

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Song Yong-cheon responds to Government Puppet Religious Leaders

Knut Holdhus
January 15, 2026



Illustration of statement made by the Korean branch of the [Family Federation](#) on January 13, 2026

Korean Family Federation issues its official position on hostile remarks made at religious leaders' meeting with President Lee Jae-myung on 12th January

A statement issued by the [Family Federation](#) in South Korea to the media on 13th January 2026. Translated from the [text on the Korean language website](#) of the [Family Federation](#).



The Constitution of the Republic of Korea. Here, the first version enacted in 1948

Position of the Korean branch of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification Regarding Certain Remarks Made at a Meeting of Religious Leaders

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With a deep sense of responsibility, the Korean branch of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) hereby states its position regarding certain remarks made in reference to [our religious body](#) during a [meeting of religious leaders](#) held on 12th January.

First, matters for which the facts have not been established through judicial proceedings require a cautious approach.

Expressions such as "collusion with political circles" and "consensus on dissolution", which were mentioned during the meeting, risk oversimplifying or distorting the essence of the investigations and judicial procedures currently underway. In accordance with the freedom of religion and the principle of due process guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, all matters must be judged based on objective evidence and the law. Premature conclusions based on unverified claims only serve to amplify social conflict and hinder the fundamental resolution of issues. Determinations regarding the illegality of a specific organization and any corresponding punishment must be made solely through judicial

procedures.

Second, we make it clear that no illegal act can ever be justified in the name of religion.

There has never been any instance in which the [religious body](#), at an organizational level, intervened in elections or instructed illegal lobbying. However, should the investigation confirm that improper conduct by a specific individual did in fact occur, the [religious body](#) will not tolerate such actions, will hold those responsible strictly accountable in accordance with its regulations, and will take clear measures to prevent any recurrence.



The Korean HQ of the [Family Federation](#) in Cheongpa-dong, Seoul, here at the inauguration in May 2005

Third, we will faithfully engage in all legal procedures and fulfill our social responsibility through substantive reform.

The Korean [Family Federation](#) is fully cooperating with investigations and inquiries by relevant authorities and is humbly awaiting their outcomes. At the same time, we take seriously the criticisms and concerns that have recently been raised, and we are thoroughly reviewing the overall operation of the [organization](#) while progressively implementing substantive reform measures, including institutional improvements. We earnestly request that the media and public discourse maintain a cautious and balanced perspective until judicial conclusions are reached.

Taking this incident as an opportunity for profound reflection, the Korean [Family Federation](#) will strive to be reborn as a responsible community that is ever more faithful to the fundamental role of religion and that contributes to peace and mutual coexistence in our society.

13th January 2026

Korean branch of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#)



The flags of the [Family Federation](#) (top) and the [Unification Church](#) waving in South Korea. [Unification Church](#) is the former name of the [Family Federation](#)

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Continuation Of Trial: Who Was Really In Charge?

- January 14, 2026
- Knut Holdhus

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Witnesses heard at 13th January continuation of trial at Seoul Central District Court over alleged political donations from religious organization

The large South Korean daily Chosun Ilbo carried on 13th January an article with the long headline: "I Don't Know About Chairman Hak Ja Han": Unification Church Executive

朝鮮日報

The logo of the Chosun Ilbo

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Testimony Prompts Judge to Say, 'Is Yoon Yeong-ho the Chairman? [...] False Statements Constitute Perjury'

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The report from [Chosun Ilbo](#) reports on a pivotal courtroom moment in an ongoing South Korean criminal trial that examines alleged improper ties between a religious organization and a political party. At the center of the case is the [Family Federation](#), a globally known religious movement founded in South Korea, and accusations that it covertly intervened in partisan politics during the country's 2022 presidential election. The trial focuses on whether senior [Federation](#) leadership unlawfully directed mass political party enrollment and political donations in violation of South Korea's *Political Parties Act*.



First and foremost a spiritual leader: Mother Han, Dr. Hak Ja Han. Photo: FFWPU

The defendants include Chairman and Co-Founder [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자 – 82) – also known as [Mother Han](#) – and [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호), the former Global Headquarters Director. Prosecutors allege that the [Federation](#) attempted to exert political influence by orchestrating “split donations” to local branches of the conservative *People Power Party*, South Korea's main right-leaning political force. Such actions, if coordinated by an organization rather than individuals, are illegal under Korean law.

