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## Nobel Peace Prize for religious liberty

Hak Ja Han Moon deserves recognition



*Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon addresses the online participants from around the world at the ThinkTank 2022 Rally of Hope (Photo: Business Wire)*

### OPINION:

**By Massimo Introvigne - The Washington Times - Friday, April 10, 2026**

The nomination of Hak Ja Han Moon for the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize by Ján Figel' has drawn global attention, and rightly so.

Mr. Figel' is a former Slovak Cabinet minister and European commissioner and was the first special envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief for the European Union. He is one of Europe's most respected voices on human rights. His long history of defending persecuted religious groups gives weight to every cause he supports.

I believe Mr. Figel's nomination of Mrs. Han is both appropriate and timely. We support it for three compelling reasons.

First, Mrs. Han's decades-long work for peace is undeniable. Besides being the leader and co-founder of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (once known as the Unification Church), a global religious movement, she is one of the world's most influential figures in peace education.

Through the Universal Peace Federation that she co-founded with her husband, the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon, thousands of peace ambassadors, representing current and former heads of state, members of parliament, faith leaders and people of influence from every sector have supported efforts for peace.

She has continuously held global summits (which I have attended with world-renowned figures) and created platforms for interfaith cooperation on a scale few private individuals have ever achieved. She is also one of the world's most persistent advocates for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula, a cause that has eluded governments but still inspires millions.

Her contribution to peace building is significant, lasting and global. The Nobel Peace Prize has often recognized individuals whose impact goes beyond their religious identity. Mrs. Han belongs in that group.

Second, she has been imprisoned in South Korea for months under troubling circumstances. At 83, with fragile health, she faces charges many observers see as politically motivated and false. Her detention aligns with a wider crackdown on religious groups viewed as unfriendly to South Korea's current administration.

History shows that the Nobel Peace Prize has frequently honored leaders unjustly imprisoned for their peaceful advocacy. Mrs. Han fits this pattern. Her case deserves international attention, and her nomination underscores the urgent need to protect the rights of peaceful religious communities in South Korea.

Third, the situation in Japan makes this nomination even more important. A Japanese court has ordered the dissolution of the Family Federation in Japan, closing its places of worship, seizing its assets and stigmatizing hundreds of thousands of ordinary believers. This unprecedented action, taken without any criminal charges against the organization, has already led to discrimination, harassment and social exclusion.

Ordinary believers who have done nothing wrong are being treated like outcasts.

Even more concerning is the geopolitical impact. China has praised Japan's decision as a model for dealing with "problematic" religious groups. For a communist government that persecutes Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, Falun Gong practitioners and unregistered Christian communities, Japan's action is a propaganda gift.

It allows Beijing to claim that even democratic countries suppress religious minorities when it is politically expedient. That sets a dangerous precedent, undermining the moral foundation of the democratic world.

Mrs. Han has faced personal attacks in the Japanese campaign against her church. Recognizing her contributions to peace would send a strong message: Democratic nations must not copy authoritarian methods of religious control.

The Nobel Peace Prize has often served as a statement against injustice. Awarding it to Mrs. Han would confirm that peaceful religious leaders cannot be silenced by political pressure, whether in Seoul, Tokyo or Beijing.

The United States has long supported international religious freedom as a pillar of global stability. When allies stray from this principle, silence is not an option. Nominating Mrs. Han for the Nobel Peace Prize is a chance for the democratic world to reaffirm its commitment to the fundamental right of every person to believe, worship and live without fear.

This is a moment to stand firm. Mr. Figel' has taken a bold step. I support it and urge others to do the same.

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*Massimo Introvigne, an Italian sociologist of religions, is the former representative of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) for combating racism, xenophobia, and intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions. He is the founder of CESNUR the Center for the Study of New Religions.*

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