

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: 3rd Extension of Mother Han's Medical Release

Knut Holdhus
June 29, 2026



Hak Ja Han, aka. Mother Han, here speaking in Seoul May 3, 2023



Mother Han wins 3rd extension of temporary release allowing her to remain hospitalized as tiny detention cell is regarded as veritable health risk

In an [article](#) published by the South Korean news agency News1 on 29th June 2026, reporters Choi Dong-hyun (최동현) and Han Soo-hyun (한수현) write that a Seoul court has once again extended the temporary release of

[Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자), the leader of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) - commonly known in Korea as [Unificationism](#) (통일교). This allows her to remain out of detention for another month while standing trial on a series of charges. The decision, handed down by the Seoul Central District Court on 29th June, marks the third consecutive extension of the suspension of her detention, underscoring the court's determination that her medical condition continues to justify her release under South Korean law.



[Mother Han](#) injured badly after fall during detention: A tear of the supraspinatus muscle, the most common form of rotator cuff tear

See also [South Korea's Slide Toward Authoritarianism](#)

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The [News1 report](#) explains that [Hak Ja Han](#) - also called [Mother Han](#) - who was originally detained several weeks before [her indictment](#) on 10th October 2025, has argued through her legal representatives that her health has [significantly deteriorated](#) during her time in custody.

According to her defense, she recently suffered a fractured shoulder requiring surgery and is also experiencing serious vision problems that turn continued detention in a correctional facility into a veritable health hazard. After reviewing the latest medical submissions, the court accepted the request to prolong the suspension of detention until 2:00 p.m. on 31st July.

The ruling does not alter the court proceedings themselves. [Mother Han](#) remains a defendant in a high-profile case involving allegations of unlawful political financing, illicit donations to politicians, bribery involving expensive luxury gifts, and the alleged embezzlement of religious funds. According to [News1](#), while temporarily released, she must continue to comply with strict judicial conditions, including remaining at the hospital where she is receiving treatment and refraining from any direct or indirect contact with witnesses or other individuals connected to the case.

Under South Korean legal procedure, a suspension of detention is an exceptional measure intended for defendants facing urgent personal circumstances such as serious illness, childbirth, or family bereavement. Although the order allows a defendant to leave custody temporarily, it does not affect the underlying indictment or the continuation of the trial.



Yoon Yeong-ho, August 9, 2020

Jeong Won-ju, here January 19, 2025

The charges against [Mother Han](#) stem from alleged activities in 2022. Special prosecutors appointed by the left-leaning current Lee Jae-myung (이재명) administration contend that she conspired with former senior officials [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호) and [Jeong Won-ju](#) (정원주) of the [Family Federation](#) to deliver 100 million won (approximately US\$73,000 at current exchange rates) in cash as an unlawful political contribution to People Power Party lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동), allegedly violating the Political Funds Act.

They also accuse her of directing the distribution of approximately 144 million won in [Unificationism](#) funds through so-called "split donations" to multiple ruling party legislators. In addition, prosecutors allege that [Mother Han](#) and former [Federation](#) executive [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호) arranged for luxury gifts - including a Graff diamond necklace valued together at around 80 million won - to be presented to then-First Lady Kim Keon Hee (김건희). The indictment further alleges that [Unificationism](#) funds were embezzled to finance both the political donations and the luxury gifts.

According to [News1](#), citing South Korean legal sources, the Seoul Central District Court approved [Mother Han](#)'s latest application for suspension of detention on 29th June. The decision follows earlier extensions granted on the same grounds after the court accepted that her medical condition warranted continued temporary release. Mother Han had been scheduled to return to custody on 30th June, but the new ruling postpones that deadline until 31st July while her trial continues.

As reported by [News1](#), South Korean law requires defendants granted a suspension of detention to comply with conditions imposed by the court. In [Mother Han](#)'s case, those restrictions confine her to the medical facility where she is undergoing treatment and prohibit her from contacting witnesses or anyone else involved in the proceedings. The suspension takes legal effect immediately upon the court's decision and represents a procedural accommodation for health-related concerns rather than a judgment on the merits of the prosecution's allegations. The criminal case itself remains ongoing, with [Mother Han](#) continuing to face trial on all charges.

