

South Korea Indicts Mother Han: A Democratic Nation's Descent into Religious Repression

10/10/2025 MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

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The question is now whether South Korea will remain a democracy that respects religious freedom—or become a satellite of China and a state where faith is punished.

by Massimo Introvigne



Mother Han, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. Credits.

On October 10, 2025, South Korea formally indicted Hak Ja Han Moon—known globally as “Mother Han”—on charges that include bribery, embezzlement, illegal political donations, and destruction of evidence. The indictment, delivered by special prosecutor Min Joong-ki, marks a dark milestone in the country’s escalating campaign against conservative religious movements. It is not merely a legal maneuver—it is a political earthquake, and a moral disgrace.

Mother Han, 82, is the co-founder and spiritual leader of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, a movement with millions of followers worldwide. She has spent decades promoting peace, interfaith dialogue, and humanitarian cooperation. Her arrest and now formal indictment are not just attacks on her person—they are attacks on religious liberty, on democratic norms, and on the very idea that faith can coexist with dissent.

The charges are a house of cards. The prosecution alleges that Mother Han directed the gifting of luxury items to former First Lady Kim Keon Hee and made political donations to conservative lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong in 2022. These acts, they claim, were intended to curry favor with then-President Yoon Suk Yeol. But the evidence is non-existing, and the narrative increasingly resembles a political screenplay.

Another feature of the case—the accusation that Mother Han orchestrated mass political enrollment of Family Federation members into the People Power Party (PPP)—has already collapsed. Prosecutors initially claimed that 110,000 members had joined en masse. That figure has now been quietly revised to 3,500, as reported by local media.

There is no evidence that the gifts to the First Lady and the politician—whose value is laughably low compared to bribes reported in other Korean cases—were given under the direction of Mrs. Moon herself, rather than as a personal initiative of a rogue Family Federation bureaucrat.

The addition of embezzlement and evidence tampering charges appears to be a desperate attempt to justify her prolonged detention. It's a classic prosecutorial tactic: when the original narrative begins to unravel, pile on new accusations to keep the target boxed in.

Mother Han's indictment is not an isolated event. It is part of a broader pattern under President Lee's administration—a pattern of targeting conservative religious voices that challenge the state's ideological agenda. The continued detention of Pastor Son Hyun-Bo, a vocal critic of the government, is a case in point. His imprisonment remains a chilling reminder of what happens to those who refuse to conform.

This crackdown is not about justice. It is about control. It is about silencing dissent, dismantling institutions that resist ideological homogenization, and sending a message to every religious leader in South Korea: your faith must serve the new government, or it will be criminalized.

The Family Federation is often caricatured in the media, reduced to headlines about mass weddings and political controversy. But beneath the surface lies a global movement rooted in principles of peace, family unity, and interfaith cooperation. Mother Han, known as the Mother of Peace to millions, has met with world leaders, spoken at the United Nations, and launched humanitarian initiatives across continents. To treat her as a criminal mastermind is not only absurd—it is dangerous.

Her arrest has already sent shockwaves through the international religious community. Faith leaders from multiple traditions have expressed concern, noting that South Korea—once a beacon of religious freedom in East Asia—is now teetering on the edge of authoritarianism.

The indictment of Mother Han raises urgent questions about the politicization of South Korea's judiciary. Is the legal system being used to settle ideological scores? Are prosecutors acting independently, or are they serving the interests of a regime increasingly hostile to religious pluralism?

The optics are damning. An elderly woman, recovering from heart surgery, is paraded through courtrooms while prosecutors leak sensational claims to the press. Her followers are vilified. Her movement is smeared. And the rule of law is bent to accommodate political expediency.

This is not how democracies behave. This is how democracies die.

We call for the immediate release of Mother Han. We call for the restoration of due process. We call for an end to the ideological persecution of religious leaders in South Korea. This is not just about one woman. It is about the soul of a nation. It is about whether South Korea will remain a democracy that respects religious freedom—or become a satellite of China, a state where faith is punished, and dissent is criminalized.

Let the world watch. Let the world speak. And let South Korea remember: the true strength of a nation lies not in its power to prosecute, but in its courage to protect the freedoms that make it whole.



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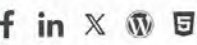


Massimo Introvigne

Massimo Introvigne (born June 14, 1955 in Rome) is an Italian sociologist of religions. He is the founder and managing director of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), an international network of scholars who

On New Religions (CESNUR), an international network of scholars who study new religious movements. Introvigne is the author of some 70 books and more than 100 articles in the field of sociology of religion. He was the main author of the [Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia](#) (Encyclopedia of Religions in Italy). He is a member of the editorial board for the [Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion](#) and of the executive board of University of California Press' [Nova Religio](#). From January 5 to December 31, 2011, he has served as the "Representative on combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, with a special focus on discrimination against Christians and members of other religions" of the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#) (OSCE). From 2012 to 2015 he served as chairperson of the Observatory of Religious Liberty, instituted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to monitor problems of religious liberty on a worldwide scale.

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