

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Juraj Lajda's Shared Prison Experience With Holy Mother Han

Knut Holdhus
January 9, 2026



Mugshot of Juraj Lajda from 1973. Photo: Archive of the Prison and Judicial Guard Corps of the Slovak Republic



*Artistic impression of [Mother Han](#) in detention cell.
Illustration: Grok xAI*



*Had vivid and intense dream: PhD. Juraj Lajda
Oct. 15, 2007*

As Mother Han has spent more than 100 days in a tiny detention cell, a former political prisoner from Czechia draws a striking parallel to his own experience of 3 years and 2 months in a communist prison

My Dream

A reflection from Prague, Czechia by PhDr. Juraj Lajda (Doctor of Philosophy), lecturer and publisher, former political prisoner under the communist regime in Czechoslovakia.

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As we write 4th January 2026, [Mother Han](#) – called "[True Mother](#)" by many – has been in [pretrial detention](#) in Seoul for more than 100 days. All hopes for her release have so far gone unfulfilled. She is enduring circumstances that few can truly imagine unless they have experienced them firsthand.

I deeply wish to express my support and to be close to her. The truest way would have been in person – to meet her, to stand by her side, and even to endure the same suffering she is facing, to take her place in the [detention cell](#) if that were possible.

But this is not possible. I live in Prague, and we are separated by great physical distance. Even entering her cell in Seoul Detention Center is beyond reach. The power of prayer alone cannot bring my physical body to her side.

Before Christmas, however, I had a very special, vivid, and intense dream. In this dream, I found myself

in the detention center where [True Mother](#) is being held. She approached me and embraced me warmly. This was not merely a physical embrace, but an inner one – rooted in deep understanding and profound empathy, where no words were needed. Words so often lead to misunderstanding, yet in this moment, without words, we understood each other completely. It was a state of inner resonance – resonance between two souls in harmony, on the same frequency. In such a state, a single look is enough to convey meaning, feeling, and closeness.

This deep sense of empathy arose from my own experience more than 50 years ago, when I went through circumstances similar to those [True Mother](#) faces now. I, too, lived through a time of persecution and danger.

More than half a century ago, under a communist regime in what was then called Czechoslovakia, I experienced severe persecution. Along with [18 other members](#) of the [Family Federation](#) there, I was sentenced to several years in prison on fabricated and false charges. The situation created a profound sense of shared understanding and belonging with [True Mother](#) – an understanding born of having faced the same threatening and oppressive environment.

In this way, I received an answer to my question and a fulfillment of my desire: how to express my support for [True Mother](#) and draw close to her during this time.



Where Dr. Lajda was imprisoned from 1973 to 1976 - the [Palace of Justice](#) in Bratislava, Slovakia

I want her to know that I am with her and thinking of her – not only in the general sense, as millions around the world surely are – but in a deeper way. I want to convey that I understand her feelings, her experience, her disappointments, and the realities of [daily life in the detention center](#), because I [lived through them myself](#) more than 50 years ago. In total, I spent three years and two months [in prison](#), including one year in pretrial detention.

We were accused of subverting the republic because of our faith in and devotion to [True Parents](#), and for spreading ideas deemed anti-Marxist. In our search for truth, we inevitably came into conflict with communist laws.

Similarly, I believe that [True Mother](#) now pursues a path toward world peace and is being unjustly persecuted for doing so.

Under communist regimes, the persecution of religious leaders was, to a certain extent, expected. However, it is deeply troubling that in a democratic country such as the Republic of Korea, religious persecution can still occur, and believers can be put behind bars.

In conclusion, I wish to affirm my faith and conviction that [True Mother](#) knows I am with her. I wish that this closeness were not only experienced in a dream, but also in reality. At the same time, I hold firm hope and belief that she will be released from detention soon.

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Faiths Caught In Expanding Political Crackdown

- January 8, 2026
- Knut Holdhus



South Korea expands probe into alleged coordinated political collusion by faiths, targeting their claimed benchmarking of tactics

The major South Korean daily Chosun Ilbo published 8th January an article by reporter Yu hee-gon (유희곤) with the headline "[Exclusive] Did the Unification Church and Shincheonji

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The logo of the Chosun Ilbo

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In early January 2026, South Korean authorities announced a significant expansion of an ongoing investigation into the intersection of religion and politics. What began as a probe into the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) – an internationally known Korean-founded religious movement – has now widened to include Shincheonji (신천지) [See editor's note below], another new religious group founded in South Korea. The move has become one of the top media stories in the country claiming that certain religious organizations may have systematically attempted to influence national elections, political parties, and lawmakers through coordinated membership drives, financial lobbying, and informal networks of power.



Lee Man-hee (이만희), founder and chairman of Shincheonji (New Heaven and Earth). Photo: [MBC PD 카메라](#) / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp

For Western audiences, the story requires some background. South Korea has a vibrant religious landscape that includes not only mainstream Christianity and Buddhism but also a number of homegrown



Hak Ja Han (한자한, also called Mother Han, in Munich, Germany 19th May 2024. Photo: Screenshot from HJ Global News 25th May 2024 / FFWPU

"new religious movements". According to the Chosun Ilbo, "two of South Korea's most representative new religious movements" are the [Family Federation](#) – led by its co-founder Hak Ja Han (한자한 – 82) – and Shincheonji [See editor's note below], led by its founder and chairman, Lee Man-hee (이만희 – 95). Both groups have become subjects of extensive probes by special prosecutors appointed by the current Lee administration in order to investigate alleged unlawful acts by the former Yoon administration and groups claimed to have supported him.

The current investigation is being led by a joint task force of prosecutors and police, formed to examine allegations of "politics-religion collusion". Authorities say they are looking into whether these groups provided unlawful funds or favors to politicians, and whether they organized their followers to join political parties en masse in order to sway internal party primaries. Such practices, while not always illegal on their face, may violate election laws or political finance regulations if carried out in a coordinated and deceptive manner.