See also [South Korea's Slide Toward Authoritarianism](#)

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Text. Knut Holdhus, editor

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judge

Tokyo, 26th June 2026 – Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper *Sekai Nippo*. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. *Original article*.

Part 2 of opinion contribution by Dr. Massimo Introvigne, Founder and Managing Director of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR)



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

Japan’s Supreme Court Finalizes Dissolution of the Family Federation

Serious Questions About Neutrality and Due Process

by Massimo Introvigne, Sociologist of Religion

Ignoring the Warnings of UN Special Rapporteurs; the Shadow of “Mind Control” Theory



The Supreme Court in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀)

The

extraordinary speed with which the judgment was delivered has also attracted attention. Although the case involved constitutional rights and the dissolution of a religious organization with a long history, the Supreme Court reached its decision in an exceptionally short period.

See also part 1: *Ruling Leaves Serious Questions on Due Process*

See also *Dissolution Case: Pseudoscience Shaping Verdict*

Given the gravity of the consequences, the Court's reasoning is strikingly brief.

Many observers expected the Supreme Court to dismiss the appeal, since it had already signaled a degree of predisposition on the underlying legal issue. At the same time, many had hoped for a more substantive examination of the constitutional and international law questions raised by the case.

Instead, the Court issued what amounts to a formal affirmation of the existing judgments rather than a genuinely substantive review.

The outcome also cannot be separated from the Supreme Court’s own earlier role. In 2025, the Court reinterpreted the *Religious Corporations Act* by expanding the meaning of “acts violating laws and regulations” to include civil torts. This new interpretation became the legal foundation for dissolving the Unification Church. [See editor’s note 1 below]

Having opened the legal path toward dissolution, the



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having opened the legal path toward dissolution, the Supreme Court has now completed the process by affirming the very outcome made possible by [its own reinterpretation](#).

Concerns regarding judicial impartiality also remain unresolved.

As [Bitter Winter](#) reported, the [Unification Church](#) [\[See editor's note 1 below\]](#) sought the [recusal](#) of Justice Masami Okino ([沖野眞己](#)) after it became known that she had participated in a seminar critical of the [Church](#) [\[See editor's note 1 below\]](#).

At that seminar, speakers denounced the [Unification Church](#) [\[See editor's note 1 below\]](#), endorsed the so-called “mind control” theory [\[See editor's note 2 below\]](#), and



AI-illustration of Justice Masami Okino ([沖野眞己](#)).
Image: Grok xAI, 22nd May 2026



Logo of [Bitter Winter](#), the world's leading online magazine on religious liberty and human rights.

portrayed the [Church's](#) activities as inherently malicious. According to the [Church's](#) recusal motion, Justice Okino herself made comments indicating that she had already formed opinions about the [Church's](#) nature and activities.

The Supreme Court [rejected the recusal motion](#) without explanation in a decision consisting of only two lines.

Justice Okino's signature does not appear on the [Supreme Court's decision](#), and it remains unclear whether she participated in drafting it. Nevertheless, the mere fact that the [recusal request was denied](#) casts a shadow over the legitimacy of the Court's final decision.

If the Court [rejected the recusal request](#), however, why did she not sign the judgment?

The [Supreme Court's ruling](#) brings the judicial proceedings concerning the [dissolution order](#) to a close. At the same time, however, many important issues remain unresolved.



UN Special Rapporteur: Clément Nyaletsossi Voule.
Photo: [Bitter Winter](#)



UN Special Rapporteur: Irene Khan. Photo (2024): Juan Carlo Ruff for the Philippine Information Agency / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

The [decision](#) does not respond to [concerns raised by four United Nations Special](#)



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Nazila Ghanea, UN
Rapporteur on
Religious Freedom
since February 2023.
Photo: Steinar Murud

Rapporteurs [See editor’s note 3
below]. They warned that the
Japanese government’s actions

against the [Unification Church](#) [See editor’s note 1 below]
relied upon an excessively vague concept of “public welfare”
that is incompatible with Article 18 of the [International
Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR).

