FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Prosecutors' Revoke Holy Mother Han's Bail

Knut Holdhus
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Mother Han's bail revoked at request of prosecutors and return of the frail 83-year-old to tiny cell in Seoul Detention Center. Illustration: ChatGPT

Repeated trips to Gapyeong lead Seoul court to grant prosecution's request for bail revocation for octogenarian

Media reports highlight the court's decision to return the Family Federation leader Hak Ja Han (한학자) - also called Mother Han - to detention, following revelations that she repeatedly left her designated hospital residence to visit the movement's headquarters in Gapyeong.

See also Dispute Over Mother Han's Hospital Restriction

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Asan Medical Center, where since March 2026, Hak Ja Han has received hospital treatment for deteriorating health, including complications following repeated falls, a left shoulder fracture requiring surgery, serious eye conditions involving glaucoma and macular degeneration, and pre-existing cardiac problems including atrial fibrillation and heart failure

On 3rd November 2026, a South Korean appeals court revoked the bail granted to the 83-year-old leader of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), just 15 days after her release from detention. The decision followed revelations that she had repeatedly left Seoul Asan Medical Center, the hospital designated as her residence under the bail conditions, to visit the Cheon Jeong Temple, the Family Federation's principal facility in Gapyeong, Gyeonggi Province.

The decision by the Seoul High Court's Criminal Division 13 also meant that the 200 million won (approximately US$140,000) bail deposit would be forfeited to the state. The court cited violations of the conditions imposed when bail was granted, as well as concerns about possible destruction of evidence. Mother Han was ordered to return to Seoul Detention Center by midnight on 3rd November.

Several South Korean media outlets reported extensively on the decision, although some provided additional details about the circumstances surrounding the visits and the arguments presented by the prosecution and the defence.

Chosun Ilbo: Court questions defence's interpretation of bail conditions

Chosun Ilbo, in an article by Kim Eun-kyung (김은경) published late evening on 3rd November, emphasized the court's dissatisfaction with the explanation offered by Mother Han's legal team.



Chosun Ilbo South Korea's largest and most influential daily newspaper

According to the newspaper, her lawyers argued during the bail-revocation hearing that they had understood the restrictions on her designated residence but had not interpreted them as prohibiting temporary outings. They maintained that Mother Han had visited the Cheon Jeong Temple during the daytime to rest before returning to the hospital. They also explained that the visits had taken place following legal advice and with the hospital's permission.

The prosecution, however, argued that repeated visits to the Cheon Jeong Temple constituted a violation of the bail conditions and raised the possibility that Mother Han had come into contact with people connected to the case.

Chosun Ilbo highlighted a particularly pointed exchange between the judges and the defense. The court reportedly recalled that Mother Han's side had originally requested permission to designate the Cheon Jeong Temple as her residence when applying for bail. The court had rejected that request because of the ongoing proceedings. Against this background, the judges expressed surprise that her lawyers subsequently interpreted the conditions as allowing her to visit the very facility that had been excluded as her designated residence.

The newspaper also reported that Mother Han appealed personally to the court, explaining that she could not move around independently and asking to be allowed to receive treatment in the residence where she had spent years of her life.

Yonhap News: Legal grounds for revoking bail



Yonhap News, South Korea's designated public news agency and the country's largest wire service



Maeil Ilbo, a South Korean national comprehensive daily newspaper based in Seoul



Asia Today, a major South Korean comprehensive nationwide daily newspaper and multimedia outlet. Officially recognized as one of the country's 12 major general dailies.Asia Today, in a report by Jeong Min-hun, and Maeil Ilbo, in an article by Kim Hyun-tae, both emphasized the prosecution's argument that the repeated journeys raised fundamental questions about the necessity of medical bail.

South Korea's national news agency, Yonhap News, published its report on 3rd November, identifying Articles 102 and 104 of the Criminal Procedure Act as the legal basis for the decision.

According to Yonhap, bail can be revoked when a defendant violates conditions imposed by the court or when there are concerns about the destruction of evidence. The forfeiture of the 200 million won deposit followed under the relevant provisions of the same legislation.

