

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: S Korean Faith Leaders Protest State Assault on Religion

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October 18, 2025



Religious leaders at the prayer rally in support of [Mother Han](#) October 13, 2025 outside Seoul Detention Center



South Korean religious councils protest state overreach following inhuman detention of 82-year-old Mother Han

On 13th October, the South Korean newspaper [Segye Ilbo](#) published a report which translated to English would carry the headline "[Detaining President Hak Ja Han Is an Infringement on](#)

[Religious Freedom - Korea Council of Religious Leaders \(KCRL\) and KCLC Issue Declaration on Religious Freedom](#)". The piece was penned by Religious Affairs Reporter Jeong Seong-su (정성수).



Religious leaders reading their joint statement at the prayer rally in support of [Mother Han](#) October 13, 2025 outside Seoul Detention Center.

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In South Korea, tensions between religious communities and state authorities have intensified following

the arrest of [Hak Ja Han](#), president of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). Prominent religious groups, including the Korean Christian Leaders Council (KCLC) and the Korea Council of Religious Leaders (KCRL), have denounced the move as an infringement on constitutional guarantees of religious freedom. The controversy has sparked widespread concern over what faith leaders describe as an alarming encroachment of political and prosecutorial power into religious affairs.



Religious leaders braving the rain during the prayer rally in support of [Mother Han](#) October 13, 2025 outside Seoul Detention Center

The [Segye Ilbo article](#) describes how on 13th October, representatives from KCLC and KCRL gathered outside the Seoul Detention Center in Uiwang, Gyeonggi Province, just outside Seoul to issue their Second Declaration on Religious Freedom. The event, attended by roughly 300 religious leaders and followers, took the form of a public prayer meeting and a press statement urging government restraint and transparency in handling religious organizations.

The declaration was prompted by a special prosecutor's investigation that included the arrest of [Hak Ja Han](#) and the search of several prominent religious institutions - among them Yoido Full Gospel Church, Far East Broadcasting Company, and the [Family Federation](#) (also known as the [Unification Church](#)). According to KCLC and KCRL, these actions amount to a direct violation of Article 20 of the South Korean Constitution, which enshrines the freedom of religion and the separation of religion and state.



Religious leaders at the prayer rally in support of [Mother Han](#) October 13, 2025 outside Seoul Detention Center

KCLC argued that the investigation reflects a growing trend of prejudice against religious organizations, warning that politically motivated scrutiny could destabilize the country's democratic principles. The council emphasized that the use of state power against faith communities not only undermines the independence of religion but also threatens the broader foundation of democracy and human rights in South Korea.

In their joint statement, the two religious councils issued three key demands to the authorities. First, they called for an end to biased and politically motivated investigations and insisted on fair legal procedures. Second, they urged the media and investigators to refrain from indiscriminate raids and speculative reporting that could damage reputations without evidence. Third, they demanded the cessation of one-sided inquiries and human rights violations stemming from the probe.

Religious Affairs Reporter Jeong Seong-su points out that the declaration also extended concern beyond Christian communities. With allegations of political involvement emerging even within certain Buddhist orders, KCLC warned of a "dangerous trend" in which political bias is spreading across religious boundaries. The group stressed the need for unity among all faith traditions to defend the principle of religious freedom regardless of doctrine or denomination.



Rev. Hong Yun-jeong, Chairman of the Korea Council of Religious Leaders, delivering his brief speech October 13, 2025

A separate news report by Peace TV on 18th October features an extract from a short speech by Rev. Hong Yun-jeong, Chairman of the Korea Council of Religious Leaders, delivered at the event 13th October,

"Please become the righteous people of this era. When politicians are corrupt, when those in power remain silent, who is it that has the mission to reveal truth in the darkness of history and become a light for the nation? It is the religious leaders of the nation.

Like the prophecy in Isaiah's era which lamented that there was not even one righteous person, I earnestly appeal once again that you become truly righteous people for this time. I earnestly request once again that you become the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles of this era."

In closing, KCLC and KCRL vowed to continue mobilizing religious communities nationwide to resist what they view as state overreach. The organizations plan to expand interfaith cooperation, pursue legal and

institutional reforms, and advocate for stronger human rights protections for religious practitioners.

