

## FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Moonie Defense No Excuse - Assassin Gets Life

Knut Holdhus  
January 21, 2026



*Nara District Court in Nara, Nara prefecture, Japan (2007)*



[Sekai Nippo](#)

### **Yamagami sentenced to life for 2022 Abe assassination; Court rejects defense arguments that upbringing affected the terrorist's decision-making**

Tokyo, 21st January 2026 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

#### **"Upbringing Had No Influence," Nara District Court**

[See editor's note below on the above headline]

Assassination of Former Prime Minister Abe: Defendant Tetsuya Yamagami Sentenced to Life Imprisonment

by editorial staff of [Sekai Nippo](#)



*Tetsuya Yamagami, sentenced for the assassination of Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister of Japan*

In the trial of Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也 – 45), charged with murder and other offenses in the July 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三), a lay judge panel delivered its verdict on 21st January at the Nara District Court. Presiding Judge Shinichi Tanaka (田中伸一) sentenced Yamagami to life imprisonment, in line with the prosecution's request.

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There was no dispute over the main facts of the indictment, including the murder charge, and the central issue in the trial was sentencing. The defense had argued that even a severe sentence should be limited to 20 years in prison.

The prosecution emphasized the dangerous nature of the crime. While acknowledging that family discord arose after Yamagami's mother made large donations to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)), the prosecutors criticized his motive for targeting Abe, stating that there was "no room for leniency."

Judge Tanaka pointed out that although the defendant had an unfortunate upbringing, there was a "logical leap" in connecting it to the course of the crime. He stated that the act was "entirely the result of the defendant's own decision" and that it could not be said that his upbringing influenced his decision-making. He added that there were "no circumstances warranting substantial leniency".

The trial began in October last year, during which 12 witnesses testified, including Diet members who were at the scene, police officers, and the defendant's mother and sister. Questioning of the defendant himself spanned five days.

According to the indictment, the defendant shot and killed Abe with a homemade pipe gun while Abe was giving a campaign speech in support of an upper house election candidate in Nara City. In addition to murder, he was charged with four other offenses: violation of the Firearm and Sword Possession Control Law, violation of the Weapons Manufacturing Act, violation of the Explosives Control Act, and damage to a building, for a total of five charges.



*A floral tribute stand set up at Osaka Gokoku Shrine on 6th July 2024, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the death of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Organized by the Itagaki Taisuke Memorial Association*

The [religious organization](#) has not issued any comment regarding the verdict.

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**[Editor's note:** The quoted text in the headline highlights the court's rejection of the defense argument that the defendant's background mitigated responsibility.]

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# South Korean Drama: A Scarf And A Tie Too Much

- January 17, 2026
- Knut Holdhus



After months of costly investigations, long-term detentions, and public spectacle, the headline-grabbing revelation now is a scarf and a tie



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

It is unfolding in a country that, according to recent media reports, can no longer afford to pay its own armed forces. The money, it appears, has instead been diverted to sustaining a vast army of special prosecutors tasked with determining whether a former president – and certain religious figures perceived to have supported him – have in any way crossed the law. The laws in question largely inhabit the grey zone at the intersection of religion and politics, where boundaries are porous and interpretation does most of the work.

Complicating matters further, it has emerged that members of the current administration now championing these investigations may themselves have engaged in precisely the same conduct for which leading figures of the opposition stand accused. Judging by the sheer volume and intensity of media coverage devoted to every procedural detail, this has become such an all-consuming national fixation that the current opposition leader has launched a **hunger strike** – protesting the Lee administration’s apparent reluctance to apply the same investigative zeal to cases implicating its own ranks.

After months of investigations, long-term detentions, and public spectacle involving both political and religious leaders, the latest twist may strike outside observers as bordering on the absurd. The headline-grabbing revelation now dominating coverage is not a financial transaction or a policy decision, but a scarf and a tie – allegedly presented as a gift by the ailing “Mother of Peace”, **Hak Ja Han** (82), to former

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president Yoon Suk-yeol four years ago.

One of South Korea's largest dailies, the Chosun Ilbo, published on 16<sup>th</sup> January an article headlined "[Yoon Yeong-ho: 'Chairwoman Hak Ja Han Personally Handed Me a Tie as a Gift for Yoon'](#)". The [piece](#) contains reports of courtroom testimony that according to the paper significantly reframes the ongoing investigation into alleged collusion between the [Family Federation](#) – formerly the [Unification Church](#) – and political power during South Korea's 2022 presidential transition.