Yonhap also reported the competing arguments presented by the prosecution and defence. The special prosecution team led by Min Joong-gi (민중기), investigating allegations involving former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희), argued that Mother Han's ability to travel approximately 100 kilometres round-trip between Seoul and Gapyeong repeatedly undermined the medical grounds on which her release had been justified.

Her lawyers maintained that the bail decision clearly restricted her residence but did not explicitly prohibit outings. They argued that the Cheon Jeong Temple was effectively the only practical destination where she could rest during the day without encountering the difficulties associated with ordinary public outings.

Asia Today and Maeil Ilbo: Repeated journeys of approximately 100 kilometres

The prosecution argued that someone whose mobility was sufficiently limited to justify medical bail, and who reportedly had serious problems with her eyesight, should not have been able to travel repeatedly over such distances.

Both outlets also described the original bail conditions. On 19th October, the court had designated Seoul Asan Medical Center as Mother Han's residence, required a cash deposit of 200 million won, and prohibited contact with anyone other than a limited group of people, including medical personnel, lawyers and those assisting with her mobility.

The two reports noted that the court's decision followed an emergency hearing on 2nd November, after her visits to the Cheon Jeong Temple became an issue during the appeal proceedings.

MBC: Return to Seoul Detention Center

MBC News, the news division of the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), one of South Korea's four major nationwide television and radio networks

In its television report on the evening of 3rd November, MBC News stressed the immediate consequences of the decision.

The broadcaster explained that Mother Han had been released on bail only two weeks earlier but would now have to return to Seoul Detention Center. It described the court's reasoning as resting on two principal concerns: violation of bail conditions and the possibility of evidence destruction.

MBC also highlighted the prosecution's argument that Mother Han's repeated journeys to Gapyeong were difficult to reconcile with the medical justification for her release. The broadcaster noted that she had previously been allowed temporary suspension of detention on health grounds and had spent periods outside prison despite receiving a two-year prison sentence in the first-instance trial.

JTBC: Hospital visits reportedly lasted only long enough to sleep

JTBC News (Joongang Tongyang Broadcasting Company), a prominent South Korean private cable television network launched in 2011. Known for its influential general programming, it features highly rated dramas, popular variety shows, and an impactful news division.

Perhaps the most detailed account of Mother Han's movements came from JTBC, which published an exclusive report by Lee Ja-yeon (이자연) on the evening of 3rd November, updated shortly after midnight on 4th November.

According to JTBC, its investigation established that Mother Han had repeatedly left the hospital, sometimes remaining away for more than 14 hours in a single day. The broadcaster reported that she was seen leaving the hospital's underground car park and travelling approximately 50 kilometres to the Cheon Jeong Temple.

JTBC cited an 18-page submission by the special prosecution team, which reportedly argued that Mother Han had been spending much of her daily life at the Gapyeong facility, including eating, resting and receiving visitors, rather than simply making occasional visits for medical or other unavoidable reasons. The special prosecutors claimed that she had effectively made the Cheon Jeong Temple her alternative residence.

The prosecution also questioned whether the restrictions on contact with other people had been respected. JTBC reported that the head of the Hyojeong Global Foundation, who also serves as president of the Family Federation's Central Administrative Office, had allegedly pushed Mother Han's wheelchair and driven her vehicle. The prosecution considered this relevant because the bail conditions restricted contact to medical personnel, lawyers and a minimum number of caregivers.

It's here worth noting that the allegations concerning possible contact with witnesses are the prosecution's arguments, not findings that Mother Han actually contacted witnesses.

Seoul Shinmun, South Korea's oldest daily newspaper, founded in 1904. Published in Seoul, the influential broadsheet covers general news with a nationwide circulation

JTBC provided a particularly striking example from Saturday, 24th October. According to its investigative reporting, Mother Han left the hospital at approximately 7 a.m. and returned at around 9 p.m. She reportedly left again at 7 a.m. the following morning, returning at approximately 9:10 p.m. In other words, the hospital may have served primarily as a place to sleep rather than as her actual place of residence during the day. None of the other news outlets reported on the alleged 14-hour absences.