Nor does the [decision](#)
address its continued
reliance on theories of
“mental harm” based
on the now-discredited
concept of
“brainwashing” [See
editor’s note 4 below],
or on standards such
as “social
acceptability”, which
are inconsistent with international law.



It also fails to examine the dangers of using civil tort liability
as grounds for dissolving religious organizations.

Nor does it consider what [precedent](#) this may establish for
other minority religions.

Finally, it does not address the implications of allowing
political pressure and media campaigns to influence the
interpretation of legal principles designed to protect
freedom of religion.

Believers will undoubtedly continue practicing their faith.
They will do so, however, without their places of worship,
without their assets, and without the legal protections and
organizational stability upon which Japan’s religious
corporations have long relied.

The Supreme Court insists that these are merely indirect
consequences. Yet it is difficult to conclude that this
characterization adequately reflects the profound changes
brought about by the [decision](#).

Japan has long presented itself to the international
community as a democratic nation committed to pluralism
and the rule of law. This case, however, raises questions
about how firmly those commitments will be upheld when
a religious minority becomes the target of political
controversy.

The Supreme Court had an opportunity to reaffirm
constitutional protections and restore balance to a process
that had been criticized on numerous grounds. Instead, it
chose simply to endorse the course adopted by the
government and the lower courts, without confronting the
fundamental concerns that had emerged throughout the
proceedings.

The [judgment](#) has now been rendered. Its impact on
religious freedom in Japan will become apparent only
gradually over the years to come.

See also part 1: [Ruling Leaves Serious Questions on Due
Process](#)

See also [Dissolution Case: Pseudoscience Shaping Verdict](#)

Featured image above: Dr. Massimo Introvigne speaking
at an international conference in Bordeaux, France 14th
June 2024. Photo: [FOREF](#). Published with permission.

[Editor’s note 1: Although Massimo Introvigne uses the
name “Unification Church” and also the word “church”,

please be aware that the [Unification Church in Japan](#) in 2015 changed its name to [Family Federation for World peace and Unification](#).]

[Editor’s note 2: In Japan, the “**mind-control**” myth has been a powerful tool used to stigmatize and suppress new religious movements (NRMs), particularly since the 1980s. The concept suggests that NRMs manipulate or “brainwash” their followers, depriving them of free will and rational thought. This narrative gained traction after the 1995 Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attack, when public fear of dangerous cults intensified. Although Aum was an extreme and violent exception, the incident cast suspicion on all NRMs, allowing critics, media, and the government to label diverse groups as manipulative or psychologically coercive.

The “mind-control” myth serves multiple social and political functions. It simplifies complex questions of belief, making it easier to portray converts as victims rather than as individuals exercising spiritual agency. This framing justifies legal and social intervention, including the coercive “**deprogramming**” of believers – sometimes involving confinement or psychological pressure to force renunciation of faith. Lawyers, ex-member groups, and certain media outlets have used the idea of mind control to construct NRMs as threats to family stability and national order, reinforcing social conformity and Japan’s preference for established, non-controversial religions such as Buddhism and Shinto.

