

## FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Hunger Strike over New Holy Mother Han Probes

Knut Holdhus  
January 16, 2026



Jang Dong-hyuk, leader of the conservative People Power Party (PPP) (2024)



**Opposition accuses ruling party of blocking new probes as political tensions rise, and opposition leader begins hunger strike**

Chosun Ilbo, the large South Korean daily newspaper, brought on 15th January a news report titled "[Jang Dong-hyuk: 'I Will Begin a Hunger Strike Urging Acceptance of Special Prosecutor Probes into Nomination Bribes and the Unification Church'](#)" (translated from Korean)

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This is by many regarded as South Korean politics entering another phase of confrontation. Jang Dong-hyuk (장동혁) is the leader of the conservative People Power Party (PPP). He announced that he would begin a hunger strike to pressure the National Assembly to approve special prosecutor investigations into alleged political corruption. His statement was made during a protest rally at the

National Assembly complex in Seoul, organized to condemn what opposition parties described as the ruling Democratic Party of Korea's (DPK) unilateral handling of special prosecutor legislation.



The logic behind the hunger strike appears to be Jang Dong-hyuk attempting to dramatize what he describes as a refusal to allow full transparency when politically powerful governing party figures may be at risk. The People Power Party (PPP), the Reform Party, and allied opposition figures argue that the Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) opposes the two proposed special prosecutor probes precisely because they could implicate DPK lawmakers and senior figures. Basically, the opposition frames the DPK's resistance as

self-protective – a way to limit political fallout rather than a principled objection.

According to the [Chosun Ilbo report](#), at the center of the dispute are two proposed new investigations. The first concerns alleged "nomination donations", meaning illicit money allegedly exchanged in return for favorable treatment during party candidate selection processes. The second involves claims that politicians across party lines may have received funds or other benefits from the [Family Federation](#) – by many still called by its former name the [Unification Church](#) – during several years when [Yoon Yeong-ho](#)

(윤영호) held a leading position within the [religious organization](#).



*Under investigation: Yoon Yeong-ho, here April 22, 2023*



*Cheon Ha-ram floor leader of the Reform Party (2023)*



*Min Joong-gi the head of a huge team of special prosecutors with extensive investigative powers.  
Image: Grok xAI*

Supporters of the investigations argue that these issues warrant independent scrutiny through special prosecutors, who in South Korea are appointed outside the regular prosecutorial system to investigate politically sensitive cases.

PPP leader Jang stated that he would begin his hunger strike at the exact moment another opposition lawmaker, Cheon Ha-ram (천하람) of the minor Reform Party, launched a filibuster in the National Assembly chamber. By choosing the Rotunda Hall – symbolically described as a place "where the voices of the people gather" – Jang sought to frame his protest as a moral appeal rather than a purely procedural tactic. Hunger strikes have a long history in South Korean politics and activism, often used to dramatize claims that normal democratic mechanisms are being blocked.

[Chosun Ilbo](#) writes that Jang in his remarks accused the DPK not only of rejecting the special prosecutor bills, but of doing so out of fear that investigations would expose corruption within its own ranks. He claimed that if certain seized phones and records were fully examined, they would implicate senior Democratic Party figures and even former presidential officials. He further alleged that an investigation into a former cabinet minister would reveal a broader pattern of politicians receiving money from the [Family Federation](#). These claims remain allegations, but they form the core of the opposition's argument that independent investigations are necessary precisely because ordinary prosecutorial processes may be politically constrained.

For those unfamiliar with South Korean politics, it is important to understand that special prosecutors have been overused in recent years as political weapons, often driven by the wish to damage rivals rather than uncover truth. Even though the governing Democratic Party itself instigated large investigation led by special prosecutors it appointed, party leaders are now claiming that existing prosecutors and oversight institutions are sufficient, and that repeated special investigations undermine institutional stability. Critics, however, counter that prosecutors themselves are subject to political pressure, making special prosecutors essential in cases involving powerful figures.

Opposition figures like Jang frame the DPK's position differently. They argue that the ruling party dropped or blocked the investigations because it anticipates severe political damage if the probes proceed. According to this view, the DPK fears that even the process of investigation – regardless of eventual findings – could erode public trust and threaten its hold on power. Jang explicitly suggested that the ruling party "knows its administration would collapse" if the investigations moved forward, portraying the refusal as an act of self-preservation rather than principle.

The broader political background is one of intense polarization. South Korea's legislature has increasingly seen filibusters, fast-tracked bills, and street-style protests inside parliamentary grounds. Special prosecutors, originally intended as exceptional tools, have become central to this struggle, symbolizing

competing visions of accountability and governance. To supporters, they represent transparency and justice; to critics, political escalation and institutional fatigue.

Jang concluded his remarks with a familiar Korean proverb: "The darkest hour is just before dawn." By this, he sought to reassure supporters that political reform and accountability would ultimately prevail. Whether his hunger strike and the renewed push for special prosecutors will change the legislative outcome remains uncertain, but the episode highlights how deeply questions of corruption, religion, and political power remain intertwined in South Korean democracy.

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# Religious Leaders' Meeting: Response To Remarks

- January 15, 2026
- Knut Holdhus

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## 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 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Translated from the text on the Korean language website of the *Family Federation*.

## 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 12<sup>th</sup> January.

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

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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.



The Constitution of the Republic of Korea. Here, the first version enacted in 1948. Photo: NZ 토끼들 / Wikimedia Commons.

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**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.

**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.



The Korean HQ of the Family Federation in Cheongpa-dong, Seoul, here at the inauguration in May 2005. Photo: FFWPU

13<sup>th</sup> January 2026

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**Featured image** above: An illustration of statement made by the Korean branch of the **Family Federation** on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Image: ChatGPT 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Edited

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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. Photo: FFWPU

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