

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Were FFWPU Gifts to Ex-1st Lady Bribery?

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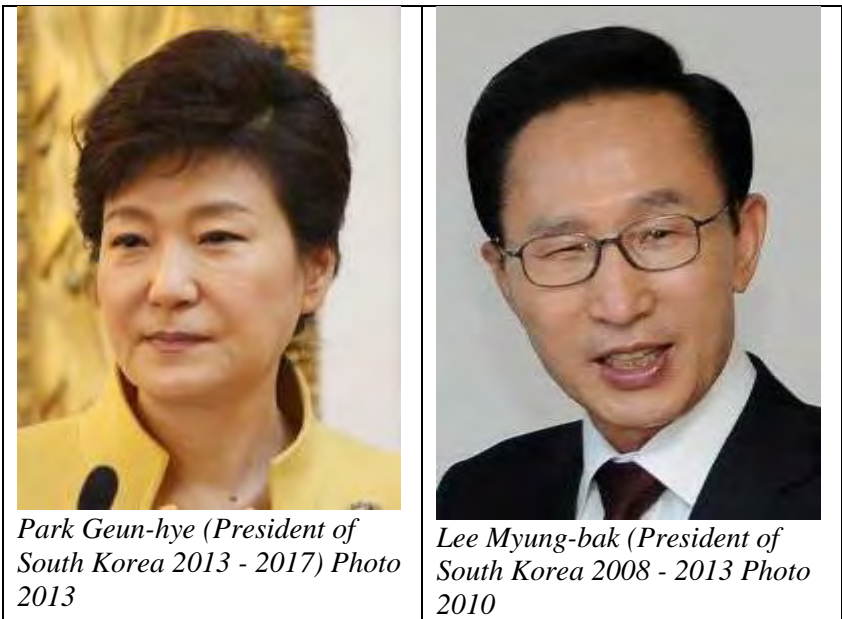


Former South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and First lady Kim Keon-hee in Tokyo March 16, 2023



In widening investigation into alleged corruption in the former presidential administration, special legal team visited Family Federation headquarters to obtain documents that may clarify whether gifts presented by former Federation leader in 2022 were bribes

Several South Korean media outlets ran July 18, 2025 stories on the ongoing legal investigation into alleged corruption in the former presidential administration led by Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열) from 2022 to 2025. The Chosun Biz - a daily that is part of the large conservative Chosun Media Group - reported that key figures associated with the [Family Federation](#) allegedly sought government favors to facilitate several major initiatives.



Yes, bribery and corruption involving politicians and government officials have been significant issues in South Korea. The country has seen multiple high-profile corruption scandals involving top-level politicians, presidents, and major business conglomerates ("chaebols").

Park Geun-hye (박근혜 - President 2013 - 2017) was impeached and imprisoned for corruption, bribery, and abuse of power in a scandal involving Samsung and her confidante Choi Soon-sil (최순실).

Lee Myung-bak (이명박 - President 2008 - 2013) was also convicted and jailed on charges of bribery and embezzlement.

Major companies like Samsung, Lotte, and the SK Group have been implicated in bribery scandals aimed

at securing government favors or business advantages.

These cases revealed deep ties between political power and corporate interests, a system critics sometimes call "crony capitalism".

To tackle the corruption, South Korea has introduced strong measures. The Kim Young-ran Act of 2016 criminalizes giving or receiving gifts and meals above a strict threshold for public officials, journalists, and educators, helping curb lower-level bribery and influence.

As opposed to Japan, South Korea has on several occasions shown that its judiciary is independent. It has proven relatively willing to prosecute elite figures, including sitting presidents, which is rare globally. In addition, a free press, active civil society, and strong public demand for accountability have played key roles in exposing corruption.

The [Family Federation](#) is cooperating fully with the authorities and granted access to the special investigation team visiting the international headquarters in Gapyeong and the Seoul headquarters located in Yongsan-gu to look through physical and digital documents.



