions and proceeded with the hearing.



*The logo of **Asia Today** (아시아투데이), a major South Korean comprehensive nationwide daily newspaper and multimedia outlet. Officially recognized as one of the country's 12 major general dailies.*

The case moves into its next stage

The charges stem from alleged events in 2022. Mother Han is accused of conspiring with Yoon and Jeong to provide 100 million won in unlawful political funding to Kweon in January that year, arranging split donations to the PPP, and providing expensive gifts to South Korea's former First lady through religious figure Jeon Seong-bae (전성배), known as "Shaman Geonjin", in an alleged attempt to seek favorable treatment for Family Federation interests.

In August, the first-instance court sentenced Mother Han to two years' imprisonment: one year for violations of the *Political Funds Act* and one year for violations of the *Improper Solicitation and Graft Act* and occupational embezzlement. It dismissed some charges and acquitted her of a separate embezzlement allegation connected with the split donations. Yoon received a six-month prison sentence, while Jeong received suspended prison sentences.

The competing accounts presented on 13th October leave the appeal focused on questions of evidence, responsibility, investigative jurisdiction, and sentencing. The prosecution is seeking a more severe assessment of the conduct, while Mother Han's defense argues that the conviction rests on unreliable testimony and an unproven conspiracy. Yoon's position adds a further complication, with his lawyers insisting that Mother Han's authority made the alleged actions impossible without her approval.

The *Seoul High Court* scheduled the next hearing for 2nd November, when the proceedings are expected to continue examining the parties' appeals and the evidence underlying the original judgment.

See also Grandson Named Head of New World Headquarters

***Text**: Knut Holdhus*

***Featured image** above: Dr. Hak Ja Han, aka. Mother Han, arriving in court in wheelchair. Here, at Seoul Central District Court 31st August 2026. Photo: Dr. Michael Balcomb, resolution improved by ChatGPT, 6th September 2026*

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