


FFWPU Europe and Middle East: 30 Days Longer in Jail Hospital for Holy Mother Han

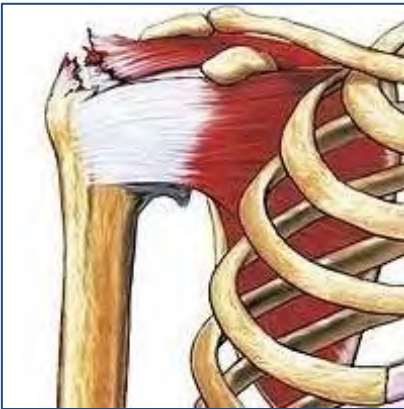
Knut Holdhus
April 30, 2026



[Mother Han](#) being sent from Detention Center to detention in hospital for urgent medical treatment on March 27, 2026

 **중앙일보**

South Korean daily JoongAng Ilbo



A tear of the supraspinatus muscle, the most common form of rotator cuff tear

Hak Ja Han given an extension until 30th May of her temporary suspension of detention to recover from surgery and related medical complications

On 30th April 2026, South Korean daily [JoongAng Ilbo](#) along with many other news outlets, reported that [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) - by many called [Mother Han](#) - the head of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), has been granted a further one-month suspension of detention as she continues to recover from surgery and related health complications. The [article](#) by reporter Ko Seong-pyo (고성표) points out that the decision, issued by the Seoul Central District Court - with Woo In-seong (우인성) as presiding judge - underscores how medical considerations are increasingly shaping the procedural timeline of a case that already carries significant political and legal weight.

[Mother Han](#) (83) has been under detention since 22nd September 2025. Korean legal procedure allows authorities to detain a person under investigation for as long as 20 days prior to indictment. [Hak Ja Han](#) was indicted on 10th October last year, and the court approved further extensions, so that she has already been kept well over six months in a tiny detention cell in spite of

her advanced age and frail health.

The latest ruling by the court's 27th Criminal Division extends [Mother Han](#)'s temporary release - originally set to expire at 2 p.m. on 30th April - until 2 p.m. on 30th May. This follows a request submitted by her legal team, which argued that her current medical condition necessitates continued hospitalization and rehabilitation.

Earlier this year, [Hak Ja Han](#) reportedly suffered a fall while in detention, resulting in a shoulder fracture and a torn rotator cuff, a group of four muscles and their tendons that stabilize the shoulder joint and enable arm movement. She subsequently underwent artificial joint replacement surgery, after which her recovery has required sustained medical supervision and physical therapy.



He was given life sentence, she 4 years in what some perceive as revenge on political opponents: Former South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and First Lady Kim Keon-hee, here in Tokyo 16th March 16, 2023

Although [Mother Han](#)'s legal team initially sought a two-month extension to allow for a fuller recovery period, the court approved only one month at this stage. She is required to remain at the hospital where she is receiving treatment and is strictly prohibited from contacting or communicating with any individuals connected to the case.

The [JoongAng Ilbo article](#) points out that this latest extension of time in hospital for surgery and recovery marks the fourth time the court has granted [Mother Han](#) a suspension of detention on health grounds. Such suspensions, while not uncommon in cases involving serious medical issues, can, however, become contentious when applied repeatedly in high-profile prosecutions. Critics sometimes view them as delaying tactics, while courts emphasize their obligation to ensure that defendants are physically capable of participating in legal proceedings.

[Mother Han](#) faces a range of allegations, including having been involved in unlawful political lobbying, violations of political campaign finance law, and bribery-related offenses. Her legal situation has drawn sustained public attention not only because of her leadership role within a globally known [religious movement](#), but also due to the high-profile political figures implicated in the case.

The investigation itself is tied to a broader probe involving First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희) and former president Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열), further amplifying its national significance. The harsh sentencing of the president - life imprisonment - and his wife - four years behind bars - is seen by many as the current left-leaning administration of Lee Jae-myung (이재명) taking revenge on its political enemies and their supporters. President Lee did not trust the regular South Korean prosecutorial system and appointed "special prosecutors" with extensive powers to investigate possible unlawful actions of the previous administration and leading persons perceived to have supported it, including a wide range of conservative religious leaders.