Rev. Hwangbo Guk, President of the [Family Federation](#) in South Korea, speaking in Gapyeong July 18, 2025

Rev. Hwangbo Guk, President of the [Family Federation](#) in South Korea, said in a message to leaders and members gathered to a prayer vigil in Gapyeong 18th July,

"The truth will undoubtedly be revealed. [...] Now is the time to attune our ears to Heaven's will, to lift the torch of truth above lies and confusion, and to walk this path with sincerity, proving our hearts through action - not retreating in the face of the world's criticism.

Let us completely discern false energies and march forward toward the gates of [Cheonil-Guk \(Kingdom of Heaven\)](#) opened by our [True Mother](#). [...] This is the time to establish Heaven's order, uphold the dignity of [True Parents](#), and be reborn in a life centered on the Word.

I believe this current trial is a time to forge our strength. Let us overcome the trial together and unite our hearts to overcome this crisis. Then Heaven will open an even greater victory for us."

As a comment to sensationalist claims made by Chosun Biz, Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of the [Family Federation](#) in Europe and the Middle East, points out,



*The former First Lady of the Republic of Korea Kim Keon-hee*

"Actually, prosecutors are mainly focused on the former presidential administration, and the impeached former President Yoon Suk-yeol and his wife, former first lady Kim Keon-hee. Indeed, the police raided the headquarters of President Yoon's former political party today. As this is an ongoing legal investigation, we cannot comment further at this stage."

The Chosun Biz claimed that a former [Family Federation](#) leader sought favors from the government for certain large projects. To obtain such favors, he allegedly attempted to bribe the former First Lady Kim Keon-hee (김건희) by giving her through an intermediary two luxury handbags and a necklace with diamonds. According to The Korea Herald, it was a "diamond necklace made by Graff" worth about \$43,000, and Chanel bags worth a combined \$14,000, from a high-ranking [Family Federation](#) official "surnamed Yoon in 2022".

The Chosun Biz claims that the [Family Federation](#) representative through bribery sought support for its "development project on the

Mekong River in Cambodia."

Dr. Balcomb emphasizes,

"The concept of South Korean investment in a new Mekong River Global Enterprise Zone in Cambodia is not new. Indeed, the South Korean government is always looking for ways to strengthen its business, economic and political ties with other nations in Asia, in the mutual interests of both nations and, perhaps, as a counterbalance to the ever-spreading influence of the People's Republic of China. The [Family Federation](#) naturally supports such national objectives."

The Chosun Biz also writes that the former [Family Federation](#) leader tried to get government help for the acquisition of YTN, a major South Korean news network. According to media reports, the [religious organization](#) aimed to expand its media presence by buying or taking control of a mainstream broadcaster.

Dr. Michael Balcomb explains,

"I don't know any specifics about this proposed acquisition, but see nothing sinister about it. The [church](#) already owns several well-known media properties, including three daily newspapers: The Washington Times, Sekai Nippo in Japan, and the Segye Ilbo in Korea. Acquisition of a broadcaster would be a logical step. Of note, other churches also own mainstream media properties."



*Dr. Michael Balcomb speaking at outdoor event in London July 18, 2025*

According to South Korean media reports, the [Family Federation](#) have pushed for support to have the UN open a 5th UN office branch in South Korea in order to increase the [federation](#)'s own prestige and global standing. Commenting this, Dr. Balcomb states,

"There are many Koreans who feel that the United Nations is under-represented in Asia, and that Korea would be natural place to open a 5th UN office (the others being in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi). Moreover, given the still-divided state of the Korean peninsula, and the role of the UN in the Korean War which broke out 75 years ago, strengthening the UN presence in Korea could help with securing

a lasting peace and possible reunification. Certainly, the [Family Federation](#) supports such an initiative and is one of its many advocates."

As for the [religious organization](#) having been drawn into the investigations involving the former president and his wife, Michael Balcomb writes in a letter to members on 18th July,

"Since this is an ongoing legal investigation, we cannot comment further on this matter at this time."

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) ranks South Korea relatively well globally. In 2023, it ranked 32nd out of 180 countries, showing improvement but indicating room for progress.

Historically bribery and corruption have been tied to the political and business elite. However, the country has taken serious and visible steps to address them, and public intolerance for corruption is high.

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