

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Holy Mother Han's Punishing Detention Until December Trial

Knut Holdhus
October 28, 2025



Artistic impression of Mother Han in detention cell. Illustration: Grok xAI.



Artistic impression of Mother Han in wheelchair at preparatory hearing. Illustration: Grok xAI,

Prolonged December trial could confine 82-year-old Mother Han until mid-2026 amid worsening health and tough detention conditions

 **YONHAP NEWS AGENCY** According to the large South Korean news agency [Yonhap](#) on 27th October, the Seoul Central District Court announced the same day that the formal trial of [Family Federation](#) leader [Hak Ja Han](#) (82), accused of bribery and other offenses connected to the administration of former President Yoon Suk-yeol, will start in December.

[Yonhap](#) writes that the first hearing is scheduled for 1st December, with the court planning to hold one or two sessions per week, according to statements made during a preparatory hearing. Before the trial begins, an additional preparatory hearing will take place on 18th November.

[Mother Han](#), indicted earlier this month by a special counsel team, faces charges that include violations of the Political Funds Act and the anti-graft law, among several other alleged offenses.

Preparatory hearings are designed to allow the prosecution and defense to present their views, address procedural matters, and organize the timetable for the upcoming trial. Attendance by the defendant is typically not mandatory, but [Mother Han](#) - who remains in detention pending trial - personally appeared for the session 27th October despite her ongoing custody.

The case marks one of the most high-profile legal proceedings in recent months, drawing public attention for its potential implications in the broader investigation into political and financial misconduct.

The Korean headquarters of the [Family Federation](#) issued a [statement](#) soon after the session.

One thing seems certain: She is likely to be detained for a long time. No one knows exactly for how long, but a reasonable estimate appears to be that she remains in detention at least until mid-2026, unless extraordinary relief is granted. The duration of detention pending trial depends on how quickly its phases

proceed - e.g., indictment, preparatory hearings, trial, possible appeals, etc.

Once the trial begins, if hearings are held "one to two times a week" - as the [Yonhap News Agency](#) writes - the process may take many months depending on complexity (number of witnesses, documents, defence motions, appeals etc.). And after the district court's decision, potential appeals to higher courts will extend the timeline further.

Can [Mother Han](#) then be released before the verdict?

Certain possibilities exist. The release may come early if a court finds the detention no longer necessary (e.g., risk of flight/evidence destruction gone, or health deterioration critical), the defense may apply for release (on bail or conditional release).

Given her advanced age (82) and reported health issues - her legal team has raised them - there may be arguments for humanitarian release or special decision, but such release is not guaranteed, especially when the court has cited strong risk factors (as here).

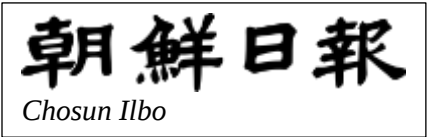
But given the alleged ambitious nature of the large team of special prosecutors behind the case, it won't be easy to obtain an early release.



The [Segye Ilbo wrote in an editorial](#) on 22nd October that the practice of coercive, separate, and highly publicized investigations has long served as a proving ground for ambitious prosecutors, who seek to demonstrate effectiveness through arrests and indictments rather than fair process or evidentiary soundness.



The [Korea JoongAng Daily](#) wrote on 23rd September that [Mother Han](#)'s advanced age (82) and reportedly poor health have been raised by her defence team.



According to the [Chosun Ilbo](#) on 2nd October, in South Korean courts, age/health can be grounds for detention reconsideration (for example human rights/humanitarian relief), but they are not automatic guarantees of release.

If her health deteriorates significantly, her legal team may press for release on medical grounds; the court may consider a "hospital remand" or conditional release. But until such relief is granted, detention continues.

And there are also factors that may lengthen the detention. One such factor is the complexity of the case: large number of documents, witnesses, involvement of international aspects (e.g., overseas funds) could slow things.

Possible appeals are of course another factor, and yet another one would be if new charges are added, or if separate investigations linked to this case cause delay.

Text. Knut Holdhus, editor

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- October 25, 2025
- Knut Holdhus



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Strong reactions are mounting against the extensive powers granted by the Lee Jae-myung (이재명) administration to its team of special prosecutors. The coercive investigation methods employed by Chief Special Prosecutor Min Jung-ki (민중기) and his large staff of prosecutors and legal assistants have already drawn



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Their extensive powers include keeping 82-year-old **Hak Ja Han** (한학자), also known as **Mother Han**, in a tiny **cold and damp detention cell** while she is recovering from a heart operation and suffers from multiple health problems. She has already been held for 35 days under inhuman conditions.



President Lee Jae-myung at a G-7 Summit 17th June 2025. Photo: Dati Bendo / European Union. License: CC Attr 4.0 Int. Cropped



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PEOPLE POWER PARTY

Logo of the People Power Party (PPP), currently the main opposition party in South Korea.

The main opposition party, the *People Power Party* (PPP), is certainly reacting. Five-term National Assembly member Cho Bae-sook (조배숙) and Attorney Park Kyung-ho (박경호) filed on 22nd

October a complaint at the *Seoul Central District Prosecutor's Office* against Special Prosecutor Min Jung-ki for abuse of power and *Capital Markets Act* violations.