A key theme emerging from the current investigation is the apparent parallel – and possible mutual imitation – between the [Family Federation](#) and Shincheonji [See editor's note below]. According to investigative reporting by Chosun Ilbo, South Korea's largest conservative newspaper,



Imitating the Family Federation? Here, the Shincheonji (신천지) Peace Palace in Cheongpyeong-myeon, on the same lake where the [Family Federation](#) has large facilities, in Gapyeong, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea. Photo (2020): Jhcbsl019 / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 4.0 Int

Shincheonji's leadership long viewed the [Family Federation](#) as a "success model" among new religions: a group that grew from a fringe movement into a global organization with political access, financial resources, and international influence. At the same time, the [Family Federation](#) is now accused of having adopted tactics

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similar to those Shincheonji [See editor's note below] was previously suspected of using, particularly in relation to election interference.

The [Chosun Ilbo](#) writes that this overlap is documented in internal [Family Federation](#) materials known as the "TM (True Mother) Reports", thousands of pages of reports compiled by senior [Federation](#) officials for Chairwoman [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자). In these documents, according to the large daily, Shincheonji [See editor's note below] is mentioned dozens of times, often as a point of comparison or competition. One report explicitly notes that Shincheonji had been "benchmarking" the [Family Federation](#). The report also suggests that internal turmoil within Shincheonji [See editor's note below] – particularly the defection of a high-ranking female leader – represented a critical turning point for the group.

That former Shincheonji leader, Kim Nam-hee (김남희), plays an important role in the broader narrative. Once regarded as second only to Lee Man-hee (이만희), Kim left the organization in 2017 and later became a vocal critic, accusing Shincheonji's leadership of financial misconduct and abuse of power. Her allegations contributed to criminal complaints against Lee, who was eventually convicted –

though on narrower charges than initially alleged – related to embezzlement and obstruction of public health efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The political dimension of Shincheonji's activities has been controversial for more than a decade. Critics allege that the group systematically encouraged its members to join conservative political parties under false pretenses, then vote as a bloc in party primaries. The goal, according to these claims, was not ideological alignment but strategic influence: ensuring that candidates perceived as friendly or non-hostile to the group would advance. Similar allegations surfaced during the elections that brought former Presidents Lee Myung-bak (이명박) and Park Geun-hye (박근혜) to power, though investigations at the time did not result in major prosecutions.

These accusations resurfaced with renewed force during the 2022 presidential election. Shincheonji [See editor's note below] is suspected of having mobilized large numbers of members to join the conservative People Power Party ahead of its internal primary. One losing candidate later alleged that as many as 100,000 Shincheonji followers became voting party members as part of an informal quid pro quo involving prosecutorial leniency toward the group. While these claims remain contested, they have placed Shincheonji back under official scrutiny for the first time in several years.



Yoon Yeong-ho, Dec 6, 2020. Screenshot from Peacelink TV

The [Family Federation](#), meanwhile, faces its own legal troubles, largely stemming from the years that [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호) held a key leadership position.

Prosecutors allege that [Federation](#) officials provided unlawful political funding and organizational support to the conservative presidential campaign in 2022.

Unlike earlier Shincheonji cases [See editor's note below], these allegations have already resulted in indictments, and court proceedings are ongoing. The irony, highlighted by Chosun Ilbo, is that in the realm of political intervention, Shincheonji appears to have pioneered certain methods before [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) of the [Family Federation](#) later adopted similar approaches – raising questions about whether the "benchmarking" may have



A closure order put up by the public health authorities at the main entrance of the Daegu branch of Shincheonji at the start of the Corona epidemic in 2020, when the Shincheonji Church of Jesus faced intense scrutiny and persecution – rooted more in stigma than purely public health concerns. It happened after a woman, later dubbed "Patient 31", attended two services in Daegu at Shincheonji's regional branch. She unknowingly became a super-spreader, infecting dozens of worshippers in tightly packed masses. Photo: Namoroka / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 0 Int

run in both directions.

The political fallout has been immediate. As police recently uncovered evidence suggesting the [Family Federation](#) also lobbied lawmakers from the liberal Democratic Party, President Lee Jae-myung (이재명) ordered the creation of a broader joint investigative task force that includes Shincheonji [See editor's note below]. Opposition parties, however, argue that expanding the probe is a strategic distraction – an attempt to dilute scrutiny of alleged lobbying involving ruling-party figures by lumping multiple religious organizations together. They are calling for an independent special prosecutor to ensure political neutrality.

What is already clear, however, is that the huge investigation with hundreds of investigators and police involved has implications that extend well beyond any single religious organization. More churches have been raided by police and are under investigation. Pastor Son Hyun-bo (손현보), the head of a large Christian megachurch, has been held in detention since early September, in the same detention center where [Hak Ja Han](#), the co-founder of the [Family Federation](#), has been detained for more than 100 days in a tiny cell.

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Imitating the [Family Federation](#)'s World Culture and Sports Festival? On 16th September 2012, Shincheonji hosted its own World Peace Festival – the 6th Shincheonji National Olympiad in Olympic Stadium in Seoul. Photo: Junganghansik / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp

[**Editor's note:** [Shincheonji](#), officially known as [Shincheonji Church of Jesus](#), the [Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony](#), is a new religious movement founded in South Korea in 1984 by Lee Man-hee, who claims to be the promised pastor mentioned in the Bible's Book of Revelation. Shincheonji teaches that the Book of Revelation is being fulfilled through its church and that Lee Man-hee has received divine revelation to interpret it.]

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Pastor Son Hyun-bo, here August 2025. Photo: [Bitter Winter](#)

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