People Power Party lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong Dec. 23, 2024

According to the indictment, [Mother Han](#) is accused of having been involved in delivering 100 million won (roughly \$73,000) in cash to People Power Party lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동) in January 2022. She also allegedly orchestrated the distribution of 144 million won (ca. \$97,000) in [Family Federation](#) funds to multiple lawmakers through so-called "split donations", a method that can obscure the origin and intent of political contributions. "Split donations" is a tactic where rather large sums are divided into smaller amounts and distributed under multiple names in order to circumvent legal limits and disclosure requirements

Prosecutors further claim that in July 2022, [Mother Han](#) played a role in arranging for the delivery of luxury items - including a Chanel handbag and a high-value diamond necklace - to Kim Keon-hee (김건희) via Jeon Seong-bae (전성배), a figure described as a shamanic intermediary. These actions are alleged

to violate both the Political Funds Act and the Improper Solicitation and Graft Act, with additional accusations of embezzlement of organizational funds.

It is believed that [Mother Han](#)'s extended time in hospital will allow her to better prepare for the final phase of her trial where the final hearing is due to be held on 12th June.

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Vague New Law, Broad Powers: Concerns Mount

April 29, 2026 • Knut Holdhus

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A DANGEROUS LAW THAT THREATENS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN KOREA

WARNING: THE 'RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION DISSOLUTION ACT'
PROPOSED BY THE LEE JAE-MYUNG ADMINISTRATION

This vague and dangerous law would allow the state to **DISMANTLE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND SEIZE THEIR ASSETS** simply because their representatives have made comments on social or moral issues.

Scholar of politics of religion issues warning

CRIMINALIZES OPINIONS on moral and social issues

GIVES THE STATE EXCESSIVE POWER to dissolve and seize assets

TARGETS FAITH COMMUNITIES like the Family Federation and Shincheonji

THREATENS FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS of religion, expression, and association

"THIS IS NOT JUST ABOUT ONE GROUP— IT IS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM IN KOREA."

Politics of religion expert issues stark warning about vaguely

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worded “Religious Organization Dissolution Act” that would allow state to dismantle an organization and seize its assets because of comments on social or moral issues

On 28th April 2026, Professor Na Jeong-won (나정원), an emeritus scholar of politics of religion at *Kangwon National University*, published an [opinion column](#) in the daily newspaper *Segye Ilbo* addressing a controversial legislative proposal in South Korea. It was made by Representative Choi Hyuk-jin (최혁진) who joined the *Democratic Party of Korea (DPK)* in 2020 but has a long record of involvement in various leftwing parties including the *Socialist Party of Korea*, known for its anti-capitalism. The proposed bill



Proposed controversial radical bill: Leftwing national assembly member Choi Hyuk-jin from *Democratic Party of Korea (DPK)*. Illustration by Grok xAI, 29th April 2026.



Professor Na Jeong-won (나정원), an emeritus scholar of politics of religion at *Kangwon National University*. Image: Grok xAI, 29th April 2026.

is formally titled a “Partial Amendment to the Civil Act” but widely referred to as the “Religious Organization Dissolution Act”, has sparked debate about constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom and overreach of state power.

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Professor Na argues that, despite its stated goal of improving transparency among nonprofit organizations, **the bill poses a serious threat to core constitutional principles** – particularly **freedom of religion and the separation of religion and state**.

At the heart of the issue is a fundamental question: **should a government have the power to dissolve a religious organization?** While governments commonly regulate nonprofit entities, including religious groups, Professor Na contends that this proposal goes far beyond administrative oversight. Instead, he sees it as opening the door for direct state intervention in religious life, something that modern constitutional democracies

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generally seek to avoid.

One of the first concerns raised in the [column](#) is the way the bill is presented. **Rather than being introduced explicitly as a law targeting religious organizations, its provisions are embedded within broader amendments to civil law governing nonprofits.** This, according to Professor Na, **obscures its true intent and undermines transparency** in the legislative process. He suggests that such framing makes it harder for both lawmakers and the public to fully grasp the implications of the proposal. Existing laws already allow for the dissolution of nonprofit organizations under certain conditions, so singling out religious groups under a new and less clearly defined standard raises questions about fairness and legislative honesty.

