

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: 14 Months for Young ho Yoon, Unificationist Leader

Knut Holdhus
January 28, 2026



A man being sentenced in a South Korean court. Illustration: Chat GPT

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법률신문

The Law Times of Korea



Yoon Yeong-ho, Dec. 5, 2021

South Korean court hands prison term to former executive Yoon Yeong-ho in influence-peddling lobbying case

Korea's primary legal newspaper, The Law Times (법률신문), carried on 28th January 2026, an article written by reporter Kim Ji-su (김지수) headlined "[\[Ruling\] Former Unification Church Headquarters Director Yoon Yeong-ho, Who Lobbied on Behalf of the Church, Sentenced to 1 Year and 2 Months in Prison at First Trial](#)"

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A South Korean court has sentenced a senior former official of the [Family Federation](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) to more than a year in prison, marking a significant moment in an ongoing series of scandals involving religion, money, and political influence at the highest levels of government.

On 28th January 2026, the Seoul Central District Court - Presiding Judge Woo In-seong (우인성) - ruled that [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) (윤영호), the former World Headquarters director of the [Family](#)

[Federation](#) (a religious organization founded in South Korea), was guilty of multiple criminal offenses connected to unlawful lobbying and the misuse of [Federation](#) funds. The court imposed a combined sentence of one year and two months in prison at the conclusion of the first trial.

According to [The Law Times](#), the case centers on allegations that [Yoon](#) used the financial resources of the [Family Federation](#) to gain political favor by offering large sums of money and luxury gifts to powerful figures closely connected to South Korea's president. According to the court, these actions were intended to influence government decisions on issues of interest to the [religious organization](#).



Specifically, the court found that in January 2022, [Yoon](#) illegally gave 100 million won (roughly USD 75,000 at the time) to Kweon Seong-dong (권성동), a prominent lawmaker from the ruling People Power Party. This payment was deemed a violation of South Korea's Political Funds Act, which strictly regulates donations and prohibits unreported or indirect political contributions.

In a separate incident later that year, [Yoon](#) was found guilty of violating South Korea's Improper Solicitation and Graft Act, an anti-corruption law similar in spirit to Western anti-bribery statutes. In July 2022, he arranged for expensive gifts to be delivered to First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희), the wife of President Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열). These gifts - channeled through an intermediary religious figure - reportedly included a luxury Chanel handbag, premium ginseng products, and a high-end Graff diamond necklace, together worth tens of millions of

won.

Crucially, the court also determined that [Yoon](#) did not pay for these items out of his own pocket. Instead, he later reimbursed himself using [Federation](#) funds, leading to a conviction for occupational embezzlement. Judges ruled that this constituted an abuse of his position within the [organization](#) and a misuse of donated religious assets for personal and political purposes.



However, not all charges were upheld. The court acquitted Yoon of one allegation related to a separate gift of a Chanel handbag earlier in April 2022, finding insufficient grounds to label that specific act illegal. In addition, prosecutors accused [Yoon](#) of destroying evidence after obtaining inside information about a police investigation involving [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자), co-founder and current leader of the [Family Federation](#). That charge was dismissed entirely, as the court ruled it fell outside the legal scope of the special prosecutor's authority.

In explaining its decision, the court emphasized the broader implications of the case. Judges described [Yoon](#)'s conduct as a deliberate attempt to leverage the wealth of a powerful [religious organization](#) to gain access to, and favor from, individuals at the core of political power. Such actions, the court said, undermine public confidence in democratic governance and the fair implementation of state policy.

The sentence was notably lighter than what prosecutors had requested. In December, a special prosecutor team had sought four years in prison, arguing that [Yoon](#) acted as the [Family Federation](#)'s de facto second-in-command and carried out these actions under the direct instruction of its leader. The court cited mitigating factors, including [Yoon](#)'s cooperation with investigators and truthful testimony in related cases.

For Western observers, the case highlights ongoing concerns in South Korea about the blurred boundaries between religion, money, and politics - and the legal system's attempt to address them through anti-corruption laws and high-profile prosecutions.

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Your Message *

1. Background to the Creation of the "TM Special Report"



Yoon Yeong-ho, here 6th December 2020. Screenshot from transmission by FFWPU

Regarding the circumstances of its creation, we present below a report prepared by an individual who worked as a staff member under Yoon Yeong-ho (윤영호) – former World Headquarters Director. According to this report, it is strongly suggested that the "TM Special Report" may contain intentional omissions, alterations, and additions.

Report from Korea [Actual Conditions Concerning the TM Special Report]

(1) Existence of Materials Possibly Omitted Intentionally

Mr. Yoon initially explained to Federation officials that he would submit more than 5,000 pages of materials to the prosecution. However, the materials actually submitted ultimately amounted to approximately 3,000 pages, resulting in a significant discrepancy in volume. It has been pointed out that, behind this discrepancy, there may have been a considerable number of materials and reports that were intentionally excluded by Mr. Yoon himself.

In fact, according to testimony from multiple staff members who directly sent reports to Mr. Yoon at the time, there are confirmed cases in which materials they submitted were not reflected in the final report or do not appear to exist in the records. These points are considered to suggest the possibility that specific materials or reports were intentionally omitted.

(2) Existence of Materials Suspected of Intentional Alteration or Addition

Upon examining the dates in the report, it can be observed that, in the early part of the year, the year notation was not corrected. For example, reports for January 2022 are recorded as January 2021, and reports for January 2023 are recorded as January 2022.