In South Korean campaign finance practice, the term “split donations” (Korean: 쪼개기 후원) describes a method by which a large amount of money is divided into numerous smaller contributions and then donated in

the names of multiple individuals. In many cases, those individuals are acting as stand-ins and may have little or no genuine role in the decision to donate. The purpose of this practice is to evade legal caps on political contributions or to obscure the true origin of the funds. An organization seeking to exceed contribution limits or conceal its participation may therefore channel money through members, staff, or other nominal donors.

In the case involving [Mother Han](#), prosecutors contend that 144 million won (ca. 100,000 US dollars) in funds belonging to the [Family Federation](#) were fragmented and funneled to lawmakers via intermediaries. Although the transactions were recorded as separate, individual donations, investigators argue that the money ultimately came from a single pool controlled by the [religious organization](#).

During a court hearing on 13th January, several former leaders of [Family Federation](#)-affiliated organizations testified as witnesses. According to the [Chosun Ilbo](#), their testimony followed a strikingly consistent pattern: they claimed that all politically sensitive actions – including recruiting [Federation](#) members into the *People Power Party* and delivering donations – were decided solely by [Yoon Yeong-ho](#). According to these witnesses, they merely followed [Yoon's](#) instructions and believed that [Chairman Han](#) had no knowledge of, or involvement in, these political activities.



Yoon Yeong-ho, here 9th August 2020. Screenshot from video by FFWPU

The [Korean daily](#) points out that this line of testimony prompted visible skepticism from the presiding judge, Woo In-sung (우인성) of the *Seoul Central District Court*.

At one point, the judge directly questioned the logic of the witnesses' claims, asking rhetorically whether [Yoon Yeong-ho](#), rather than [Chairman Han](#), was effectively acting as the [organization's](#) top authority. In hierarchical organizations – particularly religious ones – ultimate obedience is generally expected to flow toward the chairman or spiritual leader, not a subordinate administrator. The judge underscored that knowingly false statements in court could constitute perjury, a serious criminal offense.

One key witness, identified only by the surname Park, previously served as a regional director in *South Gyeongsang Province* and allegedly acted as a courier delivering political donations to local party offices around the time of the presidential election. Park testified that he complied with [Yoon's](#) directives even when they conflicted with what he believed were [Chairman Han's](#) intentions. When challenged by the judge, Park explained that [Yoon](#) exercised unilateral control over both personnel appointments and financial resources, leaving subordinates with little practical ability to object.

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Artistic impression of South Korean court hearing. Illustration: ChatGPT 22nd Nov. 2025

Additional testimony emphasized a sharp division between spiritual leadership and political activity. Another witness, also surnamed Park and formerly the head of the South Gyeongsang chapter of the *Universal Peace Federation* (an affiliated organization), stated that **Chairman Han** concerned herself exclusively with religious and spiritual matters. According to this witness, **Chairman Han** did not provide guidance on secular political issues and, to the witness's recollection, did not speak about party politics during religious events.

However, this portrayal was complicated by questioning from **Yoon Yeong-ho's** defense team. **Yoon's** attorney suggested that the internal power dynamics of the **religious organization** made it difficult for regional leaders to resist **Yoon's** orders, precisely because he was widely perceived as enjoying **Chairman Han's** trust. **Yoon** had been appointed Global Headquarters Director under **Chairman Han's** authority, leading many within the **organization** to assume that **Yoon's** directives reflected the **chairman's** will, whether explicitly stated or not. One witness conceded that this perception likely influenced compliance.

Taken together, the testimony reveals a central tension in the trial: whether **Yoon Yeong-ho** acted independently, abusing delegated authority, or whether he functioned as an extension of **Chairman Han's** leadership. The judge's pointed remarks suggest concern that witnesses may be attempting to shield senior leadership by attributing all responsibility to a single subordinate. As the case proceeds, the court must determine not only what actions occurred, but where true decision-making power resided within the **Family Federation** during the 2022 national election.

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Text: *Knut Holdhus, editor*

Featured image above: *Artistic impression of court hearings 13th January 2026. Illustration: ChatGPT 14th Jan. 2026.*

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