

Segye Ilbo: Over 7,000 people demonstrate against the law to dissolve religions

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Protestant believers filling the steps and part of the lawn in front of the National Assembly building are holding placards and shouting, "Oppose the Religious Dissolution Act."

Concerns over 'infringement of religious freedom' spread

The Committee Against the Dissolution of Religious Corporations Act, centered on Protestantism, held a rally demanding the withdrawal of the bill, stating that the 'Dissolution of Religious Corporations Act (Partial Amendment to the Civil Act)' raises concerns that it infringes upon freedom of religion.



Rev. Kim Woon-sung of Youngnak Church is giving a presentation.

On the 1st, approximately 7,000 people (according to the organizers' estimate), including Protestant pastors and believers, gathered on the steps and lawn in front of the National Assembly building in

Yeouido, Seoul, to hold a "National Rally Against the Religious Corporation Dissolution Act" and demand the withdrawal of the bill. Attendees held placards with slogans such as "Forced dissolution of religious corporations is a law that silences religious freedom," "We oppose the persecution of the Korean church under the guise of the Unification Church and Shincheonji," and "We oppose the Civil Law amendment bill for the recovery of state funds that disregards popular sovereignty and the Constitution," while chanting slogans.

Incumbent lawmakers, including Rep. Cho Bae-sook of the People Power Party, also attended the rally to lend their support. Rep. Cho argued, "Laws must not violate the Constitution and must conform to universal values," adding that "the bill in question has a high potential to infringe upon religious freedom and property rights."

The pastors who spoke expressed concern that the bill could affect society as a whole, extending beyond religion.

Rev. Kim Woon-sung of Youngnak Church emphasized, "This amendment may appear like a small seed now, but it is a dangerous starting point that could eventually engulf society as a whole." He added, "Issues of heresies like Shincheonji and the Unification Church are matters of the spiritual realm that the church must handle, not issues to be resolved by state power intervening through the law." He further pointed out, "The law must possess not only legality but also legitimacy," noting that "a law lacking legitimacy can lead to another historical tragedy." Rev.

Lee Tae-hee of Jinri Church warned by citing overseas examples. He stated, "State control over religion is gradually strengthened and eventually leads to the control of even the content of faith," noting that "China started with institutional management and evolved into a structure that restricts doctrine and sermons." He expressed concern, adding, "The Dissolution of Religious Corporations Act could become the starting point for such control."

Discussions also followed regarding how religious regulations have been abused abroad. It was noted that in countries such as Germany, China, and Russia, religious regulations were utilized as a means of political control, causing serious harm, and that Germany abolished such systems after the war.



Pastor Son Hyun-bo of Busan Segyero Church is giving a presentation.

Pastor Son Hyun-bo of Busan Segyero Church argued, "The principle of separation of church and state dictates that the state should not intervene in religion, but this is being applied in reverse." He asserted, "If this law is passed, it could lead to an abuse of state power, such as dissolving churches and confiscating their assets." He warned of a strong response, stating, "Religious freedom is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution."

Some remarks also mentioned the history of religious figures standing at the center of the independence

movement during the March 1st Movement. Religious leaders emphasized, "Just as religious figures rose up for the country at that time, blocking this bill is not a matter of faith, but a responsibility for the nation, the country, and the next generation."



Attendees are saluting the national flag in front of the National Assembly building in Yeouido before the rally.

Rev. Choi Kang-hee of Happy Church, who read a statement as the final item on the agenda of the rally, characterized the bill as "unconstitutional legislation that infringes upon the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution." The statement pointed to key issues such as investigations and supervision without warrants, the confiscation of assets into the state treasury upon the dissolution of religious organizations, and the ambiguity of criteria for judging political interference.

In particular, he criticized the bill, stating, "Although the bill is packaged as a law to prevent Unification Church and Shincheonji, it is actually a comprehensive regulation applicable to all religious organizations," and called it "an attempt to turn religion into an object of administrative control." He further urged, "If the bill is not withdrawn, an opposition movement centered on the Korean church will spread like wildfire," adding that "other religious communities, such as the Catholic and Buddhist communities, as well as civil society, must also step forward in solidarity."

The organizers announced their intention to continue holding additional rallies and joint responses until the bill is withdrawn.