Seoul Shinmun: Court rejects explanation of misunderstood restrictions

Seoul Shinmun, in a report by Kim Hee-ri (김희리) published on 3rd November and updated shortly after midnight, likewise emphasized the distinction between the defence's interpretation and the court's understanding of the bail conditions.

The newspaper reported that the special prosecution team considered the repeated journeys to the Cheon Jeong Temple a substantial violation of the restrictions. It also raised concerns that Mother Han might have met witnesses who had already testified or were expected to testify in the ongoing proceedings.

The defense maintained that Mother Han had understood the residential restriction but had not realized that it also prohibited her from leaving the hospital.

In August 2026, the first-instance court sentenced Mother Han to two years in prison. She subsequently

appealed.

The revocation of bail represents a serious setback for her and the Family Federation. The decision came after only 15 days of freedom and means that the movement's leader must once again face detention while her appeal proceeds.

For the Family Federation's members, the decision is particularly painful because Mother Han's release had been regarded as an important opportunity for her to recover her health outside detention. The court's ruling now brings that period to an abrupt end, leaving the question of her health and the conditions of her continued detention once again at the centre of attention.

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Russia's Pressure On Independent Faith Groups

November 3, 2026 • The News Desk

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A wave of searches following an undesirable-organization designation highlights mounting pressure on religious groups with international connections

An investigation targeting the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* (FFWPU), formerly known as the Unification Church, has raised concerns about religious freedom in Russia. The operation comes amid a continuing campaign against groups regarded by the authorities as undesirable, including Jehovah's Witnesses.

Russian law enforcement authorities have launched searches targeting members and premises associated with the Family

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Federation, in seven regions of the country. The operation, reported on 1st November 2026 by the major Russian newspaper Izvestia, represents a significant escalation of pressure on the religious movement.

Logo of the Russian daily newspaper Izvestia.

According to the newspaper, the organization's headquarters in Moscow is located in a small cultural center in the southern part of the capital. Security personnel reportedly searched premises connected with the religious community in several regions. Particular attention was allegedly paid to folders containing detailed personal information about members, including their health conditions, food preferences and personal habits. The newspaper described these files as extensive dossiers containing information about hundreds or even thousands of people.



The Izvestia headline for the article on the raids 1st November 2026.

The report also included an interview with a man who said he had first been approached by representatives of the movement with a question about whether he was interested in developing healthy family relationships. After completing a questionnaire, he was invited to visit the organization's premises. The Russian paper writes that in his view, the group preaches Christianity.

The way the recruitment encounter was presented is significant. Rather than focusing on any specific allegation, the report placed considerable emphasis on how the religious community approaches potential members and the personal information it collects.

Founded in 1917, Izvestia (Известия, meaning approximately "The News") is one of Russia's oldest and best-known national newspapers. During the Soviet era, it was an important official newspaper of the Soviet government. Today, it is part of the National Media Group, a major Russian media holding with close connections to the Kremlin. The European Union has also identified the group as part of Russia's government-aligned media environment. In May 2024, the EU included Izvestia among Russian media outlets accused of spreading Kremlin propaganda.

This background is relevant when assessing the newspaper's coverage of religious movements. It does not mean that every report is inaccurate, but readers should distinguish between independently established facts, official allegations and the newspaper's editorial framing.

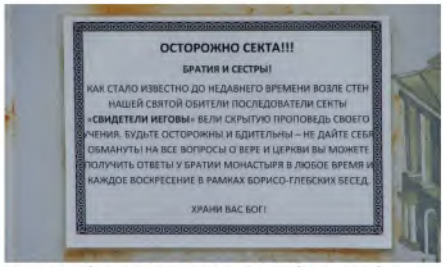
According to the 1st November report, "security forces" conducted the searches. The Russian term "security forces" used in the report is siloviki (силовики). It is a broad expression referring to personnel and institutions exercising state coercive or security powers.

The expression "operational-investigative measures", also used in the Russian reporting, can encompass surveillance, searches, questioning, evidence collection and other investigative activities.

