



## Free Mother Han! A Night of Prayer and Conviction Outside the Prison Walls

10/31/2025 MASSIMO INTROVIGNE

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Hundreds of believers and friends gather every night in front of the jail in Seoul where the Family Federation leader is imprisoned. We went to meet them.

by Massimo Introvigne



"Bitter Winter" editor-in-chief Massimo Introvigne outside the jail gate with Pastor Mark Burns and American and Korean Family Federation members.

On a cold late fall night, just outside the city limits of Seoul, my wife Rosita and I found ourselves drawn to a place of quiet resistance and unwavering faith. It was not a political rally, nor a protest in the conventional sense. It was a vigil—a moment of prayer and song, held by hundreds of devoted members of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, formerly known as the Unification Church. Their purpose: to stand in solidarity with Mother Han, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, detained under harsh conditions in the jail there.

We regarded it as our moral duty, while in Korea, to be present. To lend our voices, our hearts, and our prayers to a movement that transcends borders and politics. The air was crisp, the night long, but the warmth of faith and unity radiated from every tent, every whispered prayer, every hymn sung into the darkness.





*The jail's entrance at night.*

Among the faithful stood Pastor Mark Burns, a well-known American spiritual leader and close advisor to President Donald Trump. He had come to Korea during the President's visit, and with him he brought a powerful message of encouragement.

Pastor Burns had been granted access to visit Mother Han in jail. He found the conditions of her detention deplorable, yet her spirit remained unbroken. Together, they prayed and sang—an act of defiance against despair, a testament to the resilience of belief.

As Rosita and I moved from one tent to another, we spoke with believers—young and old, Korean and foreign—who had come from all corners of the country and from abroad. We shared two truths.



*Inside one of the tents near the jail where believers sing and pray.*

First, this is not about necklaces or designer handbags allegedly donated to a former Korean First Lady. This is about a calculated attempt to dismantle a church. The roots of this campaign trace back to the late 1980s, when left-wing lawyers in Japan, with Chinese influence, began targeting the Unification Church. Their aim: to silence the International Federation for Victory over Communism, founded by Reverend Moon, which had grown into a formidable ideological and political force. That success unsettled regimes, parties, and entire nations. Like sharks sensing blood, they circled. It took nearly four decades, but

the attack has now reached Korea, with Mother Han as its target.

Second, history teaches us that persecution often strengthens faith. The early Christians, Prophet Muhammad in Mecca, the Mormon founder Joseph Smith—all faced imprisonment, exile, or death. Yet their messages endured. You can jail a person, even kill them, but you cannot extinguish a message that is sincerely believed. We urged the believers to remain united, to stay strong. From this tribulation, they will not emerge broken—they will rise, reinforced.



Posters on Mother Han's case near the jail.

Whatever one may think of the Family Federation, witnessing hundreds of humble believers braving the cold night in prayer is profoundly moving. Their sincerity is palpable. Even skeptics, if they stood among them, would feel the depth of their conviction. This is not fanaticism. It is the belief that prayer is more powerful than prison bars, more enduring than legal persecution.

To the authorities in South Korea, we delivered a simple, urgent message: Free Mother Han immediately and unconditionally. Free Pastor Son, another religious leader unjustly detained. End what President Trump rightly called these "vicious raids on churches."

Faith is not a crime. And the night we spent outside that jail was a reminder that the human spirit, when anchored in belief, can never be confined.

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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 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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