In relation to this, it has been pointed out that the contents of the report may have been added to or modified in order to demonstrate that Mr. Yoon had reported to President Han (한학자) prior to his meeting on 5th January 2022, with Mr. Kweon Seong-dong (권성동), a prominent Korean politician. The report that is said to have been added bears the date 3rd January 2022, but in terms of its content, it corresponds to a report dated 3rd January 2023.

These matters have been, or may in the future be, subject to factual determination in Korean judicial proceedings, and it cannot be denied that there is suspicion that intentional modifications or additions were made at least in a manner favorable to Mr. Yoon. Furthermore, the exact scope and volume of such modifications or additions cannot be ascertained by anyone other than Mr. Yoon himself.



People Power Party lawmaker Kweon Seong-dong (권성동), here 23rd Dec. 2024. Photo: 국민의힘TV / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp. Cropped

(3) On Field Reports Reviewed and Supplemented by World Headquarters Staff and by Mr. Yoon

Reports submitted from the field were normally translated and then reviewed and supplemented by headquarters staff before being submitted to President Han. Behind this process, it is believed that there was an attitude of trying to present the content in a positive light out of religious consideration, as well as an intention to emphasize the achievements of the reporter – namely, Mr. Yoon.

As a result, numerical figures were sometimes revised upward, and expressions exaggerating the facts were used, and testimony indicates that this had become routine to a certain extent at the time. Furthermore, because additional revisions were made by Mr. Yoon himself at the final submission stage, field leaders were unable to ascertain what differences had arisen between the original reports they submitted and the final reports.

2. Circumstances Surrounding the Leak of the "TM Special Report: 3,200 Pages"

Originally, the "TM Special Report" was seized by prosecutors from Mr. Yoon and had long been reported as consisting of 5,000 pages. On this occasion, what appears to be a portion of it – 3,200 pages – has surfaced. However, it can be inferred for the following two reasons that the intentions of some party have clearly been added to these 3,200 pages.

First, the 5,000-page report was created as reporting memoranda based on reports from field sites around the world, yet only the portions related to the Family Federation in Japan have been compiled. Second, even within those portions, all sections disadvantageous to the author (Mr. Yoon) have been removed.

Accordingly, this 3,200-page document is not the evidence itself seized by prosecutors, but rather a document crafted to strongly reflect Mr. Yoon's intentions. It is judged that, by spreading these 3,200 pages in the Japanese media, the aim was to introduce into Korea – via Japan – reporting favorable to Mr. Yoon in connection with his own trial currently underway in Korea.

It is considered to be the "TM Special Report: 3,200 Pages," in which the author's intentions are extremely strongly reflected.

3. Credibility of the "TM Special Report: 3,200 Pages"

Former Chairman Eiji Tokuno (徳野英治) – second term as Chairman: December 2012 – October 2020) has already explained the following on X:

"It was an extremely private document written with the purpose of encouraging President Hak Ja Han (한학자), imbued with religious hope. Rather than an official document of the Japan Headquarters, it is closer to a personal letter. For that reason, it contains many personal opinions and wishful projections."



Eiji Tokuno (徳野英治) here in April

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He has thus stated that the document contained many hopeful perspectives reflecting expectations arising from his faith. 2023. Photo: FOREF

The text also strongly conveys a desire to encourage President [Hak Ja Han](#), and there are numerous discrepancies with the facts. Furthermore, because it was a memorandum document prepared by Mr. [Yoon](#) for reporting to President [Hak Ja Han](#), the fact is that no one had verified its credibility.

In addition, many contents in the report have in fact been added or rewritten in ways that are contrary to reality.

For example, in Mr. Tokuno's report, Prime Minister Takaichi's place of origin is stated as "Nara," whereas in the TM report it is listed as "Kanagawa." Moreover, the statement that "(election support) reached as many as 290 people from the *Liberal Democratic Party* alone" is known to exceed the total number of LDP candidates in the relevant national election at the time. In addition, a report purportedly submitted by the Nara District Head immediately after the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三) was never actually submitted by the individual in question, and many contrived passages can be observed.

(Even when compared with the individual's other reports, the writing style is clearly different, and creative content can be seen. It is stated that Chairman Tomihiro Tanaka (田中富広) ordered the local church to delete the name of suspect Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也), but if the person were a member, deletion would have been impossible at the local church level, as deletion procedures can only be carried out at headquarters. Furthermore, the mother's affiliated church is also incorrect.)



Tomihiro Tanaka (田中富広), here 7th November 2023 in Tokyo. Screenshot from transmission by [FFWPU](#)

The report also contains numerous descriptions concerning meetings and exchanges between senior officials of [our organization](#) and Japanese politicians. However, many of these descriptions lack corroboration through primary sources or objective records. When compared with testimony from those involved and factual circumstances, it cannot be ruled out that some expressions exaggerate beyond the facts, embellish the context, or include content that cannot be confirmed as factual.

Given the nature of these descriptions as internal materials primarily intended to encourage or persuade the report's recipient, it is appropriate to understand that they do not accurately reproduce actual exchanges, but rather strongly reflect the author's subjective perceptions, expectations, and evaluations.

Accordingly, [our organization](#) judges that the "TM Special Report" is extremely lacking in credibility.

We will continue to conduct further verification as an organization.

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Featured image above: Investigative committee for the TM Special Report.
Illustration: Chat GPT, 27th January 2026.

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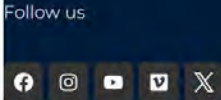
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