There are substantial reasons to view the operation against the Family Federation in the context of a broader pattern of increasing state pressure on religious minorities and independent religious organizations in Russia.

The most prominent example is the treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses. In April 2017, the Russian Supreme Court banned the legal entities of the Jehovah's Witnesses as extremist organizations. Since then, thousands of homes have reportedly been searched, hundreds of believers have faced criminal prosecution, and many have received prison sentences for participating in religious activities.

The *European Court of Human Rights* ruled in June 2022 that Russia's ban



***Persecution of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia**: A public warning against the Jehovah's Witnesses in the town of Torzhok in Tver Oblast, Russia in 2012. The headline says "Caution, sect!!!" The text goes on to say, "Brothers and sisters! As became known recently, near the walls of our holy monastery, followers of the sect Jehovah's Witnesses secretly preach their teachings. Be careful and vigilant! Don't let yourself be fooled! You can get answers to all questions about faith*

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June 2022 that Russia's ban violated the *European Convention on Human Rights*. In October 2025, the Court's position was upheld in a further judgment.

and the Church from the brotherhood of the monastery at any time and every Sunday within the framework of Boris-Glebsk conversations." Photo: Artyom Svetlov / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int. Cropped

The pressure has not ended. In July 2026, a Moscow court ordered the confiscation of 123 properties belonging to Jehovah's Witnesses, transferring them to the Russian state.

Nor are Jehovah's Witnesses the only religious community experiencing pressure. The SOVA Research Center, which monitors religious freedom and discrimination in Russia, has documented increased administrative pressure on unregistered religious associations, including Baptist communities. Muslim organisations have also faced inspections and interruptions of religious services.

The Family Federation case may indicate that the authorities are extending their scrutiny to another religious movement with international connections.

There is, however, an important distinction: the Family Federation has not necessarily been subjected to the same legal measures as Jehovah's Witnesses, and the 1st November operation alone does not establish that a nationwide prohibition is being prepared.

Why has this happened now?

One particularly important development provides a possible explanation for the timing.

According to Russian media reports, in October 2026 the *Prosecutor General's Office* declared three foreign non-governmental organisations associated with the Family Federation undesirable in Russia:

1. The Universal Peace Federation (UPF).
2. The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification.
3. The Women's Federation for World Peace.

This designation appears to have preceded the 1st November searches.



Russian version of the Unification Principles, published in 1998 as Божественный Принцип (Divine Principle).

The designation of an organisation as undesirable is particularly serious under Russian legislation. It can make participation in its activities, cooperation with it or the provision of support to it a criminal matter under certain circumstances.

The Russian authorities have increasingly portrayed organizations with international connections as potential instruments of foreign influence. This tendency has become particularly pronounced since the beginning of the war against Ukraine. Religious organizations with international headquarters, overseas funding or networks of affiliated NGOs can consequently become targets of suspicion.

The Family Federation's international structure and its associated organizations may therefore have attracted particular attention.

The October undesirable-organisation designation may have provided the authorities with a legal and administrative basis for intensifying investigations into the Russian activities of the movement. The November searches could represent the next stage in implementing that decision.

The Russian state has increasingly emphasized national unity, traditional values and loyalty to the state. Independent organizations, particularly those with international affiliations and activities involving young people, can be portrayed as potential threats to social cohesion or national security.

This does not mean that every organization targeted by the authorities is necessarily politically active or opposed to the government. Religious independence itself, however, can become problematic when the state expects civil society organizations to operate within increasingly narrow political and ideological boundaries.

The Washington Times

According to The Washington Times, reporting from Seoul 2nd November a staff member from the Family Federation in South Korea, speaking off the record, admitted they were caught off guard by the abrupt restrictions from Moscow. According to the source, the Russian government had treated them very well for a long time, and they likely even received government grants for certain projects.

***Text**: Knut Holdhus, editor*

***Featured image** above: Collage describing the content of the Izvestia article on 1st November 2026. Illustration: ChatGPT, 3rd November 2026*

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