# 朝鮮日報

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At the center of the testimony is [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호), former World Headquarters Director of the [Family Federation](#), who stated under oath that Chairwoman [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) personally authorized and facilitated political outreach to then President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열), including the delivery of a scarf and a tie as gifts. This testimony directly challenges earlier claims from [Chairwoman Han's](#) camp that any political engagement was undertaken independently by subordinates and without her involvement.



**In same detention center as [Mother Han](#):** Former President Yoon Suk-yeol of the Republic of Korea April 25, 2023, in Maryland, USA. Photo: NASA/Aubrey Gemignani. [Public domain image](#). Cropped

According to [Yoon Yeong-ho](#), his actions on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 were neither spontaneous nor personal. He testified before the [Seoul Central District Court](#) (Criminal Division 27) that he had fully reported to [Chairwoman Han](#) in advance about his scheduled meeting with President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol at the [Presidential Transition Committee](#) office.

On the morning of that day, [People Power Party](#) lawmaker [Kwon Seong-dong](#) (권성동) reportedly visited [Chairwoman Han](#), informed her of the confirmed meeting time, and discussed the forthcoming encounter. Yoon stated that this exchange occurred openly and that [Chairwoman Han](#) was fully aware of, and engaged in, the political context of the meeting.

Most consequentially, [Yoon](#) testified that [Chairwoman Han](#) personally handed him a scarf and a tie, explicitly identifying them as gifts for President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol. This act, he emphasized, took place in the presence of senior aides and party figures, suggesting deliberate and formal intent rather than a private or symbolic gesture. This assertion contradicts prior statements from [Chairwoman Han's](#) representatives that she was "unrelated to politics" and that any gift-giving or political contact was conducted unilaterally by [Yoon Yeong-ho](#).

The legal significance of a scarf and a tie lies not in their material value but in their context. Under South Korean law – particularly the [Improper Solicitation and Graft Act](#) (Kim Young-ran Act) and the [Political Funds Act](#) – any provision of goods, services, or benefits to a public official or president-elect by an interested organization can constitute an illegal inducement if it is connected to influence, access, or political favor.

Religious organizations are subject to these restrictions when they engage in political activity. A gift delivered during a presidential transition, from the de facto leader of a powerful religious organization, may therefore be construed as an attempt to establish influence or goodwill at a sensitive constitutional moment. The issue is not whether the items were luxurious, but whether they symbolized an improper relationship between religious authority and state power.



**Perceived to have supported the former president: [Mother Han](#),** as she appeared on South Korean TV in Sep. 2025. Photo: Massimo Introvigne / [Bitter Winter](#)

[Yoon Yeong-ho's](#) testimony also raises questions of consistency and credibility. Earlier in the controversy, he had been portrayed – by both the [Family Federation](#) and its leadership – as acting independently, without explicit authorization from [Chairwoman Han](#). His courtroom statements now reverse that narrative, placing responsibility squarely at the top of the [organization](#) – at least for this particular incident. This shift may reflect a strategic legal recalibration, an effort to distribute liability, or a response to evidentiary pressure. Regardless of motive, the contradiction certainly weakens prior claims that [Chairwoman Han](#) was detached from political operations.

Finally, testimony from other [Family Federation](#) affiliates broadened the scope of the allegations. Witnesses indicated that political engagement was not limited to the conservative [People Power Party](#) but extended to the [Democratic Party of Korea](#) as well, suggesting a pattern of cross-party outreach aimed at safeguarding institutional interests rather than ideological alignment. This reinforces prosecutorial claims that the [Federation](#) pursued systematic political influence, rather than isolated or incidental contact.

Taken together, the testimony presented on 16<sup>th</sup> January could mark a pivotal moment in the case. In the current South Korean political climate, it looks like the army of special prosecutors will do their best to transform what had been framed as individual overreach into a potential example of organized, top-down political intervention by a [religious institution](#), with legal consequences extending well beyond a scarf and a tie.

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**Text:** Knut Holdhus, editor

**Featured image** above: [Yoon yeong-ho](#) speaking at a gathering in Gapyeong, South Korea on 8th May 2020. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by PeaceTV.

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