Cho Bae-sook is one of the country's pioneering female legal professionals. It's not the first time she has stepped to the forefront of legal and ethical controversy. A former prosecutor, judge, and lawyer, Cho currently serves in the *People Power Party*, where she is known for her sharp legal insight, conservative values, and commitment to the integrity of the justice system. Educated at *Seoul National University's Faculty of Law*, Cho built her career across nearly every branch of Korea's legal world before entering politics.



Baesook Cho

4.3K friends

On 22nd October, she released a

Screenshot from Cho Bae-sook's Facebook page 25th Oct. 2025.

powerful statement on Facebook following the *People Power Party's* formal complaint against Special Prosecutor Min Jung-ki and his investigative team – a post that has quickly spread across social media and reignited public debate about judicial ethics, prosecutorial conduct, and accountability at the highest levels of law enforcement.

In her statement, titled “*Min Jung-ki, the Special Prosecutor Who Speaks of Justice with Dirty Hands While Hiding Behind the Statute of Limitations – Resign Immediately*,” Cho opened with the announcement that she and other party members had submitted an official complaint to the *Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office*. The complaint accuses Min Jung-ki and members of his special investigation team of coercive interrogation practices and human rights violations during their handling of the *Yangpyeong Gongheung District* development case – an investigation that, according to Cho, culminated in the suicide of defendant Jeong Hee-cheol (정희철), a local township chief.

Cho's post goes beyond the immediate tragedy of the Gongheung case to paint a picture of what she calls a pattern of unethical behavior by Min stretching back more than a decade. She accuses him of past financial misconduct dating to his tenure as a high court judge, particularly involving insider trading and concealed profits from the NeoSemitech solar energy scandal of 2010.

According to Cho, Min disclosed ownership of 10,000 unlisted shares in *NeoSemitech* in 2008, when he served as a senior judge. The company later went public through a backdoor listing in October 2009, but within months, accounting fraud was exposed, its trading was suspended in March 2010, and the company was delisted that August. Cho claims Min had already sold his shares just before the trading suspension, profiting by about 150 million won (roughly USD



Chief Special Prosecutor Min Jung-ki (민중기), who is sought investigated for financial misconduct, insider dealings, and abuse of power. He summoned **Dr. Hak Ja Han** and Pastor Son Hyun-bo for questioning and asked for their long-term detention. Min is the head of a huge team of special prosecutors with extensive investigative powers. Image generated

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110,000). Even more telling, she writes, was that Oh Myung-hwan (오명환), the company's CEO – and Min's high-school and university classmate – made a much larger profit, selling his stock shortly before the suspension and allegedly earning 2.4 billion won (USD 1.8 million).

Cho challenges Min's defense that he had simply invested "on the recommendation of an acquaintance unrelated to the company." She stresses that Min has refused to identify this acquaintance, the securities firm, or the broker who allegedly advised him to sell the stock, nor has he disclosed the precise timing of the transaction. **Such secrecy, Cho argues, undermines his credibility and strongly suggests the use of insider information, which would constitute a serious criminal offense.**

The lawmaker's post conveys a deep sense of public outrage among small investors who suffered losses in the *NeoSemitech* collapse. Many of them, she recounts, lost their savings and homes, with some reportedly driven to despair and suicide. "Countless small investors shed tears of blood and saw their families destroyed," Cho quoted one victim as saying.

"And now we learn that the man at the center of it all is a special prosecutor? It's beyond belief."

Anticipating claims that any potential charges against Min are barred by the statute of limitations, Cho presents a detailed legal rebuttal. She cites the case of Oh Myung-hwan (오명환), NeoSemitech's former CEO, who was indicted and eventually sentenced to 11 years in prison after fleeing abroad for four years before his arrest by Interpol in Vancouver in 2013. Citing Article 253 of the *Criminal Procedure Act*, Cho argues that the suspension of the statute of limitations for one accomplice applies to all accomplices. Given Oh's extended flight and trial, she contends, the clock on Min's own potential charges was stopped for at least seven years, meaning that the case remains open and prosecutable.

Beyond legal arguments, Cho's post is a moral and philosophical indictment of what she sees as hypocrisy within the justice system. Drawing on the "Clean Hands Principle" – a doctrine stating that those who have acted unlawfully cannot invoke the law's protection – **she insists that a prosecutor implicated in ethical violations has no moral authority to administer justice. "If the head of the nation's top investigative body has dirtied his own hands," she writes, "he can no longer speak in the name of justice or investigate citizens in its name."**

Her conclusion is unequivocal: Min Jung-ki must resign immediately, and the special prosecution team should be dissolved. She calls on Min to "bow before the people," to voluntarily appear before investigators, and to "confess his crimes in full."

Cho's post combines the sharpness of a legal brief with the fervor of a political manifesto. It reflects her dual identity as a jurist and lawmaker – one steeped in legal reasoning but animated by moral conviction. Her argument is not limited to Min's alleged misconduct; it is also a broader critique of the erosion of public trust in the justice system. For Cho, accountability is not just about punishing wrongdoing but about preserving the moral authority of the law itself.

Her statement also positions the *People Power Party* as a defender of legal transparency and prosecutorial reform at a time when the political climate is deeply polarized. Whether her allegations lead to renewed investigation or disciplinary action remains uncertain. Yet, Cho Bae-sook's intervention has already reignited debate over whether those entrusted with enforcing justice can ever be above it – and whether, as she warns, "those who have defiled the name of the law have any right to speak in its name."

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Portrait of Cho Bae-sook 7th September 2023.
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