A central criticism of the bill lies in its **vague criteria for dissolving religious organizations. The proposal allows authorities to take such action if a group is found to have “significantly harmed the public interest”.** While this may sound reasonable in principle, Professor Na emphasizes that the lack of a precise definition makes it highly problematic. In legal systems based on the rule of law, citizens and organizations must be able to predict what conduct is prohibited and what consequences may follow. **Without clear standards, enforcement can become arbitrary, potentially influenced by political considerations rather than objective criteria.**



The current Lee Jae-myung administration is trying to introduce a vague new law that would give the state powers to arbitrarily dissolve religious organizations, effectively violating the country's constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom. Illustration: ChatGPT, 5th March 2026.

The bill also introduces “violation of the separation of religion and state” as a reason for dissolution. Professor Na argues that this reflects **a misunderstanding – or even a reversal – of the concept.** In many democratic systems, including South Korea's, **the principle of separation is designed primarily to protect religion from government interference.** It ensures that the state cannot control religious institutions or favor one faith over another. However, **under the proposed law, this principle could be used in the opposite direction: as a justification for the state to penalize religious organizations that express political views or engage in public debate.**

This raises further concerns about freedom of expression. **Religious leaders and communities often speak about social and moral issues, which can overlap with politics.** According to Professor Na, **the bill could allow authorities to interpret such activities as improper political involvement, thereby exposing religious organizations to sanctions.** Even ordinary acts – such as a sermon addressing contemporary social problems or a religious individual participating in civic life – might be seen as violations, depending on how the law is applied. This, he argues, risks chilling both religious expression

and broader democratic participation.

Another major issue highlighted in the [article](#) is **the scope of investigative powers granted to government authorities**. The bill would allow officials to demand documents, summon individuals for questioning, and enter organizational premises without a judicial warrant. Although the proposal includes language suggesting that these actions are not part of criminal investigations, Professor Na questions this distinction. In practice, the ability to dismantle an organization and seize its assets resembles the consequences of criminal enforcement. Without judicial oversight, such powers could leave religious groups vulnerable to administrative overreach.

To underscore the potential dangers, Professor Na draws on historical examples. He notes that governments have often justified the suppression of religious groups in the name of maintaining public order or national stability. From ancient imperial decrees to modern authoritarian laws, such measures have frequently been **used to silence dissenting voices**. In the South Korean context, he points out that **no law since the country's founding has explicitly authorized the dissolution of religious organizations by the state**. Passing such legislation, he warns, could damage the country's international reputation as a society that respects religious freedom.

In terms of possible responses, Professor Na outlines two main paths. The most straightforward would be for the law's sponsor to withdraw it voluntarily, possibly replacing it with a revised proposal that addresses legitimate concerns without infringing on constitutional rights.

The alternative would involve public resistance at each stage of the legislative process, from committee deliberations to final approval. While he acknowledges that the right to resist is an extreme measure, he frames it as a last resort when fundamental freedoms are at stake.

At its simplest, the "right to resist" means that when state power becomes unjust or unlawful – especially when it infringes on basic freedoms – people are not morally or constitutionally obliged to comply, and may actively resist. The concept has deep roots in political philosophy. Thinkers like John Locke argued that if a government breaches the social contract – by attacking life, liberty, or property – citizens regain the right to resist or even replace it.

At the same time, the [column](#) does not place all responsibility on the government. Professor Na calls for introspection within religious communities themselves. He suggests that religious institutions must consider whether they have maintained public trust and upheld their social responsibilities. If religious groups are perceived as overly aligned with political power or as failing to act ethically, they may weaken their own ability to resist unjust policies. In this sense, safeguarding religious freedom is not only a legal issue but also a moral and social one.

Finally, Professor Na proposes a constructive way forward. Rather than pursuing legislation that risks overreach, he encourages collaboration among government agencies, religious organizations, and academic experts to develop a more balanced legal framework. Drawing on examples from the European Union and the United States, such a framework could clarify the boundaries between religion and state while preserving mutual independence. The goal, he suggests, should be a system in which both spheres coexist in a complementary relationship, guided by clearly defined constitutional principles.

Professor Na's basic argument is that the proposed law, though presented as a technical reform, carries far-

reaching implications. **By granting broad and ambiguous powers to the state, the law is likely to undermine the very freedoms it claims to regulate.** For an international audience, the debate reflects a broader and familiar question: the separation of religion and state. In Professor Na's view, the two must work together to "develop a Korean-style legal framework" with a firm commitment to the constitutional values that underpin a democratic society.

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Featured image above: Scholar issues warning about vague new law that allows state to arbitrarily dissolve religious organizations. Illustration: Chat GPT, 29th April 2026, edited.

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