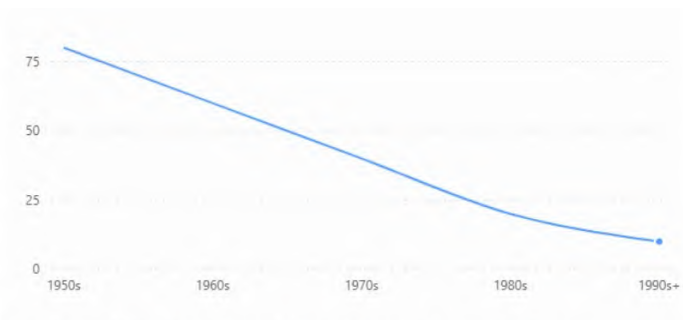
In recent years, the myth resurfaced following the 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose attacker cited resentment toward the [Family Federation](#). A public outrage largely created by media reignited scrutiny of NRMs, and politicians and journalists revived “mind-control” rhetoric to explain fundraising and recruitment practices. Critics argue that this framing discourages genuine religious tolerance and critical examination of Japan’s restrictive religious climate. Overall, the “mind-control” myth functions less as a scientific or psychological concept and more as a moral panic – a cultural weapon used to delegitimize minority faiths and to reaffirm mainstream social norms about religion, obedience, and the boundaries of acceptable belief.]

[Editor’s note 3: A **Special Rapporteur** (or *Independent Expert*) is an independent human rights expert appointed by the United Nations (UN) to provide reports or advice on human rights issues from either a thematic or country-specific perspective. These experts are selected by the UN Human Rights Council and operate independently of any government, playing a crucial role in monitoring the actions of sovereign nations and democratically elected governments.

Special Rapporteurs do not receive financial compensation from the United Nations for their work. However, they receive support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and are often funded by charities and corporations. Annually, they convene in Geneva to discuss common issues, coordinate their efforts, and engage with various stakeholders, including states and civil society organizations.

These experts frequently conduct fact-finding missions to investigate human rights violation allegations in different countries. In addition to these missions, they regularly review complaints from alleged victims of human rights abuses. If a complaint is verified, they send an urgent letter or appeal to the concerned government. Even without a specific complaint, Special Rapporteurs can intervene on behalf of individuals or groups at their discretion.]





Decline of the brainwashing concept in mainstream science. Illustration: ChatGPT, June 2026.

[Editor's note 4: "Brainwashing" was a popular term that emerged during the early Cold War to explain why some prisoners of war and political detainees appeared to adopt beliefs favored by their captors. The idea suggested that powerful psychological techniques could erase a person's existing beliefs and replace them with new ones against their will, almost like reprogramming a machine.

Over time, however, the concept was largely discarded by mainstream psychology and cognitive science as a scientific explanation of persuasion or belief change. Researchers found little evidence for such a process, that any special, unique process existed that could fundamentally override human autonomy and completely remake a person's personality or convictions.

Studies in psychology, sociology, and psychiatry showed that belief change is usually gradual, variable, and dependent on many factors: social pressure, isolation, coercion, rewards, threats, conformity, identity, and existing motivations. People can certainly be influenced, manipulated, indoctrinated, or coerced, but there is no scientifically demonstrated mechanism that allows a person's mind to be completely overwritten in the dramatic way implied by "brainwashing".

The concept came under especially heavy criticism in the 1970s–1990s during debates about new religious movements – by anti-religious activists and others often called "cults". Some experts testified that members had been brainwashed, while other scholars argued that the theory lacked clear definitions, reliable measurements, falsifiable predictions, and strong empirical support. Courts increasingly viewed brainwashing testimony skeptically because it often could not meet scientific standards of evidence.

A major problem was that "brainwashing" lacked a clear, measurable definition. Different writers used it to describe very different phenomena, from prisoner interrogation to religious conversion to participation in controversial groups. Because it could not be reliably operationalized or tested, it failed to meet basic scientific standards. Studies of prisoners of war and members of new religious movements showed that apparent ideological conversions were often temporary, strategic, situational, or reversible rather than evidence of a mysterious mind-control process.

By the 1970s and 1980s, many psychologists, sociologists, and legal scholars concluded that brainwashing functioned more as a cultural and political metaphor than as a validated scientific theory. Courts also became increasingly skeptical of expert testimony claiming that members of new religious movements had been "brainwashed". Today, scholars generally prefer more specific concepts – such as persuasion, coercive control, social influence, indoctrination, obedience, and group dynamics – rather than assuming the existence of a mysterious power that can completely rewrite a person's beliefs.]

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