The event outside the detention center symbolized more than a protest - it was a collective declaration that South Korea's faith leaders intend to safeguard their constitutional rights and resist any erosion of religious liberty in the face of growing political and judicial pressure.

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According to Jeong, in South Korea, the ruling **Democratic Party** appears to be waging an all-out campaign to discredit and dismantle the [Family Federation](#) for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) – formerly known as the [Unification Church](#) – and its affiliated organizations. To many observers, the attacks seem less about accountability and more about **political theater, exposing a troubling erosion of fairness in Korean politics.**



At the center of the controversy is an 82-year-old woman suffering from heart disease, the [Federation's](#) president, who is currently in detention. Despite her condition, the authorities and certain lawmakers have intensified scrutiny not only on the [Family Federation](#) itself but also on its partner institutions, such as the [Korea Religions Association](#) and [Sun Moon University](#), which the [Federation](#) founded. The tone of this pursuit has raised concerns about bias and disproportionate pressure against a single religious community.

A Disputed Financial Controversy



Democratic Party lawmaker Jeong Eul-ho (정을호). Photo: 대한민국 국회 (National Assembly of the Republic of Korea) / Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

The [Segye Ilbo](#) article reports that *Democratic Party* lawmaker Jeong Eul-ho (정을호) during a parliamentary audit of the Education Committee on 14th October, claimed that the *Ministry of Education's* financial support for *Sun Moon University* had “soared” from 11.7 billion won in 2020 to 25.8 billion won in 2024 – more than doubling in just four years. The lawmaker accused the [Family Federation](#) of having “extended its tentacles into the education sector under the Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열) administration.”

The remark quickly made headlines. Many Korean media outlets repeated the claim with little to no verification, fueling suspicions that the university's growth was the result of political favoritism or religious influence.

The [Segye Ilbo](#) describes how *Sun Moon University* responded immediately with a

rebuttal. The increase in funding, it explained, was part of a nationwide policy to expand financial support for universities – not a case of special treatment. Nearby institutions received similar boosts: one saw a 172% rise, another 212%, and others well over 170%. The data, in other words, reflected a general trend.

Yet by the time the facts emerged, the damage to public perception was done. The narrative that *Sun Moon University* – and by extension, the [Family Federation](#) – was “corrupt” or “improperly connected” had already spread. Some outlets even used **sensational headlines** suggesting collusion between the [Federation](#) and President Yoon, further amplifying the controversy.

Fact-Checking Fails in Parliament

Religious Affairs Reporter Jeong Seong-su portrays how the attacks did not end there. Another Democratic Party lawmaker, Moon Jeong-bok (문정복), brought up the *Korean Religious Development Forum*, alleging that former leaders of the *Korea Religions Association* – an organization historically linked to the [Family Federation](#) – had joined the forum in an attempt to “control” it.

Her assertion, however, was factually incorrect. The forum was actually founded in 2019 by Professor Park Jae-gap (박재갑), a respected cancer researcher and former professor at Seoul National University. The organization's purpose is academic and interfaith in nature, not political. It is unclear whether Rep. Moon conducted any factual checks before making her claims.



Democratic Party lawmaker Moon Jeong-bok (문정복). Photo (2019): 문정복 / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int.](#) Cropped

According to the [Segye Ilbo](#), Moon went on to allege that the [Family Federation](#) was using the forum, its network, and other individuals to

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[Segye Ilbo](#) writes that ultimately, the issue is not about defending one religion over another. It is about maintaining fairness, due process, and respect for human rights – principles essential to a functioning democracy. When political power is wielded selectively against a specific faith group, it damages public trust and weakens the very institutions meant to uphold justice.

The [Family Federation's](#) members are now enduring profound emotional and social hardship. They are citizens of this nation, entitled to the same dignity and legal protection as anyone else. If Korea's political leaders continue to sacrifice impartiality for the sake of political advantage, they risk losing credibility not only with religious communities but with the broader public as well.

In the end, the question remains: **Is the Democratic Party genuinely pursuing truth – or simply targeting a convenient enemy?** The answer may determine not just the fate of one religious organization, but the integrity of South Korea's democratic values themselves.

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Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Elderly woman in wheelchair attacked by fierce red dragon. Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, October 2025.

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